

Title: An Attempt by the Baťa Shoe Company at maritime transport in the years 1932 to 1935

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Abstract

The article documents the Bat'a Shoe Company's own maritime transport operations between 1932 and 1935, in years when the Bat'a company was doing business in 35 other fields of industry, trade and services apart from shoes production. The opening pages focus on contracts guaranteeing the newly formed Czechoslovakia the right to maritime transport, followed by a brief description of maritime transportation developments. However, the main part deals with the efforts of the Bat'a Company to operate two naval vessels used for raw material shipping. The larger vessel *Morava*, was to deliver goods from Europe to Southeast Asia. On the return leg, it would haul raw material for footwear manufacturing, mainly rubber and leather. However, *Morava* only made one trip to Asia, and then transported goods among European ports before being sold just one year later. The smaller vessel *Little Evy* was to transport freight on the route Hamburg – Gdynia – Hamburg. It did so for a year and a half before also being sold after a crash. Thus ended the most important economic endeavour in Czechoslovak maritime transport in the 1930s. It would be two decades after World War II before another naval vessel flew the Czechoslovak flag.

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A successfully run and thriving business has always been one of the sources of wealth to any country. Well established maritime transport in particular greatly contributed to the wealth of nations. In the past, small states or even cities gained significant wealth due to their entrepreneurship. They managed not only to carry out transport of their own goods, but also to control the transport of goods of other countries and regions, near and far. They often became agents of those that could not conduct maritime transport themselves, or were unable to. Such places thus gained a monopoly of overseas trade and overseas transport in large areas. The importance of maritime transport was understood by all participating countries and cruel and bloody wars were often the result of mutual rivalry or effort to maintain maritime trade or eliminate competition.

Legislation enabling Czechoslovakia to operate maritime transport

As one of the outcomes of the Paris Peace Conference, the Treaty of Versailles with Germany was signed on June 28, 1919. It laid the foundations for ship transport for the newly created landlocked Czechoslovakia. The most important part of the treaty was section XII. titled Ports, waterways and railways in particular its second part Shipping¹.

¹ Part XII. of the contract is divided into six sections with articles: Section General provisions (articles 321-326), Shipping (articles 327-364), Railways (articles 365-375), Dispute Resolution and Revision of

Articles 327, which highlighted the general principles of freedom of navigation in German waters, articles 328-330 determining the regime of free zones of the North German ports, and two short articles 363² and 364³ that granted Czechoslovakia the use of the North German ports for a period of 99 years⁴ are the most notable ones.

The International Commission for the regime of ports, waterways and railways was established at the time of the Paris Peace Conference, which prepared and discussed the first texts of future conventions "on freedom of transit of waterways and ports." Various causes, however, prevented the inclusion of the full text of the conventions into the peace treaties. Therefore only parts of these agreements were included in the Treaty of Versailles. After the signing of the peace treaty the commission cooperated with the League of Nations, was completed by other experts from neutral countries and converted into the Study Commission containing representatives of 18 countries. The Study Commission, a member of which was a significant representative of The Bat'a

Permanent Clauses (articles 376-378), Special Provisions (article 379) and Clauses on the Kiel Canal (articles 380-386).

² *"In the ports of Hamburg and Stettin, the Czecho-Slovak State is to rent German premises for a period of 99 years. These premises will be subject to the general order of the free zones and are intended for direct transit of goods originating from that State or aiming there."*

³ *"The borders of this areas, its maintenance, usage and all conditions of their utilisation, including the cost of rent shall be determined by the Commission, composed of one representative from Germany, one representative of the Czecho-Slovak State and one representative of Great Britain. Such conditions may be reviewed every ten years in the same manner. Germany first declares that it agrees with the decision which then comes into force."*

⁴ http://cs.wikisource.org/wiki/Versaillesk%C3%A1_smlouva [21 May 2014]; Emil Ženatý, 'Československý Lloyd (Czechoslovak Lloyd)', *Věstník pro vodní hospodářství (Journal of Water Resource Mangement)* 15, No. 2-3 (1936), 17.

Shoe Company Hugo Vavrečka, met in Paris in October 1919 to continue the work of its predecessor.

In February 1920 the committee was urged by the League of Nations, *"to present a proposal for the formation of a permanent organisation for communications and transit issues at the League of Nations, to prepare a preliminary drafts of general international agreements, which would be submitted to the organisation and to become an advisor of the Council of the League Nations on issues which fall within the sphere of action of the League of Nations under the Article XXIII of the Covenant and under other peace treaties relating to ports, waterways and railways."*

In mid-May 1920, the Council of the League of Nations decided to convene a general conference for communication and transit in Barcelona. The conference took place from 10th March to 20th April 1921 and 44 countries of all continents participated. The Czechoslovak Republic was represented by Envoy Extraordinary, Minister Plenipotentiary, State Secretary of the Ministry of Public Affairs Bohuslav Müller, Eng. The conference achieved a set of agreements and arrangements which came into force on 8th October 1921 and among others it included a statement of recognition of the right to a maritime flag of states without sea-coast: *"The undersigned, duly authorised for the purpose, declare that the States which they represent recognise the flag flown by the vessels of any State having no sea-coast which are registered at some specified place situated in its territory; such place shall serve as the port of registry of such vessels. Barcelona, the twentieth*

*day of April nineteen hundred and twenty-one, done in a single copy, of which the English and French texts shall be authentic.”*⁵

The National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic on 15th April 1920 adopted two significant acts that legally guaranteed Czechoslovak maritime transport. The first Act No. 315 On the establishment of the Czechoslovak Nautical Office established the Czechoslovak Nautical Office in Prague in order to “... *see to affairs of inland waterways and sea transport...*”⁶ The second Act No. 316 On the flag and naval vessel register was divided into ten sections consisting of forty paragraphs and was based on the maritime law of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and on applicable international conventions on aid and rescue at sea, healthcare and telegraphy.⁷ The Act defined binding legal relations of the Czechoslovak sea transport, and inter alia, it set the conditions for obtaining the Czechoslovak nautical flag and established Prague as the port of registry (home port).⁸

⁵ National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic 1920-1925, files, No. 4230. Available online http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1920ns/ps/tisky/T4230_01.htm [20 May 2014].

Participation in the conference, except Turkey which was defeated in World War II, was also refused by the United States, which never ratified the Versailles Treaty. First, the USA disagreed with the amount war reparations specified in the contract and also because of its policy of isolationism, i.e. refusing to join the League of Nations.

⁶ Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Yr. 1920, figure LVII, 8th May 1920. Available online <http://ftp.aspi.cz/aspi/opispdf/1920.html> [20 May 2014].

⁷ Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Yr. 1920, figure LVII, 8th May 1920. Available online <http://ftp.aspi.cz/aspi/opispdf/1920.html> [20 May 2014].

⁸ Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Yr. 1920, figure LVII, 8th May 1920. Available online <http://ftp.aspi.cz/aspi/opispdf/1920.html> [20 May 2014].

Czechoslovak maritime carriers in the period of the Czechoslovakia 1918-1939

During the First World War a large number of naval transport ships was made, especially to cover the needs of national armies. After the war the military transportation subsided, armies returned leased private steamers which made them available to the public and they also made their ships available for maritime transport, which created an excessive shipping capacity. As a result, transport rates decreased. However, the cost of shipping rose ceasing to make sea transport profitable. The situation above had an adverse impact especially on smaller shipping companies that were affected by bankruptcy or were liquidated, while large companies overcame the crisis. These circumstances and the lack of tradition and experience in shipping therefore led to a rather slow development of the Czechoslovak maritime transport.⁹

Even before the First World War a ship-owner Julius Veselý from Prague who bought a steamer *Erna* on April 12th 1912 in Rotterdam was ploughing the sea. However, the first vessel flying the national flag of Czechoslovakia was a schooner *the Kehrwieder* under the command of Alfred Konderman in March of 1920. Unfortunately the schooner shipwrecked before it could have been registered in the Register of naval vessels at the Commercial Court in Prague, which was not established until 1923. By 1939, twelve naval ships of six owners had gradually entered the registry. A registered

⁹ Bořivoj Radoň, 'Plavba námořní (Maritime transport)', *Plavební ročenka 1924 (Journal of navigation)*, 330-331.

ship had to be a naval vessel, be of a greater tonnage than fifteen gross registered tons (GRT)¹⁰ and be awarded the Czechoslovak flag right. The act of registration itself was then performed on three sheets. The first contained a technical description of the ship, the second proprietary sheets contained the name of the owner and the operator of the ship and the third sheet served as a record of malfunctions.¹¹

The first and the largest ship to have entered the register with a tonnage of 5 735 GRT was the ship *Legie* (in English *the Legion*), originally named *the Tajkai Maru*, built in the shipyard of Uchida Comp. in Yokohama. In July of 1920 it was purchased in Japan by Legiobanka for 36 million Czechoslovak crowns. The vessels, which was 122m long and 16.70 m wide, first transported 70 Czechoslovak legionaries from Vladivostok to Trieste.¹² It was later used for business purposes, particularly for transport to North and South America. During the Great Depression, the ship was docked in Hamburg as it was without use and at the end of 1933 it was sold by Legiobanka to a Greek ship-owner Pateras.¹³ Later, in March 1942 the ship was sunk en route from Belfast to Halifax by a German torpedo.

