

BOHUMÍR MENZEL: ANOTHER INFLUENCE ON THE BEGINNING OF THE CZECH MASS IMMIGRATION TO TEXAS?

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to present the relatively unknown personality of Bohumír (Gottfried) Menzel (1798–1879) and connect his writings to the beginning of the Czech mass immigration to Texas. Adopting the thematic and discourse analyses, we can observe that his letters contain positive information on Texas that coincides with the main concerns of Czech society in the 1840s and early 1850s. Therefore, we can assume that his letters were published by the general Czech press and served as an influence for immigration to Texas. Furthermore, the passenger lists also show us that he probably led one of the first groups of migrants to Texas. The main finding of this article is that Menzel was wrongfully omitted by Czech and American historiography and should be put alongside other persons who influenced Czech mass immigration to Texas, Josef Arnošt Bergmann or Josef Lidumil Lešikar.

KEYWORDS: Bohumír (Gottfried) Menzel (1798–1879) – Czech immigration to the US – Texas – Czech Texans – Catholic church

Introduction

In history books on the beginnings of the Czech² mass immigration to Texas (roughly the five years between 1849 and 1853), several persons were encountered that influenced this exodus. Sometimes they are labeled as ‘fathers’. Traditionally, scholars focused on three men who, according to their research, motivated Czechs to cross the Atlantic Ocean and settle in ‘The Lone Star State’. These were Josef Arnošt Bergmann, Josef Lidumil Lešikar, and Vojtěch Mašík. Yet, Bohumír (Gottfried) Menzel (1798–1879) [Fig. 1] is not mentioned amongst them as an influence of Czech immigration to Texas. He is a somewhat mysterious figure, especially for American or Texan historiography. In Bohemia, he was regarded as more of a natural scientist and so far, only one article in a regional journal dealt slightly with his American experience.³ Also, scholars from both sides of the Atlantic never shared their information, presumably due to the isolation of Czechoslovakia during the Cold War. Another possibility is that in Texas he was known

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2 The term Czech is used here as an umbrella term representing the language and ethnic groups of Czechs, Moravians, and Czech speaking Silesians. However, around 80 % of Czechs in Texas were of Moravian descent and, therefore, the terms ‘Bohemians and Moravians’ refer to the regional identities.

3 Anděl 1993, pp. 4–24. Menzel himself wrote an autobiography edited and annotated by his friend Julius Helbig: Menzel and Helbig 1893–1894, pp. 75–106. This work served later as a source material for another important biography by Hübler 1905, pp. 3–27.



Fig. 1. Bohumír (Gottfried)
Menzel. Městské muzeum
Frýdlant.

as Bohumír, while in Bohemia, he was known by his Germanised first name Gottfried. Therefore, he may have been thought of as two different individuals. Whatever the case may be, the personality of Menzel is surrounded by mystery. The American narrative, for instance, interprets his story in Texas as follows:

He arrived in 1840 along with a group of German settlers which included a few Czech families. The group went to New Braunfels and Fredericksburg where Menzl [sic!] served Catholic inhabitants and taught in the school. Menzl also served Catholic settlers in the Castroville and D'Hannis areas. His knowledge of medicine helped not only the European settlers but the Indians, who looked upon him as a benefactor. In 1856, Menzl returned to his hometown of Frýdlant, Bohemia, and died soon after.⁴

Other sources also add information about him erecting a cross near Fredericksburg.⁵ This account is not only inaccurate but is also very brief for such an important character, especially when the fact that he wrote a lot of material about his stay in America is taken into account.

Therefore, the main goal of this article is to demystify his personality and evaluate his influence in the context of Czech immigration to Texas in the middle of the 19th

4 Machann and Mendl 2001, p. 24.

5 *Naše Dějiny*, 1939, p. 14.

century. The principal aim is to answer the research question whether we can consider Menzel as an influence on the beginnings of the Czech mass immigration to Texas. A thematic analysis⁶ is applied in order to identify principal topics in his writings, especially those translated into Czech,⁷ and to see how they matched the principal reasons why Czechs left the Habsburg monarchy. Another method applied here will be the discourse analysis⁸ to evaluate not just what he wrote, but also how, whether his information invited the migrants to Texas. These primary sources will then be confronted with scholarly literature on Czechs in Texas to put Menzel into the historical context and next to the other influences of Czech migration to Texas.

The three 'traditional' influences

One of these men was Josef Arnošt Bergmann (1797–1877), a Protestant pastor who arrived in Texas in March 1850. He settled down in Cat Spring and started to write letters about his journey and his experiences in this new country to his home. One of these letters was divided into seven parts and published, in late 1851, in the Moravian newspaper *Moravské noviny*. Czech historians agree that it created several centres of emigration, especially amongst Protestants in eastern Bohemia and eastern Moravia,⁹ even though he never used Czech in his preaching as he associated himself with the Germans.