¹⁰ Gross registered ton (GRT) is a unit of volume determining tonnage of merchant ships. BRT equals 2,83 m³.

¹¹ Radek Novák, *Námořní přeprava (The Maritime Transport)* (Praha 2005).

¹² The journey from Vladivostok to Trieste was done between August 24 and October 10, 1920. On October 28 1920 it was officially named *the Legion* in Trieste.

¹³ State District Archive in Zlín, Baťa a. s. (Baťa, Public Limited Company), II/8, k. 161, inv. no. 161.

Table 1. Trade voyages of the Legion in the years 1920 to 1930.¹⁴

year	travelled distance in nautical miles	transported goods in tonnes
1920	13 774	8 136
1921	31 775	10 254
1922	38 071	36 560
1923	30 506	26 755
1924	38 606	44 262
1925	51 115	61 562
1926	46 589	60 361
1927	42 201	40 170
1928	43 275	40 830
1929	36 775	36 785
1930	32 730	34 552

The second vessel in the register of ships was *the Arna*, built in 1905 in the shipyard of Howdon on Tyne in the north of England with the carrying capacity of 3 049 BRT and slightly smaller in size than *the Legion*; its length was 99.06m and the

¹⁴ State District Archive in Zlín, Baťa a. s. (Baťa, Public Limited Company), II/8, k. 163, inv. no. 163. The table shows that transport grew from 1920, in 1925 it reached its peak and then it gradually declined.

width 14.63m. *The Arna* was owned by Artur Zdenkovič and it carried raw materials. After three years of being in operation, under unclear circumstances in a storm on 16th February 1928 it hit a reef near the Spanish Almeria at Cabo de Gata and sank with a cargo of iron ore, which it was carrying from Bilbao to Trieste. There were no casualties reported partly due to subsequent successful evacuation of the crew including eight passengers.¹⁵

The other eight vessels registered were of a small tonnage compared to *the Legion* and *the Arna*. Their owners Leo Glass, Gerhard Weiss and Ervin Spitzer supposedly used them for suspicious business activities in the second half of the 1920s and the early 1930s, especially for smuggling alcohol to Finland, which the Finnish party reported several times. Moreover the vessel of Gerhard Weiss, *the Litoměřice*, smuggled weapons for rebels in Venezuela in 1930.¹⁶ For the reasons described above, several vessels were stripped of the Czechoslovak flag right and removed from the register. The last two vessels, *the Morava* and *the Little Evy*, listed in the register belonged to the Baťa Company.

¹⁵ The National Archive Prague (hereafter NA Prague) The fund of Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague 1921-1950, k. 75, inv. no. 962: It is yet to be resolved whether the sinking of the ship was not an attempted insurance fraud. The ship was insured in the amount of three million and a whole hour passed between the collision and sinking, during which the captain allegedly did not try to save important papers or the ship itself.

¹⁶ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 80, inv. no. 1012.

Table 2. The list of vessels registered in the Czechoslovak naval vessel register in the years 1918 to 1939.¹⁷

order number	name of vessel	GRT = gross registered tons	vessel owner
1.	Legie	5 735	Legiobanka
2.	Arna	3 049	Zdenkovič Artur ¹⁸
3.	Dalibor	173	Spitzer Ervín
4.	Neptun	243	Spitzer Ervín
5.	Míla	150	Spitzer Ervín
6.	Duben	548	Glass Leo
7.	Plzeň	79	Weiss Gerhard
8.	Jiřina	339	Spitzer Ervín
9.	Marie	128	Spitzer Ervín
10.	Litoměřice	641	Weiss Gerhard
11.	Morava	3 463	Baťa Company
12.	Little Evy	461	Baťa Company

¹⁷ <http://www.namorniplavba.cz/cnp/1221.html> [20. May 2014].

¹⁸ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 75, inv. no. 962. The owner of the vessel was Artur Zdenkovič, a husband of Arnoštka Veselá, a daughter of Julius and Ernestina Veselý, the ship was named after Zdenkovič's wife. Julius Veselý was the head of the Prague credit bank and the owner of the pre-war ship Arna. Some researchers believe that the operator of the ship was Erich Veselý (probably a son of spouses Veselý).

Brief introduction of The Baťa Company

The history of the Baťa Company began to unfold in September 1894, when the Baťa siblings Antonín, Tomáš and Anna founded the Baťa shoe factory in the small town of Zlín. Despite the initial difficulties the company prospered and grew under the leadership of Tomáš, the youngest of them. The tipping point came in 1922, when Tomáš Baťa attempted to overcome the post-war crisis by an action titled "Baťa crushes high prices", in which he decided to sell out warehouses full of shoes by reducing the shoe prices by half. At the same time he reduced the earnings of his employees by 40%, which was partially compensated to them by several advantages, e.g. 50% off groceries and other goods in the company stores. Via such efforts Baťa acquired the necessary capital, put his marketing machine into motion and also made a great reputation for himself. Two years later, the company introduced self-government of workshops and employee participation in company profits.

In the early 20s the company began to expand into foreign markets. Gradually it opened Baťa sister companies selling footwear and assisting in purchasing raw materials. Baťa bought a factory in Lynn, USA, and in the early 30s he began to build other factories in several European countries. The first shop abroad opened in 1919 in Belgrade. The Baťa Shoe Factory used several types of means of transport for its business activities. From 1924 Baťa used railway and air transport and two years later he added road haulage. In 1928 Tomáš Baťa became a member of The Oder Shipping

Company that transported goods along the river Oder. In 1923 Baťa became the mayor of the town Zlín. In 1900 there were 2 975 inhabitants in Zlín. In 1923, the number of inhabitants rose to 5 285 and in 1932 it was 26 350 inhabitants. The mayor Tomáš Baťa increased the number of inhabitants fivefold. The successful life of Tomáš Baťa was ended by a tragic accident on July 12th 1932.

Tomáš Baťa left a thriving business to his followers. In 1932, the Baťa company was doing business in 35 fields of industry, trade and services, employed 31,200 workers, it operated 2,500 shoe stores in Czechoslovakia and 24 in other countries around the world, it produced 81% of footwear in Czechoslovakia and it comprised 75% of the Czechoslovak footwear export.¹⁹

The Baťa Shoe Factory and maritime transport

In the early 30s, during the Great Depression, The Baťa Company was forced to seek new forms and ways of strengthening the footwear export and expanding the established network of manufacturing and trading centres around the world. At this time, the company focused mainly on the Asian markets, where, however, it encountered tough Japanese competition and as well as transport problems. The

¹⁹ For more see Tomáš Baťa, *Reflections and Speeches* (Amsterdam 1992). Available online <http://tomasbata.com/audiobook.html?lang=en> [24 June 2014]; Zdeněk Pokluda, *From Zlín into the World: The story of Thomas Bata* (Zlín 2009); Zdeněk Pokluda, *Man and Work: The vision and principles of economics of Tomáš Baťa* (Zlín 2014).

shipping conditions of Czechoslovakia as a landlocked country were somewhat impeded due to the fact that Trieste, the nearest seaport, did not offer any vessel connecting the Far East directly and transshipment of the transported goods in Port Said or Aden made transportation significantly more expensive. Should Zlín footwear remain affordable, it had to stay void of expensive transport fees, which was the main reason why Zlín management decided to purchase its own naval vessel. Own maritime transport did not raise the footwear prices, and more conveniently the ship could be used on both its ways of the voyage; it would import manufactured footwear to Asia and bring raw materials back to Europe, namely crude rubber. In the early 30s rubber was purchased from the Indonesian islands, especially in Java and Borneo, by an employee of the Purchasing department of The Baťa Company Josef Sedlář.

It is rather hard to say who originally came with the idea of company's own shipping transport. However Tomáš Baťa's air travel to India at the turn of 1931-1932 must have been of significance. Company designated workers began working on the idea of Baťa's own maritime transport in mid-1932. Undoubtedly Hugo Vavrečka, who joined the company on June 7th 1932 participated in its implementation. Vavrečka, a former Austro-Hungarian sailor, journalist and diplomat, held the post of a consul in Hamburg in the years 1920 to 1922 dealing primarily with transport issues of the landlocked Czechoslovakia. Vavrečka's previous job experience and a research trip of the North German ports taken with Jan Antonín Baťa in the summer of 1932

significantly accelerated the genesis The Baťa Company's maritime transport.²⁰ In the beginning of September 1932, the company attempted to purchase a naval vessel. Its representatives first negotiated the purchase of Legiobank's vessel *the Legion*, which had been moored in Hamburg for two years as the owner had no use for it. *The Legion*, however, did not meet the company's requirements and therefore the idea was abandoned.²¹

In Friday's issue of the company journal *Zlín*, issued on 16th September, an article was published titled "A Steamer with one hundred Zlín pioneers on a 52,000 kilometre voyage". The article also reprinted a call for company employees, which had earlier been published on the company's first office building: *"We are looking for a hundred people, salespersons and shoemakers for our global businesses in Africa, British and Dutch India. Sign up those of you who you are enterprising, pioneers and*

²⁰ Hugo Vavrečka (22 February 1880 - 9 August 1952) After graduating from the University of Technology in Brno, followed by a one-year military service in the Austro-Hungarian Navy in Pula, he enlisted in the Navy in Pula during the World War I. He worked as a journalist, from January 1919 he worked in the Czechoslovak delegation at the peace conference in Paris, in February 1920 Vavrečka was appointed the Consul General in Hamburg. In the years 1922-1932 he served as the Czechoslovak envoy in Budapest and Vienna. At the Baťa company, Vavrečka was in charge of the national-economic issues, trade and diplomatic relations of the company with its business partners in Czechoslovakia and abroad. After the death of Tomáš Baťa, Vavrečka became one of the three-member directorate. In the period of September to December 1938, he enters the Czechoslovak governments as the minister of propaganda and the minister without portfolio. After the end of II. World War II, Vavrečka was dismissed from the Baťa company and in a sham trial he was sentenced to a heavy three-year sentence in prison, but was spared the jail. Vavrečka died in Brno in 1952. Nina Pavelčíková, 'Ředitel Baťových závodů Hugo Vavrečka (The Director of the Baťa Shoe Factories Hugo Vavrečka)', *Zlínsko from the past to the present*, 13, (1994), 21-67.

²¹ State District Archive in Zlín, Baťa a. s. (Baťa, Public Limited Company), II/8, k. 161, inv. no. 161.

steadfast."²² The article first informed of the company's intention to acquire a large naval vessel with a capacity of three and four thousand tons that would sail "from Hamburg or some other North European port across La Manche along Spain to Las Palmas of the Canary islands, where the water and vegetables are supplied. From Las Palmas the voyage is to continue via Dakar, Senegal, along the west coast of Africa, to the southernmost tip of the African continent, the Cape Town. Here the vessel changes its course to the north and copying the east coast of Africa it will navigate to Majunga in Madagascar and Mombasa in Kenya. From there it is to head out to sea, to the northeast, directly to Bombay in India. From Bombay the journey continues further through Colombo in Ceylon, to Calcutta, around Sumatra to Singapore in Farther India, to Batavia in Java and to Saigon in Indochina, which unless the voyage is extended further to the northeast, will be the farthest point of the expedition." On its homebound journey the vessel was to pass through Singapore, Colombo, the Arabian Sea, Aden, Suez Canal, the Mediterranean Sea, Gibraltar and back to Hamburg. During stopovers in each port, the goods would be unloaded, along with retail facilities and people selected to promote the sales services. Based on preliminary calculations, the overall voyage was estimated to take 133 sailing days, during which the ship would travel 52,262 kilometres. Another 37 days would make up for the stops in the world's

²² Zlín – Friday, 16 September 1932. The company management warned the potential candidates against difficulties on the way. Searching for "healthy thinking people, for whom the expedition means an extraordinary opportunity to toughen their characters, provide them with a rare experience and knowledge, and to all who responsibly fulfil their mission it will be a way to wealth and life success."

ports. The longest parts of the voyage, taking approximately 12 days, were planned between Hamburg and Dakar and between Mombasa and Mumbai.²³ According to the initial plans the vessel was to serve as a floating fair promoting Czechoslovak products along this long journey. On board the ship should be spacious enough for the travelling representatives of the exhibiting companies.

The Baťa Company organised a series of lectures given by two leading Czech Indologists and Charles University professors, Vincenc Lesný²⁴ and Otakar Pertold²⁵ in early October 1932 for the selected employee candidates. Professor Lesný lectured on the general geographical, political and social conditions in India while Professor Pertold talked mainly about the economic conditions of India.²⁶

²³ Zlín – Friday, 16 September 1932.

²⁴ Vincenc Lesný (3 April 1882 – 9 April 1953) Czech Indologist, after graduating from a grammar school in Jindřichův Hradec, he graduated in Indology, Iranistics and classical philology at the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University in the years 1903-1907. He also studied Indology and Iranistics at the universities of Oxford and Bonn. 1918 he habilitated in the field of classical philology and ancient Indian philology, in 1924 appointed Extraordinary Professor and in 1930 appointed Professor at Charles University. Lesný went on two study trips to India, in the years 1945 to 1952 he was a director of the Oriental Institute in Prague. He studied central Indian and neo-Indian languages, Persian and Romani. He dealt with the oldest form of Buddhism, translated from the Sanskrit, Pali and Bengali languages (especially his personal friend R. Thakur works). Lesný is an author of a number of popular scientific works, monographs and other writings.

²⁵ Otakar Pertold (21 March 1884 – 3 May 1965) a Czech religious scholar and Orientalist, Indologist, an expert on Indian religions. In the years 1902-1907 he studied at Charles University, appointed Associate professor in 1919, in 1927 Extraordinary Professor and in 1934 Professor of Comparative Religious Studies at Charles University. From 1920 to 1923 Pertold held the office of the Czechoslovak consul in Mumbai, India. From 1953 he headed the Department of ethnography at Philosophical Faculty of Charles University. An author of numerous philological works, travel books and numerous studies and synthesizing works in the field of comparative religious studies. Translated from Bengali, Tamil, Burmese and Pali languages.

²⁶ State District Archive in Zlín, Baťa a. s. (Baťa, Public Limited Company), II/8, k. 160, inv. no. 160.

*Naval vessels of the Baťa Shoe Factory - The S/S Morava and The S/S Little Evy*²⁷

In the first half of October 1932, the representatives of The Baťa Shoe Factory in Marseille purchased a vessel *the Kouroussa* from the company Fabre Lines for 420,000 French francs, paid upon signing the contract. *The Kouroussa*, a great steamship built in/by the largest shipyard in Hamburg's Reiherst's Schiffswerke in 1911 under the name *the Lulu Bohlen*, was originally used to transport goods to the German colonies in Africa. After the end of World War II the ship went to the French party under the war reparations, was renamed *the Kouroussa* and it transported passengers and freight between southern France and the northern coast of Africa.²⁸

At the time of its purchase by The Baťa Shoe Factory the vessel's length was 100.72 m, the width 13.40 m and the height 7.06 m. Its tonnage was 3 510.55 BRT. However, before the ship set sail on its maiden voyage, it had to undergo technical and safety tests in the port of Marseille. Based on the result it was assigned "a class", which set the amount of insurance and transportation fee. The higher the class, the higher the transportation charges for foreign companies' goods transport.²⁹ Meanwhile a hired crew from the Czechoslovak vessel *the Legion* led by an experienced captain Václav

²⁷ Acronym S/S means a steamer (steamship) with screw propellers (screw-driven steamship).

²⁸ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 79, inv. no. 999. *Kouroussa*, for example, regularly transported soldiers of the Foreign Legion from Marseille to African Oran.

²⁹ Zlín – Wednesday, 23 October 1932. The ship was towed to the floating dock, lifted above the surface, experts inspected the hull, ship cranes, wire ropes, anchors and the steam engine. All deficiencies had to be removed and the repaired parts were re-painted with a protective waterproof coating.

Woseček³⁰ arrived in Marseille to board *the Kouroussa*. Having passed the tests, on November 5th 1932 the captain filed a request for recognition of the Czechoslovak flag right at the Czechoslovak consulate in Marseille. After the ship was cleared from the French ship register, the consulate approved the request and the ship was temporarily granted the right to the Czechoslovak flag by the Interim certificate no. 7209/32, issued 7th November 1932.³¹ Subsequently the owner of the ship, The Bat'a Shoe Company agreed with the Hamburg company Spedition Rapid to represent the Zlín headquarters in communication with port authorities.

When *the Kouroussa* was awarded the Czechoslovak flag right, the sailors began to load the goods. On Armistice Day, November 11th 1932, the ship sailed from Marseille and on its way to Gdynia it gradually distributed the transported goods in Antwerp, Hamburg, Malmö, Norrköping and Stockholm. At the end it docked in Gdynia where it delivered 900 tons of rubber and leather.

³⁰ Václav Woseček (after 1935 changed his name to Voseček) born 26 September 1882 in Hořice. Before the World War I. he served as Imperial and Royal navy pilot, during the war he was shot down and captured, but escaped from captivity. After the war he became a merchant ship captain on the Czechoslovak vessel *Legion*, where he served until 1933. In the same year he took over command of the ship *Morava*. Woseček died in December 1969. Jindřich Marek, 'Život na tři romány. In memoriam Václav Woseček (Enough life for three novels. In memoriam of Václav Woseček)', *Přísně tajné! Non-fiction*, No. 6 (2004), 41-56.