Another pioneer was Josef Lidumil Lešikar (1806–1887), who proclaimed himself a 'father' of Czech immigration to Texas. In his short biography, he claimed to have sent Bergmann's article to the newspaper *Moravské noviny*. Some historians, however, consider his recount as unreliable and raise interesting questions challenging his version of the story.¹⁰ Nevertheless, he organised two groups of settlers from eastern Bohemia for a voyage to America. The first one left in 1851 and he took no part in it because his wife refused to leave her motherland. The second group sailed in 1853 together with Lešikar and his family.¹¹

Texas historians complete this triumvirate with Josef Mašík (1810–1881), the first Czech teacher in the United States of America.¹² The local authorities in Vsetín and Valašské Meziříčí in eastern Moravia considered him as an influential and dangerous person. Mašík was an educated man and after the failed revolution of 1848, he decided to move to America. However, his neighbours in the Vsetín area persuaded him to take them with him and to even write the necessary documents for them. This was considered, by local police, as an act of encouragement of emigration, which was illegal. He even spent several weeks in prison until he was released. Finally, Mašík sailed with other Czech families for Texas in 1854.¹³

6 Braun and Clarke 2022.

7 See section 'His Letters and Other Writings' that deals with his literary production in greater detail.

8 Dijk 2007.

9 Polišínský 1996, p. 30.

10 Chroust 2000, pp. 48–64.

11 Lešikar 1880, p. 179.

12 Maresh and Hudson 1934, p. 172. The authors claim that: 'It has authoritatively established that Josef Mašík was the first Czech teacher in the United States.'

13 Skřivánková 1886, pp. 132–133.

If summed up: they all went to Texas between 1849 and 1854, they wrote a description of Texas that was very inviting,¹⁴ or they organised a group of emigrants and sent them to Texas. Therefore, let us examine the personality of Bohumír Menzel and his actions during his brief sojourn in Texas and conclude whether he could be placed amongst Bergmann, Lešikar, and Mašík.

Priest Menzel, his life, and his sojourn in Texas

Jan Bohumír Menzel was born on 6 June 1798, in Krásný Les, a small village in northern Bohemia, to farmer Antonín Menzel and his wife Magdalena, daughter of Gottfried Geissler and Anna Maria Appelt [Fig. 2].¹⁵ His household was not very wealthy, but their careful economic activities were sufficient to maintain a decent living standard. The family was composed of seven members, as Menzel had two brothers and two sisters; and it can be said that it was one of the most respected families in the community. Antonín was even selected as a *vogt* – the administrative and judicial leader of the territory. Bohumír attended the local school. However, the school lacked quality, and he only learned how to read, write, and count. On the other hand, there he met the local friar Karl Streit, who was responsible for religious education or catechism. He immediately recognised the talents of the young boy and convinced his father to let Bohumír continue his studies at a *gymnasium*.¹⁶ Streit even spent two years between 1812 and 1814 with the prolific apprentice as to prepare the understudy for the necessary education to pass the admission exams.¹⁷

In 1814 Menzel moved to Prague because Streit recommended him to the *gymnasium* there. However, these were the toughest years of his life. He went to an unfamiliar urban environment, he could only count on limited financial support from his parents; and as Europe was economically wrecked after the Napoleonic Wars, he could only afford the cheapest accommodation. As such, he had to live through severe European winters without heating. He remembers that during those years he often suffered from hunger, and only his will to finish his studies helped him to overcome these difficulties. In 1820 he moved to Litoměřice where he studied to become a priest. The following four years, before his graduation, contrasted with the times in Prague he did not have to care about his basic needs and that allowed him to focus on studies, especially natural sciences [Fig. 3]. When he turned 26 he was ordained and sent to Hrádek nad Nisou as a chaplain.¹⁸

In the decade of the 1830s Menzel's jobs allowed him to start developing his scientific career. In 1831 he became a catechist in Liberec and in 1834 was ordained a priest in

14 This is one of the reasons we have excluded the letters written by František and Kateřina Herrmann. They appeared in *Pražský prostonárodní list* between 31 October and 24 December 1851. Although the first ones were somewhat undecided, the last one ended with a proclamation far from inviting: 'Burn all the books that praise Texas.' It is no surprise that the Herrmanns eventually went back to Europe. Kutnar 1970, p. 238.

15 Parochial birth record from Krásný Les, sig. L74/1, N, I-N, 1784–1826, p. 115. Státní oblastní archiv v Litoměřicích. Accessible through the system Archivní VadeMeCum, <http://vademecum.soalitomerice.cz>.

16 Gymnasium provides advanced secondary education in Central European countries.

17 Anděl 1993, p. 5.

18 Anděl 1993, p. 6.

Königreich Böhmen
Landesherzogthum Aussig
Herzogthum Sudland



Diocese Leitmeritz
Chorarchid Sudland
Locality Schoenwald

Taufschein.

Im Jahr 1800 im Schoenwalder Pfarroberamt ward feierlich begangt, daß
im Jahre ein Tausend sieben Hundert neunzig Acht 1798/
im 6ten Juni geboren und am nächst folgenden Tage von hochwürdigem
Herrn Pfarroberamte Andreas Willinger in eine frommen Ehe-
heirath Joh. Helena im Jahr 1798 geboren sub N^o 104 73
am 1ten d. d. befohlenen d. d. befohlenen d. d. befohlenen d. d.

Johann Gottfried Menzel, im gleichen Jahr 1800 im Schoenwalder
Pfarroberamt, und des Pfarroberamtes Andreas Willinger, eines Pfarroberamtes
Joh. Helene Wenzel mit der Joh. Anna Wenzel geboren August
im Schoenwalder Pfarroberamt.

Oben d. d. Jahre geboren sind Gottfried Joh. Helene Wenzel in
Schoenwald, Gottfried August Wenzel, und Agnes Wenzel
Wenzel in Schoenwald.

Daß Pfarroberamt Schoenwald mit dem Pfarroberamte Schoenwald sub N^o
115 ganz gleichlautend sei, wird nicht weiter nachzuweisen
bedürftig und demnach die Pfarroberamtsbeurkundung bezeugt.

Pfarroberamt Schoenwald am 26ten Jahres 1840 neu.



N. 104. 73.

Johann Gottfried
Willinger

Fig. 2. Menzel's birth certificate as issued in 1849. SOKA Liberec, collection Gottfried Menzel (1798-1879), NAD 1321.

STUDIES

take up the position of curator of the zoology division at the Czech National Museum, by the museum's founder and president, the influential Kaspar Maria von Sternberg. The companions exchanged letters, Menzel was often giving advice to his younger colleague, and Corda, on the other hand, was providing the priest with novelties of natural science research.²⁰

The culmination of Menzel's career was, without any doubt, his voyage to Texas, where he went in August 1849 and came back in June 1851. Thanks to his passport, we also have a short physical description of the friar [Fig. 4]. He was tall with a round face, grey eyes, and brown hair.²¹ We may know his looks, but we do not know exactly why he went to the United States, as several sources quote different reasons. We may thus assume that his travels had several motives related to his employment and interests.

Menzel's first intention was his passion for natural sciences and his desire to discover unknown flora and fauna in Texas. He was very likely influenced by his friend August Corda, who was invited by count Franz Colloredo Mansfeld to participate in a biological expedition to North America in 1848.²² They were not supposed to meet there because Corda had left Galveston before Menzel arrived, but it was the curator who directed the attention of Menzel to the 'Lone Star State'. Yet, there were others who might have sparked the curiosity of Menzel. The decade of the 1840s triggered the growing interest of travellers, immigrants, adventurers, and scientists of Central Europe in Texas. Many of them published their findings, and it is probable Menzel knew their works as he quotes them in his writings. For instance, Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels crossed the Atlantic with the intention of starting a German colony.²³ Viktor Bracht emigrated to the United States in 1845 and wrote an interesting description of Texas, as it was in 1848,²⁴ whilst Ferdinand Roemer amalgamated information on local nature.²⁵ Another interesting personality was Friedrich Schlecht, who fled Germany because of the revolution in 1848. As an outdoorsman and adventurer, he spent the summer of the same year in the prairies of the southern US.²⁶ Other names that could have been an inspiration for Menzel include, for example, William Steinert²⁷ and Jakob Thran.²⁸

Other sources put his social sentiment above his love of nature. He was interested in the fortune of people who sought a livelihood in North America. Therefore, he wanted to find out their situation, so he could advise those wishing to emigrate in the future.²⁹ Ethnographer Josef Václav Sheybal also emphasises the humanitarian aspect of Menzel's intentions:

20 Anděl and Karpaš 2002, p. 73.

21 Státní okresní archiv Liberec, collection Gottfried Menzel (1798–1879) NAD 1321, Reisepass (Passport) of Bohumír Menzel, 26 April 1849, number 2655.

22 Weitenweber 1852, p. 33.

23 Solms-Braunfels 1846.

24 Bracht 1849.

25 Roemer 1849.

26 Schlecht 1851.

27 Steinert 1850.

28 Thran 1848.

29 Anděl and Karpaš 2002, p. 73.



Fig. 4. Menzel's passport for America. SOKA Liberec, collection Gottfried Menzel (1798-1879), NAD 1321.

There was such a great scarcity of news regarding the true conditions overseas, that the philanthropic naturalist P. Gottfried Menzel, a native of Krásný Les near Frýdlant, went to America for two years to write to his countrymen about his impressions.³⁰

Closely related to the second reason is the fact that Menzel served as a guide of Czech and German emigrants to Texas. This we have confirmed, not only from sources in Texas³¹ but also from the passenger list from his ship, *Canopus*. Captain Bushmann noted 21 persons from Bohemia: 'Minister [Pfarrer] Gottfried Menzel, Friedrich Brotze and 11 persons, Johann Ernst Gaebler (?),³² Josef Weiss, Johann Ezegka (?) [Czegka (?)],³³ Mathias Jaeckel, Josef Bursa (?) [Burla (?)] and 4 persons, Stephan Seffel.' In the list there are many Germans too; nevertheless, we cannot successfully distinguish those who came with Menzel and those who did not.³⁴

However, this raises a question; as we lack further information about these Czechs and their arrival in Texas, what happened to them? The only logical answer is that they assimilated themselves with the Germans. First, we can presume they were from the German-speaking regions of northern Bohemia, like Menzel, and thus could cooperate with them easily. This is confirmed for us in the story of a famous figure in San Antonio, Frank Hanzal. He had gone to Mexico with the expedition of Emperor Maximilian. After the Emperor's death in 1867, he moved to Texas. Although he was Czech, he quickly assimilated himself with the German minority there.³⁵ Unlike central Texas and counties like Fayette, there was not a strong Czech community, maybe until the beginning of the 20th century. By that time, however, those who came with Menzel had already mixed with the Germans.