³¹ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 79, inv. no. 999. According to the aforementioned Act on the national flag and naval vessel register of 1920, to gain the national flag right the operator or the representative had to file an application with the navigation authority, The Czechoslovak Nautical Office. At the same time the ship could not be registered in a foreign maritime register. The Czechoslovak nationality of the ship and its flag right was confirmed by the Czechoslovak Nautical Office by issuing a ship certificate. In urgent cases the Czechoslovak consulate was allowed to issue an Interim Certificate with limited validity of up to one year.

Table 3. The crew of the Kouroussa en route from Marseille to Gdynia.³²

name surname	date of birth	home affiliation	Naval ID	
			No.	issued
Benda Klement	23.11.1909	Praha	370	21.5.1927
Zajíc Břetislav	15.5.1882	Bělá (Semily)	285	14.4.1926
Munzar Václav	20.5.1898	Mžany (Hr. Král.)	54	27.10.1923
Pilný Karel	1.10.1902	Stod	516	6.5.1929
Burian Jan	16.10.1914	Výprachtice	479	19.11.1928
Dostál Karel	8.8.1903	Heřmanec	508	2.4.1929
Frey Jakub	8.6.1906	Postřekov	251	8.10.1925
Lukesle Václav Jiří	28.2.1893	Pardubice	252	14.10.1925
Zaňka Rudolf	2.2.1901	Kostelec n. Oslavou	586	25.3.1930
Tomandl Jaroslav	1.12.1910	Domažlice	610	10.6.1930
Resler Josef	14.5.1899	Výprachtice	391	21.7.1927
Burian Jan	17.9.1884	Výprachtice	16	24.10.1922
Kania Bohumil	23.9.1905	Lázy	557	19.10.1929
Klos Bohumil	9.2.1904	Bílovec	321	16.9.1926

³² The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 79, inv. no. 999. The crew list is not complete. The ship's captain had to take on a few assistant seamen, foreigners, who are not listed in the table. In addition, a few of the crew member sailed with Naval IDs, which had expired.

Hradil František	10.11.1898	Holešov	256	29.10.1925
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In November the final preparations for the expedition to India took place in Zlín. Sixty experienced salesmen, shop managers and fixers from Baťa's shops were selected. They underwent thorough medical examinations, attended lectures on protection against tropical diseases and prepared for the journey. However the date originally set for late November for the ship to leave Gdynia was postponed.³³ In Gdynia the representatives of The Baťa Shoe Factory *the Kouroussa* was renamed and christen *the Morava* on 9th December and under this new name the vessel went on a short cruise to Malmö, carrying pomace. It was delayed in Sweden for several days due to dense fog and thus did not return to Gdynia in time. For this reason the planned departure to the Orient on December 15th was postponed to December 23rd. Upon its return Gdynia on December 15th certain unspecified technical problems were detected requiring repairs and yet another postponement of the departure to December 28th. All these delays resulted in changing the originally planned route. *The Morava* was not to circumnavigate Africa anymore, but should sail through the Suez Canal instead, which would make up for the time lost and ensure its arrival in India in the spring of 1933, as originally planned.³⁴

³³ Zlín – Friday, 11 November 1932.

³⁴ State District Archive in Zlín, Baťa a. s. (Baťa, Public Limited Company), II/8, k. 161, inv. no. 161.

During the Christmas season, the ship was ready for its voyage. On Christmas Eve, the crew loaded 1,500 tons of coal, and three days later the sailors began to load the goods that should be transported to India. The loading was not finished until the next day, meanwhile, an expedition of sixty Baťa workers arrived to India after a twenty-hour journey from Zlín ready for their next voyage. On departure from Zlín one of the directors of the company Dominik Čipera reminded them that: *“We are not travellers, we are shoe salesmen. We make out living producing and selling shoes and people do not expect any less from you. This is not a journey of discovery, but a business journey. You are not going on a fun trip. You will be over 7 weeks at sea and it is therefore reasonable for you to use this considerable amount time wisely. In order to sell shoes, you must be able to communicate with people. Philologists found that 350 words is enough for a person to talk in English about everything. We do not see any difference between young and old men, we only see men. Some of them are men at eighteen, and others not at sixty.”*³⁵ The passengers had a rigorous daily schedule; getting up at six o'clock, then exercising in the open air, from seven to eight o'clock breakfast was served, between eight and twelve English was taught, reading English newspapers and conversation. A one hour lunch break was followed by a personal time off from 1 to 2 pm. After that English conversation was practiced until 6 pm. For the first three weeks it was taught via textbooks, the other five weeks via written business

³⁵ State District Archive in Zlín, Baťa a. s. (Baťa, Public Limited Company), II/8, k. 161, inv. no. 161.

instructions titled “The Path to 100%.” Dinner was served between 7 and 8 pm before and before and after it there was an hour of personal free time. The curfew was ordered at 9 pm. In order to practice their English an experimental shop and shoe repair shop were built on board. However during port stopovers it would provide its services to all visitors to the port. The knowledge of English was evaluated by teachers, who were paid according to the level of knowledge of their pupils. Those passengers, who at the end of the journey scored more than three Fs, were not allowed to leave the ship, and were dismissed upon their return to Zlín for incompetency.

Impromptu renaming of the vessel *Kouroussa* to *Morava* on December 9th 1932 had its consequences. The representatives of the ship owner did not report the renaming to the Czechoslovak shipping authority which was the sole authority to approve of the process renaming. The vessel sailing under the name *Morava* did not possess valid shipping documents, as the interim documentation was issued in the original name *Kouroussa*. For operation without valid documents and the use of the Czechoslovak nautical flag the vessel operator risked significant financial penalties, detention of the ship in port or refusal of assistance.³⁶ On December 20th a company representative appealed to the Ministry of Public Works for a radio transmission licence for the vessel

³⁶ According to § 37 of Act no. 316 of 1920, On the national flag right and the register of naval vessels “... the shipping authority (the Czechoslovak Nautical Office) is to charge monetary penalties: 1. up to one quarter of the general value of the ship in question that is in possession of a person who illegally operates the ship under the Czechoslovak flag internationally without a naval certificate or interim certificate...”.

Morava. The Ministry approved however warned that a ship with this name was unknown and currently unregistered with the Czechoslovak Nautical Office.³⁷ In early January 1933 an employee at Department of Transportation of the Baťa Shoe Factory Josef Zelinka, Eng. sent a telegram to the Nautical Office informing the authority about the renaming. The authority showed leniency, decided not to detain the ship in port and complicate its next voyage and issued The Interim certificate for the vessel *Morava* on 5th January 1933 valid to April 5th 1933.

For its long passage to Southeast Asia, Václav Woseček was appointed as the captain of *Morava* along with Václav Lukesle as the Chief Officer, Jakub Frey as II. Officer and Bohumil Klos as III. Officer. On the departure day from Gdynia the crew consisted of 33 members, but the number of seafarers changed during the way. On 20th January there were 40 crew members and in March four more.³⁸ The seafarers on board

³⁷ In this case, certain ignorance and inexperience of the Baťa workers with shipping became obvious. The Czechoslovak Nautical Office pointed to their incompetence several times in their documents and demanded redress. The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 79, inv. no. 999: "...*Whole message makes an unfavourable impression due to its confusion and the person sending is clearly not familiar with the matter. It is my duty to report that the Baťa company does not pay sufficient attention to their affairs ...*". Another document states: "*On 4th January, an employee of the Baťa company Mr. Pavel visited the superintendent of our office. ... During this meeting, it was found that Mr. Pavel has no current knowledge of the Act On the national flag and the register, or the Ministry of Trade Regulation no. 170/1912. Therefore, the meeting was rather difficult ...*". In August 1933, another document states: "*With regard to the outcomes ... Cpt. Voseček's request cannot be approved. In order to assist the Baťa Shoe Company, which seems completely ignorant in that matter ...*".

³⁸ The fluctuating number of crew members was caused by the fact that the men, especially those of the crew department, were not hired for the whole voyage, but only for the individual sections. The number of crew members also changed based on the applicable law. For example, the Ministry of Trade Regulation no. 160, from 12.7. 1906, On engineering service on naval steamers of merchant fleets states

were divided into the deck department and the crew department, and each group had its own rights and obligations arising from the employment contracts. The deck department consisted of the captain, other officers, ship machinists, the doctor, an accountant and radiotelegraph operators. The crew was divided into marine, technical and service crew members.

Table 4. *The Morava* crew on January 20th 1933.³⁹

name	rank/position	name	rank/position
Woseček Václav	Captain	Siirak Valdemar	assistant stoker
Lukesle Václav	Chief officer	Smola František	assistant stoker
Frei Jakob	II. officer	Slowinski Felix	assistant stoker
Klos Bohumil	III.officer	Deregowski Leon	assistant stoker
Zajíc Břetislav	Chief engineer	Dvořák Antonín	Chief radio operator
Munzar Václav	II. engineer	Vocásek Ladislav	II. radio operator
Pastyřík František	III. engineer	Výmola Karel	cook
Stiglich Petr	deckman	Thorand Ottho	baker
Benda Klement	sailor	Bílek Josef	mess-boy

that when sailing in the tropics the Chief engineer had to hire an assistant stoker because of high temperatures.