Another intention could be of a missionary character. There was a large community of German Catholics living in Texas in 1849 who were lacking a priest that could hold ceremonies in their mother tongue. It is probable that he did not consider holding the masses and services until he evaluated the situation on site. He was absent from the almanacs of the Leopoldine Society³⁶, which organised Austrian missionary activities abroad.³⁷ We also know he had to sell almost all of his property just to afford the voyage, which indicates he was not paid by the church.³⁸ On the other hand, he mentions that the bishop of Galveston, Jean-Marie Odin, was glad to have him in his diocese and

30 Scheybal 1990, p. 262.

31 Machann and Mendl 2001, p. 24; *Naše Dějiny*, 1939, p. 13.

32 Probably Gebler or Gábler in Czech.

33 Probably Čejka in Czech.

34 Smith 1988, p. 13.

35 For instance, in UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures his file is categorised amongst the Germans – and not Czechs. He was a member of the congregation of the German church of St. Joseph and was buried in the local German cemetery.

36 Die Leopoldinenstiftung für das Kaiserreich Österreich zur Unterstützung der amerikanischen Missionen (Leopoldine Society of the Austrian Empire for Support to the American Missions) was an organization in Vienna established in 1829. Its principal goal was to raise money and donations for the Catholic Church in North America. It helped to build churches and organise German-speaking and later Czech-speaking priests in the United States.

37 Bayard 1945, p. 355.

38 Anděl 1993, p. 12.

supported him in his efforts. As he did not put him into the almanacs, it is probable he did not incardinate him and Menzel's stay in Fredericksburg and New Braunfels was an informal one.³⁹ He was a successful missionary during his short stay. In Fredericksburg, he erected a huge cross at a nearby hill and claimed to be able to prevent Catholics from converting to other confessions.⁴⁰ The locals also remembered him as he is mentioned in almost every serious work about Germans or Czechs in Texas.⁴¹

After his return, the church recognised Menzel's humanitarian endeavour, and he was promoted to the position of dean. Sadly, his travels took a heavy toll on his health, especially on his eyesight. In 1854, he retired, because he was unable to practise his office. This did not prevent him, however, from researching local nature and he published several books on this topic in the 1860s. His impact and activities were also recognised by the Austrian emperor Franz Joseph I, who decorated him in 1875 with the Golden Cross for merit with Crown, an appreciation designated for civilians.⁴² Father Bohumír Menzel died in Nové Město four years later, on 4 May 1879 [Fig. 5].⁴³

His letters and other writings

Upon returning from the United States, Bohumír Menzel wrote about his American experience. Several of his writings appeared in Austria and Germany. We can track all of these and analyse if they contained any motivation for Czech emigrants to leave Europe. We can exclude the small booklet of poems. Although some of these were inspired by his recollections from Texas like 'Prairie Wildfire', and 'Missionary Day', the booklet was published quite late in 1859 when there was already a vast amount of literature considering emigration to the United States. People did not need to look for information in poetry.⁴⁴ This leaves us with three major works of Bohumír Menzel published between 1851 and 1853.

The first one is a collection of four short stories he sent to his friend Julius Helbig, a historian and a journalist from Frýdlant. He knew Menzel very well and offered him space in his new yearbook *Friedlandia*, which he started in 1851 to support the local families of the unemployed. The writings of Menzel appeared in the almanac of 1852 so it was almost immediately after his return. Nevertheless, the style and purpose of these stories were by no means inviting someone to Texas. As the titles suggest: '*Eine Gewitternacht in Texas*' (A Thunderstorm Night in Texas); '*Ein Ritt durch einen Fluss*' (A Ride on a River); '*Eine unverhoffte Begegnung*' (An unexpected Encounter); '*Eine Reise im Postwagen*' (A Journey in the Mail Coach), these were anecdotes describing his adventures in the United States. They did not include any practical information for immigrants, no depiction of life across the Atlantic, nor even the natural conditions. Furthermore, the

39 Menzel 1852a, p. 88.

40 *Pražské noviny*, 11 November 1851, p. 2.

41 Biesele 1930.

42 Anděl and Karpaš 2002, p. 73.

43 Parochial death record from Nové Město pod Smrkem, sig. L107/23, Z, I-Z, 1868–1891, p. 109. Státní oblastní archiv v Litoměřicích. Accessible through the system Archivní VadeMeCum, <http://vadecum.soalitimorice.cz>.

44 Menzel 1859.

Fig. 5. Menzel's memorial in Nové město pod Smrkem. SOKA Liberec, collection Gottfried Menzel (1798–1879), NAD 1321.



last one is not even situated in Texas but in Pennsylvania. All four are an interesting read, but it is clear they were not meant for an audience considering emigration.⁴⁵

This was not the case of his second work, the book *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Deutsche Auswanderung dahin* (The United States of North America with special regard to German emigration there) [Fig. 6].⁴⁶ The title implies it should serve especially emigrants, but in the preface the author clarifies his intentions. Menzel mentions that lots of German books have been published recently about the United States or its parts. However, they are mostly written to support the speculators that organised the emigration and are not in the interest of their customers. During his stay, he found that the books were exaggerating, and when he interviewed some Germans in America, they confirmed that they had been deceived. He considered it his duty to present his travel observations to his emigration-hungry compatriots and not to conceal any advantages or disadvantages of what he saw. In other words, he acknowledged himself as an impartial observer. Another reason for him to write this book was the fact that the other books were heavily focused on the issue of resettlement that they did not present anything about the United States, its people, its development, nor the state of its civilization. Scholarly books were too complicated for common men to understand and popular writers were lacking proper information or were outdated.

45 Menzel 1852b, pp. 7–25.

46 Menzel 1853.

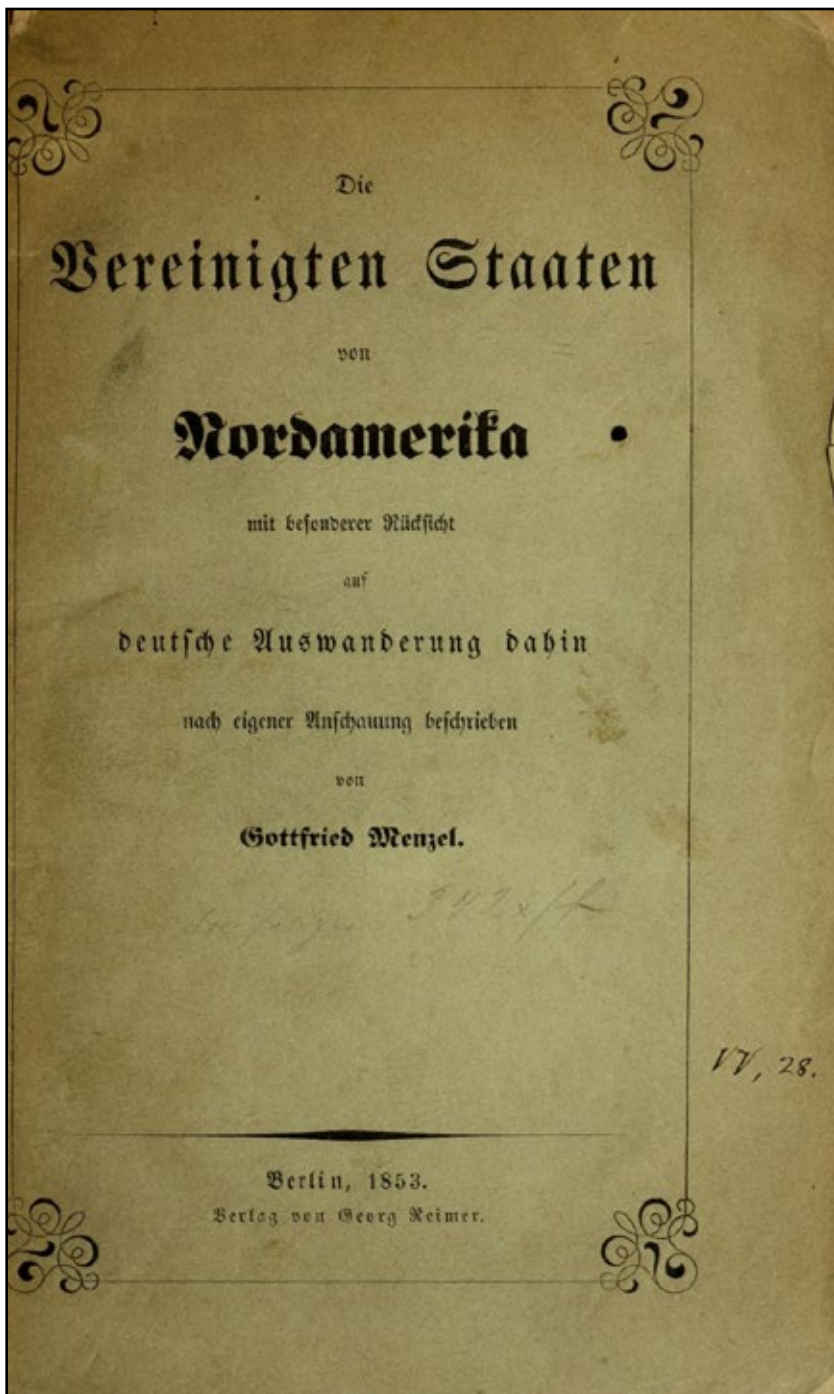


Fig. 6. Title page of Menzel's book *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Deutsche Auswanderung dahin* on the German emigration to North America.