³⁹ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 79, inv. no. 999.

Tomandl Jaroslav	sailor	Zubcki Stanislav	mess-boy
Dostál Karel	sailor	Wieloguzów Adolf	sailor
Pilný Karel	sailor	Miklas Viktor	trainee (élève)
Kania Bohumil	sailor	Kaczan Jan	trainee
Burian Jan	sailor	Kössler František	trainee
Zaňka Rudolf	stoker	Wittig Josef	trainee
Resler Josef	stoker	Karásek Josef	trainee
Ježek Ludvík	stoker	Mečíř Ladislav	storeman
Kos August	stoker	Machač Josef	accountant
Szmidowicz Leon	stoker	Dr. Recht Walter	ship doctor
Hradil František	stoker	Dr. Rehtová Marie	nurse

Fully loaded with goods and passengers *Morava* set sail from Gdynia on 28th December 1932. Shortly before departure two "stowaways" were discovered and made leave the vessel in Gdynia.⁴⁰ Another three were found by the crew completely exhausted a few days later on the way to Antwerp. As they had no valid documentation the port police of Antwerp did not allow them to leave the ship. Against their will they boarded a Polish ship *Premjer*, which transported them back to Gdynia. *Morava* docked

⁴⁰ The term refers to a passenger who did not pay for the trip and is therefore traveling without a valid ticket or documentation.

in Antwerp for five days and after having received the new Interim document issued by the Czechoslovak Nautical Office it continued its journey. Having left Antwerp the crew discovered two more stowaways of a Polish nationality. They had been on board since Gdynia. However after they provided valid identification documents, the captain discovered that they are experienced sailors and they were taken on as crew members.⁴¹

Morava reached the first non-European port of Algiers on 15th January. At the end of the month while docked at Port Said, the vessel was visited by the main representatives of the company, namely J. A. Baťa and Hugo Vavrečka who tested the knowledge of English in the passengers.⁴² *Morava* then sailed through the Suez Canal, for which the sum of over one hundred thousand Czech crowns was paid and on February 24th it arrived in Calcutta, where it unloaded most of its cargo designated as equipment of a factory in Konnagar near Calcutta. Max Heller, a participant in the expedition, recalls: *“In Calcutta port, the vessel got rid of most of its cargo, either of living or material property. Hundreds of pairs of shoes were unloaded, except for machinery intended for a factory in Konnagar near Calcutta, which is now under construction. We also parted ways with a large number of young men from Zlín who are to work in Konnagar in workshops and offices. ... In contrast, a huge relief was felt as we hauled off a 180-ton vulcanising boiler aim to Konnagar. Throughout the journey it was necessary to make sure that its water tank is well balanced. In addition its iron*

⁴¹ State District Archive in Zlín, Baťa a. s. (Baťa, Public Limited Company), II/8, k. 162, inv. no. 162.

⁴² Zlín – Friday, 10 February 1933.

*mass was disrupting the compass. Now we are rid of it. We are now travelling down the river Hoogli to Konnagar, located 20 km ahead of us.*⁴³ Having unloaded the cargo in Calcutta *Morava* sailed to Medan and Malacca, where it picked up over 1,000 tons of rubber. Another 3,000 tons was loaded on March 22nd in Batavia, Java, (present-day Jakarta). Fully loaded it sailed to its farthest destination, Saigon, where it docked on March 27th and dropped off "*goods of other companies*", especially iron from Western Europe, which partially settled the cost of the journey.

A day later, *Morava* loaded with rubber was on its way to Europe. On the way it stopped in Singapore, Malacca and Colombo in Ceylon, where 18 young men of Indian nationality boarded. There were attending the Bat'a's School of Work in Zlín, to acquire adequate education and manage future subsidiaries of the Bat'a Shoe Factories in India.

Exotic animals for the Zlín Zoo were transported on board in Colombo, especially brightly coloured parrots, monkeys and mongoose.⁴⁴ After embarkation *Morava* sailed through the Suez Canal, Port Said to the Romanian port of Galati, where on 15th May 1934 *Morava* successfully concluded its long voyage. In Galati all the passengers disembarked and the crew gradually unloaded the 4000 tonnes of crude rubber, which was then transported along Danube, via Bratislava to Zlín by the

⁴³ Zlín – Wednesday, 12 April 1933.

⁴⁴ Zlín – Wednesday, 14 June 1933.

Czechoslovak Steamboat Company. *Morava* loaded 4,000 tons of grain and sailed from Galati to Rotterdam.⁴⁵

The whole voyage of the vessel *Morava* was carefully monitored by the Zlín company management. News from the ship was dispatched via the radiotelegraph station. Also a journalist Max Heller travelled on board and a detailed report was published every week in Zlín and national press. In a Zlín newspaper, another journalist Stanislav Jandík published several memoirs of one of the footwear retailers of the journey from Gdynia to Port Said. During its journey of 138 days *Morava* navigated 48,000 km. It sailed through nine seas and stopped in seventeen ports. For propulsion it consumed 3,228 tons of coal and 3,285 tons of fresh water for steam boiler cooling and for the needs of the crew.⁴⁶

However, not everything was always ideal as evidenced by the memories of a sailor Jan Burian, who recalls: *“The whole journey was very long and tiring, the diet lacked in quality, so the sickness rate began to rise in the Tropics, especially in stokers and coal feeders. These worked in very harsh conditions. For that matter, every day two of the deck crew had to help out supplying coal into the boiler room. In Saigon (today's Ho Chi Minh City), we completed unloading and got ready for the return trip. In*

⁴⁵ Zlín – Friday, 19 May 1933; Ivan Jakubec, ‘Firma Baťa a její pojetí vnějšího logistického zázemí v meziválečném období (The Baťa Company and its concept of external logistics facilities in the interwar period)’, in Marek Tomašík, eds., *Tomáš Baťa. Doba a společnost (Time and Society)* (Brno, 2007), 194-195.

⁴⁶ Zlín – Friday, 2 June 1933. Contrary to previous assumptions the ship consumed 522 tons of coal less.

*Singapore we loaded rubber and in Mumbai goatskin and about 80 young Indian men from well-off families, who were to train in Zlín for higher positions in the Indian shoe industry. After a perilous voyage when the ship reached only 5 miles an hour we unloaded in Galatz and Braile in Romania. Then we transported cement (I do not remember where we loaded it) to Turkey and from there we went to transport sulphur in Rotterdam where finished the voyage and where the ship was perhaps sold with cargo.*⁴⁷ On the way back there was yet another annoyance. When anchoring in Malacca, on the morning April 6th 1933, a greaser František Smola left the ship without permission and did not return. Therefore, he was considered a deserter, which the captain Woseček duly reported to the Czechoslovak shipping authority on 19th June. Clothing and an amount of 79.50 Czech crowns, which Smola left behind, was later donated to the local Salvation Army by the Consulate in Rotterdam.⁴⁸

Table 5. Ports visited by *Morava* en route to Southeast Asia.

Gdynia - Saigon	Saigon - Galati
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⁴⁷ Memoirs available online <http://www.namorniplavba.cz/cnp/364.html> [30 May 2014]. In his memoirs Jan Burian presents several inaccuracies. On the way back the vessel did not stop in Mumbai, on its way from Galati it did not transport cement, but grain and after returning to Rotterdam the ship was not sold immediately sold, but carried out at least two more trips. Also archival sources speak only about 18 (in some cases only 17) Indians, who were brought to Europe by the vessel.

⁴⁸ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 79, inv. no. 999. František Smola left on the boat: a provisional passport valid until 2nd September 1933, his naval ID, a pay book of S/S *Morava*, a canvas knapsack, a hat, a pair of long stockings, three handkerchiefs, an overcoat, a scarf, a pair of gloves, two pairs of shoes, sandals, clogs, neckerchief, two towels, two shirts, swimwear, two pair of trousers and a beret, a silk shirt, a German-Czech dictionary, a pack of envelopes, a book of Verse for postcards, a hair net, two ties, a wooden inkwell, a pair of wool socks and a pocket knife. All these items were rather worn out.

port	arrival
Antwerp	2.1.1933
Algiers	15.1.1933
Port Said	25.1.1933
Suez	27.1.1933
Bombay	10.2.1933
Kolkata	24.2.1933
Medan	14.3.1933
Malacca	March 1933
Singapore	16.3.1933
Batavia	22.3.1933
Saigon	27.3.1933

port	arrival
Singapore	April 1933
Malacca	6.4.1933
Colombo	April 1933
Suez	May 1933
Port Said	May 1933
Galati	15.5.1933

The Czechoslovak flag right for the vessel *Morava* was granted by the Czechoslovak Nautical Office on March 14th 1933, at a time when *Morava* anchored in Medan. The authority approved of the ship's certificate to freight transport, which should have been done immediately after the registration of the ship at the Commercial Court in Prague into the Register of naval vessels. At the same time the company was warned about the approaching expiration of the Interim certificate of *Morava*, expiring on April 5th. The Nautical Office recommended that an entry in the naval vessel register be made promptly so that the Interim certificate could be renewed at any of the

Czechoslovak consulates. However, The Baťa Company applied for freight and passenger transportation, which the office rejected on the grounds that the vessel was unfit for passenger transport. In late March, a representative of The Baťa Shoe Factory sent a new application for a vessel certificate for the transport of persons, as the company was planning to send *Morava* as a passenger ship to North America in June 1933. 150 passengers were to board the ship and be housed in the newly refurbished cabins; 60 people would lodge in double cabins, 90 people would be placed in collective booths. However the Czechoslovak Nautical authority rejected the request, rightly arguing that according to the boat plan there are only three cabins on the vessel accommodating nine passengers at most. In May, the company personnel updated the boat plan including built-in wooden partitions, fitted in before the journey to India that served as cabins for Baťa employees during the trip. Rebuilding of the extensive ship hospital, an abolition of the corporate shop and canteen provided the needed additional space for passengers. The company representatives finally proved sufficient capacity for 127 passengers regarding the cabins and lifeboats so that the Czechoslovak Nautical Office issued an admission certificate for both, freight and passenger traffic, on August 4th. As a result *Morava* could officially transport 127 passengers and 38 crew members, i.e. the total of 166 people.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 79, inv. no. 999.