Therefore, his intention was to present the United States in a simple manner, so even the average person could read it without any trouble.⁴⁷

Menzel divided his book into seven chapters, and most of them reflect his primary two goals: present the United States and give some information to those considering emigration. The first part talks about the physical characteristics of the country. Its first half describes the water system of the Mississippi and the Great Lakes and includes a geological survey. In the second half, Menzel focuses on the climate, the quality of the waters, and the health of the inhabitants, with a special focus on the acclimatization of Germans. He recommends areas suitable for Central Europeans to settle in and those inappropriate.

The second chapter is dedicated to the natural products of the United States. Here, he makes use of his vocation as a natural scientist and skilfully describes the fauna and flora of the country. In the part about minerals, he mentions the still ongoing California Gold Rush. It was a topic that piqued his interest, and in Texas, he interviewed lots of wanderers and merchants who were coming from the Pacific coast. He knew many Germans were coming to America to take part in this venture, yet he discouraged them and talked about the whole commotion as a hoax.

A huge portion of his book talks about the inhabitants of the state. In chapter number three he described Americans as diligent and motivated. He also emphasised the treatment of women as equals. Germans had a great reputation there and were welcomed. However, he said, they should learn how to interact with locals, especially indigenous people. He was interested in the natives and despised the violent actions of the whites. Menzel believed in peaceful cohabitation and gradual civilization of the first people. In a similar way, he condemned the system of slavery and the treatment of Afro-Americans in general. He was deeply moved by the experience of a slave auction that divided families.

The next two chapters talk about the history of the United States and its political system. Menzel admired the democratic order and its surprising stability, and so he considered the country as a certain social laboratory for the rest of the World to observe. Then he described other aspects of the state; army, welfare, education, culture, and press. Special attention is paid to religion because, as a priest, Menzel was interested in the various branches of Christianity that were tolerated in the United States.

Chapter number six is the longest one. Here, Menzel talks about all three sectors of the economy. Agriculture is described in a very detail manner. Firstly, he covers animal husbandry, then agriculture and its mechanization, and ends with an enumeration of the most important crops and their cultivation. He concludes with some examples of building a farm, prices, and acquisition of lots. The secondary sector of the economy is divided into handicrafts, manufactures, and work in factories. In the end, he talks about the exchange of goods, tariffs, and foreign trade. This chapter contains key information for potential emigrants and serves as a makeshift guide, because it mentions the profits and salaries one can gain in America.

The last section is probably the most important. It is not as long as the previous ones, but here Menzel addresses the whole issue of German emigration. In compliance with the preface, he lists the advantages and disadvantages of the issue. On the one hand, he talks about more freedom, lower taxes, no military service,

47 Menzel 1853, pp. III-IV.

lower prices of food, and better means of livelihood. On the other hand, the land is so cheap because it is not cultivated, and revenues are not that high. Germans are also strangers in America, and there are places that were not healthy for them. Menzel warns interested persons about the agents or letters promoting emigration, as many of them are scams just to rob people. He recommends verifying the information and to think about their future home. Amongst the best places in the United States, he advises Texas, because of its suitable climate and considerable German societies. Even then, he suggests travelling with adequate funds, and those who are over forty should bring over able-bodied family members.

Menzel's book could be easily considered as motivation for emigrants to come to the United States and especially to Texas. It is true that he also mentions the negative aspects, but those willing to go usually omitted these and focused on the bright side.⁴⁸ The problem with the publication is that it was never meant for a Czech audience. First, it was dedicated to Germans, and they are mentioned throughout the whole book, even though he also acknowledged other Central Europeans' desire to emigrate. Also, it was published in Berlin, that is, in Prussia, where, in the 1850s, no significant Czech minority lived. To sum it up, the book could have had an important impact in Germany but only limited in Austria, Bohemia, and Moravia. It was probably never distributed there officially, and only individuals or lower numbers of guest workers and journeymen could spread the information it contained. Nevertheless, its significance faded when more information about Texas of Czech provenance appeared in Bohemia and Moravia in mid-1850s. Therefore, this publication could never be the reason to call Menzel an influence on Czech emigration to Texas.

This leaves us with the rest of his work, the two letters he wrote to his friend Franz Petters, honorary member of Litoměřice diocese, district vicar and dean in Chrástava, near Frýdlant. These were personal letters, and Menzel probably never intended them for publication. The first one describes his life and travels in Texas with a brief analysis of the situation of the German and Czech immigrants.⁴⁹ The second one is more about the fauna and flora he encountered there. However, in the end, the author also mentions the sad condition of religious care for newcomers.⁵⁰

We do not know why they appeared in *Berichte der Leopoldinen-Stiftung im Kaisertume Österreich* (Reports of the Leopoldine Society in the Austrian Empire) in 1851 and 1852. It is possible the bishop of Galveston, Odin, a core member of the society, forwarded the messages, after recognizing their value, and recommended them for publication in the almanac. Odin was constantly complaining that his vast diocese lacked priests, and he regularly asked for more. He also observed that German migrants were moving into Texas in number, and they did not speak any other languages. So, he wanted to bring more German-speaking pastors. Both Menzel's letters share the same preoccupation. So, maybe Odin wanted to create more awareness amongst the directors of the Leopoldine Society in Vienna.