Meanwhile, on April 5th 1933, the Interim certificate of the ship *Morava* expired, which was pointed out on June 19th by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The investigation revealed that the ship was last attended to by the Czechoslovak consulate in Batavia on 23rd March 1933. Since then neither the ship's captain nor the Baťa Company representative communicated with any shipping authority or consulate office regarding the extension of the Interim certificate. As the postal service from the Malay Archipelago took up to a month, there was no doubt *“that the company Baťa did not pay sufficient attention to their obligations and their utterly inadequate care of own marine affairs severely hampers the smooth handling of maritime administration of the local authority. Due to absence of any reports we deem that the vessel Morava has been sailing for more than two months without a valid Interim certificate, which triggered the need to press charges against The Company Baťa on the basis of § 4 and 37 section 1 for misdemeanour against the Flag Act No. 316/1920 punishable up to one quarter of the general value of the ship.”*⁵⁰

A day later, June 20th, the Consulate in Rotterdam suggested that the ship be detained in the port in which it planned to arrive, assuming that the ship did not produce a valid certificate. The proposal was sent to the Czechoslovak shipping authority, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as well as consulates in Antwerp and Poznan. The same day *Morava* sailed to Antwerp. On June 23rd a representative of the

⁵⁰ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 79, inv. no. 999.

Department of transport of The Baťa Company provided the Czechoslovak Nautical Office with an explanation. The company did not apply for a renewal in the Register of naval vessels as they were applying a Certificate for freight and personal transport. The company was promised to receive the certificate three times (21st April, 15th May, 10th June) as soon as the Czechoslovak Nautical Office receives information about the number of lifeboats and jackets on the ship *Morava*, which the captain Woseček allegedly sent on 12th June. The company had rightly been expecting the final approval of ship certificate extended to passenger transport. The company demonstrated sufficient lifeboat capacity of 296 persons and therefore the Czechoslovak Nautical Office agreed to issue the ship's Certificate (Admission certificate), based on the cabin specification for passenger and freight traffic and ship was officially allowed to embark up to 127 passengers. The copy of the Admission certificate was received in early August 1933.

As I mentioned earlier, in May 1933, *Morava* docked in the Romanian port of Galati, where it loaded grain and imported it into Rotterdam in June. The shipowner had been meaning for *Morava* to transport freight goods to South America,⁵¹ and for passenger traffic to North America,⁵² but neither of these ideas saw their implementation. *Morava* made at least two trips on the route Rotterdam - Galati -

⁵¹ State District Archive in Zlín, Baťa a. s. (Baťa, Public Limited Company), II/8, k. 162, inv. no. 162.

⁵² The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 79, inv. no. 999.

Rotterdam, carrying iron from Rotterdam to Galati and grain on the return journey. Truth be told, The Bat'a Shoe Company, or its representative Rapid Spedition, could not find use for a vessel of its size, so in October 1933 they consented to sell *Morava*. A suitable buyer was not found until the end of the year. Via an agency C.G. Ashdown London the ship was bought by a shipowner Young from Hong Kong for the sum of £ 7,300 on January 3rd 1934. In early February, The Bat'a Shoe Company filed a request with the Czechoslovak Nautical Office to revoke the Czechoslovak flag right of the ship *Morava*. The request was granted February 20th 1934 and *Morava* was erased from the Register naval vessels.

Morava naval officer Jakub Frey looks back on his service: *"I remember docking in the port of Antwerp. It was necessary to fix the boilers as they leaked. The crew went home on leave and I was left there alone. The boilers had been already leaking when Morava was purchased. I knew about it because I followed the logbooks and found that the ship had excessive water consumption and that the cause can only be in poor condition of the boilers. I was the chief engineer officer, but he decided not to report it as the purchase would fall through eventually and we would without a job again. And so we cruised the seas with leaky boilers. Then it became necessary to repair them. It was in the times of crisis, and the port was full of seafarers in between jobs. I took advantage of the situation and offered them accommodation on board, good food and pocket money if they help repair the ship. Enough people signed up. We*

managed to put Morava in such a shape that even after another year of service, in 1933, the company received CZK 850,000 for it. About half a million more than what they bought it for. Morava was sold because it was too large and its operation was not profitable. The company did not have enough work for it. In a factory, for example, 12,000 tons of rubber were consumed annually and we were able to bring 5,000 tons in one load.”⁵³

Table 6. *Morava* itinerary in the service of The Bat’a Shoe Company.

Route no.	port		date		cargo
	start	end	departure	arrival	
1.	Marseille	Gdynia	11.11.1932	6.12.1932	rubber, leather
2.	Gdynia	Malmö	December 1932	December 1932	pomace
3.	Malmö	Gdynia	December 1932	15.12.1932	?
4.	Gdynia	Saigon	29.12.1932	27.3.1933	shoes, machinery
5.	Saigon	Galati	28.3.1933	15.5.1933	rubber, leather
6.	Galati	Rotterdam	21.5.1933	17.6.1933	grain
7.	Rotterdam	Antwerp	20.6.1933	June 1933	?
8.	Antwerp	Galati	June/July 1933	July 1933	?
9.	Galati	Rotterdam	July 1933	July/August 1933	grain

⁵³ Memoirs available online <http://www.namorniplavba.cz/cnp/364.html> [30 May 2014].

10.	Rotterdam	Antwerp	August 1933	August 1933	?
11.	Antwerp	Galati	5.8.1933	3.9.1933	iron, grain
12.	Galati	Rotterdam	5.9.1933	6.10.1933	grain
13.	Rotterdam	Antwerp	12.11.1933	November 1933	?

S/S Little Evy

Due to the already mentioned study trip of J.A. Baťa and Hugo Vavrečka in the summer of 1932 around North German ports, The Baťa Shoe Company bought a naval vessel *Little Evy* from a Dutch shipping company on 22nd September 1932.⁵⁴ The ship's entry in the Registry of naval vessels reads that *Little Evy* was built in 1918 in the shipyard Internationale Scheeps Bouw Mij de Maag in Slikkerveer near Rotterdam under the name *Uslan*. The ship, which was 47.25 meters long, 7.66 meters wide and 3.24 meters high with total tonnage of 461.12 BRT, and over the years it bore the names *Orpen* and *Mona*. Prague became its port of registry (home port) but the vessel docked in Gdynia.⁵⁵ The company purchased *Little Evy* for the purpose of large coastal cruises in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, where it would transport goods and raw materials for the Zlín factory between the ports of Hamburg, Gdynia, Gdansk and Königsberg

⁵⁴ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 82, inv. no. 1027.

⁵⁵ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 82, inv. no. 1029.

(today's Kaliningrad). From the ports the raw materials were transported further inland by rail as the company had negotiated better railway tariffs on Polish railways than from Hamburg, where the goods were dropped off by ocean vessels. Representatives of the shipowner, The Baťa Shoe company, was a company Spedition Rapid G. m.b H. in Hamburg, and a company Rummel Burton in Gdynia and Gdansk. Both were intended to making full use of the ship and take care of the workload on trip. Also, they were to serve as the intermediary of communication between the Zlín headquarters and port authorities.⁵⁶

On November 23rd 1932 the Czechoslovak Nautical Office approved of a Dutch K. P. Kwak as captain of *Little Evy* and the vessel was also provisionally entitled to the Czechoslovak naval flag, without which it could not sail out of the harbour. However, both documents only stayed in force for three months. Having obtained all the necessary documents, the ship, fully loaded and with thirteen crew members, set sail from Hamburg to Gdynia on its first journey under the Czechoslovakian flag. This journey took three days. In early December 1932, *Little Evy* with its Dutch crew sailed back from Gdynia to Hamburg, where it docked. Two days later, *"the Dutch captain Kwack handed command of the vessel over to the newly appointed captain Wurdack, whereupon the Dutch crew, except for its II. Officer van Beieren, left the ship, in a*

⁵⁶ Karel Raba, 'Naděje a ztroskotání čs. námořní plavby za první republiky (Hopes and failure of the Czechoslovak maritime transport in the First Republic)', *Dějiny a současnost*, 4, No. 8 (1962), 17.

rather dirty condition.⁵⁷ The Dutch crew was given a regular notice and a new crew, composed primarily of Czechoslovak nationals, took over.⁵⁸ The commander of the ship was Vilém Wurdack, a native of Bukovce near Pilsen, and from this moment the ship service affairs were conducted under the existing Czechoslovak legislation, and rules and regulations of the Czechoslovak Nautical Office.

Table 7. The Dutch Crew of *Little Evy* from 23 November to 4 December 1932.⁵⁹

Name	Name	Place of living	Citizenship	Monthly pay
K. P. Kwak	Captain	Rotterdam	Dutch	300 HFL
Kosi van der Gerrit H.	Chief officer	Oestglest	Dutch	195 HFL
Beyeren Bergen van Bertus	II. office	Rotterdam	Dutch	115 HFL
Barendregt Johan Cornelis	I. chief engineer	Rotterdam	Dutch	230 HFL
Groen Marinus	II. engineer	Rotterdam	Dutch	175 HFL
Mark Gerrit van der	cook	Katwijk	Dutch	118,50 HFL
Kaapaan Willem Frederick	steward	Leiden	Dutch	30 HFL

⁵⁷ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, inv. no. 119.

⁵⁸ The new crew consisted primarily of Czechoslovak nationals. The engineering positions were occupied by Josef Hanák and Anton Zawadsky, the position of deckman by Karel Veselý and Jan Vachuta, stokers Hugo Loos and Oldřich Šlais. It cannot be said that it was a purely Czechoslovak crew. As early as December 6th 1932, the cook Bohumil Čabelka was replaced by a German, Gustav Wilhelm Friedrich Scharlau, and on 12th December two Polish stokers, Josef Machniak and Alexander Olszewski were hired.

⁵⁹ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 82, inv. no. 1027.

Breider Gerrit	deckman	Rotterdam	Dutch	91 HFL
Kessel Antonius van	deckman	Rotterdam	Dutch	91 HFL
Nohl Wilhewlm Johannes	deckman	Rotterdam	Dutch	50 HFL
Been Nicolaas	deckman	Rotterdam	Dutch	50 HFL
Breve Hubertus Bernardus	stoker	Rotterdam	Dutch	95,50 HFL
Fink Frant	stoker	Rotterdam	Austrian	95,50 HFL

After hiring a new crew and embarkation of 520 tons of raw hides and rubber, *Little Evy* sailed from Hamburg to Gdynia on 6th December arriving on 12th December. Upon unloading it went to Gdansk, from where it started its return trip to Hamburg on 14th December. During this journey the captain Wurdack fell seriously ill and on December 15th he was rushed to hospital in Kiel. The command of the ship was naturally passed on to the Chief officer Bertus von Beyeren-Bergen and his position was taken by a German national Rudolf Max Willi Höfke.⁶⁰

In early January 1933 the Czechoslovak Nautical Office reminded the Baťa company to file an application for a certificate renewal for *Little Evy*. At the same time, the authority complained that “*attempts to settle these matters are often thwarted as the ship, taken over from the Dutch, now runs continuously between Hamburg and Gdynia*

⁶⁰ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 82, inv. no. 1027.

and unless the business interests of the company are to be extensively damaged, it will not always be possible to deal with all matters in Hamburg. The general consulate and all statutory and governmental regulations suggest otherwise. The ship dwells in the local port always only a short time to load new goods. It would be highly beneficial for definite arrangement of conditions, both on the ship itself, and among the crew, if the Baťa company urgently required a ship certificate and then if the Czechoslovak Nautical Office provided the Baťa Company as well as the local authority with all instructions necessary for the operation of the ship ...”

Table 8. The *Little Evy* crew on 20th December 1932.⁶¹

No.	Name	Rank	Nationality
1	Beyeren-Bergen van Bertus	Captain	Dutch
2	Höfke Rudolf Max Willi	I. Chief officer	German
3	Hanák Josef	I. Chief engineer	Czechoslovak
4	Jílovský Otto	II. engineer	Czechoslovak
5	Veselý Jan	deckman	Czechoslovak
6	Vachuta Jan	deckman	Czechoslovak
7	Scholz Albert	deckman	Czechoslovak

⁶¹ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 82, inv. no. 1027.

8	Nedvěd Jaroslav	deckman	Czechoslovak
9	Loos Hugo	stoker	Czechoslovak
10	Michniak Josef	stoker	Polish
11	Olszewski Alexander	stoker	Polish
12	Saeger Hans Julius	steward	German
13	Scharlau Gustav	cook	German

Under the command of captain Beyeren-Bergen the ship carried out regular trips en route Hamburg - Gdynia - Hamburg. A considerable number of short trips resulted in great variability of the crew, whose number was set to thirteen men by default. In the first two months of 1933, fourteen new sailors were taken on, of whom eight were of Czechoslovak nationality, four were German, one Lithuanian and one Polish. Perhaps because of such variability ethnic strifes emerged which often resulted in dismissal from the service. This happened on February 19th 1933 to the I. chief officer Höfke who was dismissed *"for differences arising between him and the men."* Ethnic strifes were also solved by the Czechoslovak Nautical Office who advocated the positions on the ship to be held by Czechoslovak nationals. At the request of The Baťa Company the Czechoslovak Nautical Office provided a list of potential Czechoslovak sailors who qualified for the positions of captain, Chief officer, Chief engineer, II. engineer and radiotelegraph operators because *"... it is in the interest of things that the crew positions*

*on Little Evy were finally occupied by Czechoslovak nationals. As experience teaches having German nationals in the leading positions did not prove to be productive.”*⁶² It is therefore possible that the urgency of the situation called for the vacant position of Chief Officer to be occupied by a German national Heinrich Putz. However, Chief engineer Josef Hanák “did not see eye to eye” with him and three days after Putz’s appointment Hanák resigned.

The escalated situation calmed down with re-emergence of captain Vilém Wurdack on April 25th 1933, who recalls: *“I had the misfortune of having to let go the engineer Mr. Medek, as on the day of departure when sent on an official errand he got drunk and the whole ship ready to departure (with the pilot and a representative of The Baťa Company on board) had to wait for him.. For the time being I have to keep a Polish engineer Grühwirt. I also dismissed the Chief officer, a Dutchman, as during the first four days the man was not sober for a moment. Let’s just say that the overall situation on board was rather strange while I was off sick.”* The Consulate General in Hamburg noticed the improvement of the situation and informed the Czechoslovak Nautical authority as follows *“the personal and service conditions on the ship gradually*

⁶² The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 82, inv. no. 1029. They were mainly fresh graduates of maritime academies in Kotor or Bakar in Dalmatia, the office also featured former sailors from the vessel *Legion*. For example, Bedřich Frühwirt was recommended for the commanding position of the ship – a former Chief officer on the *Legion*, Jindřich Durda, a former III. officer of *the Legion* was listed for the position of the Chief officer as well as Jan Béba, a former II. officer of *the Legion*.

came to a rest, so it seems that its future operating under the command of captain Wurdack will be meeting the sailing instructions as recommended several times in the past. The vessel now makes regular trips, as scheduled and announced by a company Rapid Hamburg, i.e. every 10 days it goes on a proper business trip between Hamburg and Gdynia and back. As has already been stated, the personal situation among the crew is now safe to call almost stabilised ...”. Meanwhile, on 29th May 1933 the Czechoslovak Nautical Office issued the admission certificate for *Little Evy* and it was finally granted the Czechoslovak flag right.⁶³

The truce among the crew, however, ended in September 1933, when the personnel fluctuation began again. The Consulate General in Hamburg saw the causes of such frequent alternation of staff in service contracts that the Baťa Company representatives did not comply with: *“The shipowner, respectively its representative Rapid Spedition in Hamburg, has not yet submitted the wage agreement, which would clearly define the minimum conditions under which the crew and the officers sign on. The crew works in many cases 16 to 18 hours a day without receiving adequate compensation for overtime work. The employees are asked to confirm in their payrolls that by receiving wage they renounce any claims to be paid for overtime.”* New contracts, approved by the Czechoslovak Nautical Office, were signed in March 1934.