48 Josef Arnošt Bergmann is great example of overlooking the negative side of immigration to Texas. Much of the information in his letters is critical, yet his readers focused on the positives, see Polišíenský 1996, pp. 30–31; Machann and Mendl 2001, p. 28. For more details on the migration agitation and propaganda see Kutnar 1964, p. 22; Polišíenský 1992, p. 15.

49 Menzel 1851, pp. 78–87.

50 Menzel 1852a, pp. 82–91.

Be this as it may, the letters were published in Austria, and the first one especially became very famous in Bohemia. However, we do know the reports were also published in Czech. So, the information about the Leopoldine Society could reach even the furthest corners of the empire.⁵¹ Therefore, the letters were translated into Czech and could have had more impact on the population of Bohemia and Moravia. We do not know the exact circulation of those original reports of the Leopoldine Society, but in the case of Menzel's letters, it is not that important, because they were reprinted in the Czech press, or at least the first and most important one. Thanks to an interested editor, its shorter version appeared in three parts in the conservative *Pražské noviny*⁵² at the end of 1851. It should be noted that the fragments about Texas showed up even before the Bergmann letters were published in *Moravské noviny*.⁵³ Furthermore, parts of the writing were also reprinted in a popular Catholic magazine called *Blahověst*.⁵⁴ This confirms that the contents of Menzel's letters and the information about Texas were widespread, at least in Bohemia.

Unfortunately, we can only speculate about the practical influence of Menzel's letters. Some authors dismissed the effects,⁵⁵ but others acknowledged that his personality and his writings supported the resettlement, especially of Catholic families from Moravia and Bohemia.⁵⁶ Sadly, when we go through the memoirs of the first Czech emigrants to Texas from the 1850s published especially in *Amerikán. Národní kalendář* between 1878–1930, we do not have the benefit of a direct mention of Menzel's information as a reason to move. The majority does not mention any influence at all, but a few do mention the letters of Ernst Bergmann.⁵⁷ The problem here is that the majority of the first Czech Texans who compiled some sort of memoirs were Protestants from Eastern Bohemia, Eastern Moravia, or Catholics from the latter. They mentioned Bergmann because he was of the same faith, and his letter was published in Brno, Moravia. Nevertheless, we know also about a relatively large group of Catholics from Western, Central, and Southern Bohemia that resettled in Texas during the 1850s.⁵⁸ They left only minimal, if any, personal recollections. So, we do not know what made them cross the Atlantic, but it is only logical to assume they got their information from the local press and Menzel's letters in particular.

Menzel as the motivation to emigrate

As we lack conclusive evidence, we have to look more closely at the information included in Menzel's letters to find at least indirect or analogical evidence. When we analyse the memoirs of the emigrants and specialised literature, we can identify several

51 They were published in Vienna under the Czech title *Zprávy Ústavu leopoldinského w Cjsařstwj rakauském*.

52 *Pražské noviny*, 30 November 1851, pp. 1–2; *Pražské noviny*, 2 December 1851, p. 1; *Pražské noviny*, 3 December 1851, pp. 1–2.

53 Bergmann first describes his stay in Hamburg and the voyage. Texas is mentioned for the first time in the 3 December 1851 issue, cf. *Moravské noviny*, 3 December 1851, p. 1106.

54 *Blahověst*, 4 December 1851, pp. 582–585.

55 Clinton Machann was talking about little or no influence. Machann and Mendl 2001, p. 26.

56 Dravillas 1998, pp. 23–24.

57 Skřivánková 1886, p. 132; Lešikar 1880, p. 179.

58 Kutnar 1964, pp. 14–15.

reasons for Czechs to decide to come to the United States. If they are compared to the contents of Menzel's writings, they make an interesting match. Motives that are going to be examined closely are the economic situation, social problems, political oppression, religion, military service, and others.

The year 1848 was one of the most important dates in European history, although the revolutions that spread throughout Europe were not successful. The goals of the rebels were not accomplished in their majority, but at least they had several repercussions. In the Czech Lands, it is considered as the year 'number one' of mass emigration. For one of the most important achievements of this radical time in Austria was the removal of *corvée*.⁵⁹ Albeit individuals like Michael Dignowity (for example) had been coming to the United States and even to Texas for several years, from 1848 we can talk about a massive and organised movement. The new legal framework meant that subjects of Emperor Franz Joseph I were not bound to the lands of their local lords anymore and could move freely. Many of them resettled in the Empire itself, while some went to Germany or Russia, however, the majority went even further, across the Atlantic.