In October 1933, Jakub Frey replaced Vilém Wurdack on the position of the

⁶³ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 82, inv. no. 1029.

captain of *Little Evy*. His first trip as the captain on October 14th was from Hamburg to Gdynia with a total of 235,410 kilograms of goods and to Gdansk with 66,256 kg.⁶⁴

The vessel *Little Evy* transported various goods on the route Hamburg - Gdynia - Hamburg, which was undertaken in regular ten-day intervals. For example, in the first half of 1933 it transported salty skin, raw rubber, bone meal, rye flour, zinc plate, coal, drinking water, barley, jute, tobacco or unspecified loose goods. In the second part of the same year it carried cotton, turpentine oil, sodium hydroxide, water, pork intestines, cotton waste, salted skins, lizard skin, horse leather, crude rubber, nuts, chemicals, sandpaper, talc, copper, honey, rice springs , bamboo, soda, coconut fibre or pig bristles.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 82, inv. no. 1029. Jakub Frey (referred to in some sources as Frei) was born June 8th 1906 in Postřekov, near Domažlice. After passing the graduation exam, he graduated from the Naval Academy in Bakar in 1925. He first worked as a cadet and having passed the examination as an officer on the vessel Legion. After the military service, he was employed by the Baťa Shoe Factories for 16 years. He first served on the ship Morava as an officer (Chief and II. officer). In 1932 Frey passed the captain exams in Kotor and served on the ship Little Evy as the commander. In the years 1935-1938 to Frey purchased raw materials for the Baťa company in Africa, especially in Angola. In 1939 he became the operation manager of the Baťa navigation and irrigation canal. Later he also became the head of the Purchasing department of the company. In 1948 he held the position of the head of Sales department in the state enterprise Moravia, then he worked in Centrolloyd. He was also the head the Czechoslovak Oder Shipping Office in Prague and a purchasing manager of Lidové Družstvo (Public association) Znak in Prague. Since 1952, he helped the newly revived Czechoslovak maritime navigation. Frey commanded a number of ships, worked as a teacher, journalist and translator from Portuguese. He retired in 1966, but worked as a captain until 1978. Frey died on October 23rd 1987 in Prague and according to his wishes he was buried in the sea near Sri Lanka. František Ptáček, *Modré medailonky (Blue medallions): Part One - Věčně živé námořní legendy (Eternal maritime legends)* (Prague 2009), 47-56.

⁶⁵ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, inv. no. 119.

On a night cruise in Kiel Canal on 22nd August 1934, the vessel *Little Evy* collided with a Russian ship *Beresina*. Captain Frey recalls the event as follows: *"I was on duty until midnight, Klos then took over from midnight. The ship was mandatorily navigated by the ship pilot in the Kiel Canal. In the opposite direction, also navigated by the ship pilot, was a Soviet ship Berezina. At that time, the English still used different command. When the Englishman said "starboard" it meant for the ship to go left. When the German said "starboard", it meant for the ship to go right. And it was for those unclear command terms the collision occurred. The ships sailed against each other and apparently the Soviet ship not having encountered other vessels for some time, the pilot, lulled by the calm did not see our lights until the last moment, forget that he gave orders in English. He said "starboard" to the helmsman of Berezina and he turned it exactly to the opposite side than the ship pilot wanted him to. As is often the case in a canal, if the ship does not sail in middle it creates a wall of water by the shore which then pushes the craft to one side at the fore and to the other side at the aft. The vessel actually skids. And this is exactly what happened when the ship pilot wanted to salvage the situation. Berezina turned across the channel. Imagine that it was ten times bigger than us! The pilot sent Klos to hurry and throw out the anchor. He quick-wittedly shouted through the vent pipe down the bow to the sleeping engineering crew who just ran out, and actually saved their lives. After the collision the bow was just a tangle of metal sheets and beds. Nothing much happened to us. Water did not get in any further than to the*

collision bulkhead. The cargo was not damaged either. The court ruled out that the other ship was to blame, so the company received the full damage compensation.”⁶⁶

After the accident, Kiel Maritime Bureau opened an investigation of the incident proving the Russian steamer guilty of the collision. The damaged vessel *Little Evy* first docked in Rendsburg, then tugboats towed it to the docks in the port of Kiel, where The Baťa Company was looking for a buyer. Except for the captain, on September 10th, the crew was let go with the possibility of staying on the ship. A lifeguard František Cibík, a cook Branko Materljan and engineer Jan Doležal accepted the offer, stayed on the ship with accommodation and food, but without salary.⁶⁷

At the beginning of 1935, The Baťa Company found a buyer, hired a new crew and *Little Evy* sailed from Kiel to Rotterdam, where it was handed over to the new French owner. Captain Frey recalls: “... *That was in 1935, when I went with her and the new crew to Rotterdam to hand Little Evy over to new owner. From the old crew, only the cook and an engineer were left, otherwise we had a German crew. They wouldn't give me a German steward, because Hitler was already in power and the Germans could not stand a German serving a captain, who belongs to the inferior Slavic race. It was a sad voyage with a damaged ship. In Rotterdam I lowered our flag and I thought*

⁶⁶ Memoirs available online <http://www.namorniplavba.cz/cnp/364.html> [30 May 2014].

⁶⁷ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 82, inv. no. 1029. Archive materials also mention another “*crash of Little Evy on 21st January 1933*”. However, I was unable to gather enough information. It was very likely a minor accident, which did not cause much damage to the ship.

to myself that it will rise again, once we have a Czechoslovak ship again.”⁶⁸ As already recalled by the captain, on January 24th 1935 *Little Evy* was sold, of which four days later, the company informed the Czechoslovak Nautical Office and the Czechoslovak maritime consulates. As the boat lost the right to the Czechoslovak flag through sale, it was removed from the Czechoslovak Register of Naval Vessels on February 2nd. Czechoslovakia lost its last naval ship, and it took almost 20 years before another one would fly the Czechoslovak national flag.⁶⁹

From November 1932 to January 1935, when *Little Evy* was owned by The Baťa Shoe Company, over hundred crew members of eight different nationalities served on board. Most sailors came from Czechoslovakia and Germany, some crew members were Poles and, mainly at the beginning, Dutch. A few exceptions were an Italian, a Lithuanian, an Austrian and a citizen of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Although the conditions on the ship were regulated by valid service contracts and regulations, some sailors violated these. The violations of law and regulations occasionally resulted in the termination of their employment. For example, in March 1933 Josef Svoboda was let go for smuggling goods, in September it was Heinz Hahs and in April 1934 Richard Kroupa, Jan Račanský and František Chmelař. In June 1933 the Chief officer Johann Otto Putz was dismissed for excessive alcohol consumption, as

⁶⁸ Memoirs available online <http://www.namorniplavba.cz/cnp/364.html> [30 May 2014].

⁶⁹ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 82, inv. no. 1029.

well as the Chief engineer Emil Scheller and a stoker František Stein, who were let go in October.⁷⁰

Table 9. Overview of captains of *Little Evy* in the service of The Baťa Company 1932-1935.⁷¹

No of order	Name	Captain of <i>Little Evy</i>	
		from	to
1.	K. P. Kwak	23.11.1932	6.12.1932
2.	Vilém Wurdack	6.12.1932	15.12.1932
3.	Bertus Bergen – Beyeren	15.12.1932	22.4.1933
4.	Vilém Wurdack	22.4.1933	14.10.1933
5.	Jakub Frey	14.10.1933	28.1.1935

In summary, The Baťa Shoe Factory purchased two maritime cargo ships in 1932. However, the company employees did not have any prior experience with operation of maritime transport and did not familiarise themselves with related legal regulations, which was pointed out by the Czechoslovak Nautical Office several times. The larger vessel *Morava* was originally intended for transport of goods to Southeast

⁷⁰ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 82, inv. no. 1029.

⁷¹ The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 82, inv. no. 1029.

Asia but made only one trip to Asia followed by several raw material transports between European ports. The Baťa Shoe Company, or its representative in Hamburg, Expedition Rapid, failed to arrange for enough business for such a large vessel. Therefore, the company attempted to rebuild the freight vessel for personal transport, but this attempt also failed, partly due to ignorance of the law and *Morava* was sold at the end of 1933, after having been in operation for a mere year. The smaller vessel *Little Evy* was to transport goods on the route Hamburg - Gdynia - Hamburg. However, the whole time it had to face tough competition, especially from Germany, which in the mid-1933 significantly increased. There was rising dissatisfaction among the crew members under the leadership of most captains caused by ethnic disputes or work overload. Also fluctuation of the staff members negatively influenced the atmosphere among the crew. With increasing competition, the number of voyages of *Little Evy* gradually declined. On its last trip, carried out in August 1934, *Little Evy* crashed in the Kiel Canal. The shipowner, The Baťa Shoe Company, managed to sell the damaged vessel at the beginning of the year 1935.

The two-and-a-half-year ownership of naval vessels was a mere episode in the company's development. Even though the ships were entrusted in the hands of experienced seamen the expected results were not accomplished. The disadvantages of operating their own shipping transport were soon discovered by The Baťa Company, after less than a year, in the autumn of 1933. The reasons above eventually led to the

decision to sell both vessels. Without exaggeration, the attempt of The Baťa Shoe Company at their own maritime transport was by far the most important economic endeavour in this area of industry in the 1930s Czechoslovakia, even though its failure to meet its stated goals makes it an unsuccessful one.⁷²

⁷² The National Archive Prague, Československý plavební úřad Praha (Czechoslovak Nautical Office Prague) 1921-1950, k. 82, inv. no. 1029: *As per communication with cpt. Woseček, both ships of the Baťa company are being sold, we shall not investigate the matters specified in the file any further for the time being ...*”.