Many members of the 'lower classes', like peasants and artisans, indeed changed their homes because the economic conditions had deteriorated and were not competitive anymore. The Industrial Revolution was spreading through Europe and influenced the vicissitudes of the Bohemian and Moravian countryside. Firstly, it meant modernization of agriculture: new machines like seed drills or harvesters led to the mechanization and thus the facilitation of crops. Primary fertilisers were introduced which increased production. All this led to the decrease in the prices of farm products. However, the Austrian countryside was not that advanced and lost its competitiveness completely, especially in poor regions with a scarcity of fruitful soil, where farmers were barely surviving, cultivating their yields in an obsolete fashion.⁶⁰

The turbulent times of the mid-19th century also brought liberalization of the estate market in Austria. The only problem was that peasants could not afford to buy new lands at all. After years of *corvée* they lacked capital, prices were quite high, and the credit institutions were slow to develop. Therefore, even at the end of the 19th century, almost 50 % of farms were less than 5 acres in size. Farmer often needed another job in craft or industry. Another possibility was to lease more land, but it diminished the profit and could be applied only in fertile areas. In mountainous regions, local aristocracy offered only soil that was hard and therefore uneconomic to cultivate.⁶¹

When Menzel's letters reached the peasants in Bohemia and Moravia, they must have been thrilled, reading about the ease with which one could cultivate plants and breed farm animals in Texas. The only unpleasant information, at the end, about the necessity of other income, was no novelty for them as seen above:

Corn (called rye) used here to make bread is everywhere and is cultivated across the whole country as various fodder for cattle; then cotton, tobacco, sweet potatoes, with a rich root that can weight a pound, are tasty and healthy. Almost everyone is cultivating vegetables for himself; cucumbers, pumpkins, and melons grow in immense opulence. Watermelon, full of

59 *Corvée* was a system of unpaid forced labor in Central Europe.

60 Kutnar 1970, p. 216.

61 Jindra and Jakubec 2015, p. 159.

pleasantly delicious juice, is a great heavenly gift in the times of summer heats. Cultivation of cereals is still experimental. Cultivation of fruits has just begun. Also, wild nuts and grapevines grow here. /.../ One does not need any barn or fodder to raise cattle; during summer and winter, the cattle have to look for its own fodder and shelter from the north wind in some bush. However, whoever wants to have milk during winter has to take better care of the cattle at that time of year. /.../ The settler here has a lonely, yet pretty much comfortable livelihood. Cultivating corn and raising cattle is not that difficult work, compared to a farmer in Germany, but getting rich is not that easy without other income.⁶²

Similarly, the Industrial Revolution affected small handcrafting artisans all over the world, in Asia, Latin America, and in less developed parts of Europe, like Austria. The first phase of the revolution is usually associated with the textile industry, which inundated important craftsmen in small villages and towns, the weavers. For many generations, this profession presented an auxiliary income mainly in poor regions. Homemade linen cloth was not only used domestically but also exported to various markets in Europe. Nevertheless, by the end of the 18th century, Bohemia and Moravia were the industrial heartland of the empire and the place of new textile factories. These started to produce cheap cotton cloth and affected not only the craft itself but also other tied-in occupations from dyers and decorators to merchants and tailors. With more mechanization, other handcrafts followed suit quickly. Thousands of people lost their jobs and their means of living. Suffering and starvation set in. Farmers tried, at first, to utilise the opportunities in nearby factories to increase their income. However, complicated transport and instability of the jobs soon frustrated them even further, and emigration seemed like the only opportunity.⁶³

In his letters, Menzel also described the situation of skillful artisans in Texas. Anyone considering resettlement was probably excited to read the following lines:

Craftsmen, blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, saddlers earn a lot of money and reach prosperity easily even if they do not take much [from Europe]. Certain S., son of F., works in San Antonio as a blacksmith for the government and he makes 30 dollars without food. W. from F. works as a hauler and earns 20 dollars a month. The usual daily wage for day laborers is 6 Pitt⁶⁴ or 1 dollar per day. /.../ Here, work greatly nourishes the man; the workers are here the aristocrats and regard themselves as such.⁶⁵

With the economic reasons came the social ones. Europe was experiencing a population boom from the beginning of the 19th century. Especially in the poor regions the population almost doubled between 1772 and 1850. It created a problem because in the past the farmer usually handed over his lands to just one son. Now, as he had two or more, the logical solution was to divide his property. However, as is mentioned

62 *Pražské noviny*, 2 December 1851, p. 1.

63 Kampelík 1859, pp. 10–21.

64 He probably means British money or it can be a wrong transcription of 'Mills' Money'.

65 Menzel 1851, pp. 85–86.

before, not everyone could afford it. Small parcels were simply not enough to support a family and its head usually had to find a complementary job. It was impossible to split them, and the gloomy prospect of a landless future led many younger sons and their respective children to leave the country.⁶⁶

Bohumír Menzel described Texas as a state with little population. He actually meant it as a huge disadvantage and he was right to do so, because Czechs were accustomed to village life, i.e. living in small but compact communities with close or distant relatives and neighbours. In Texas, however, they suffered from loneliness and isolation, as the farms were several miles apart.⁶⁷ No one realised this before the voyage and because of that, Menzel's words were actually encouraging for peasants living in cramped conditions:

It is a fertile, good country, but when we compare Texas to Germany, it is an (un)inhabited wasteland. What are 300,000 people in an area that is as large as Austrian monarchy? Nature is magnificent and maybe one century will pass until it is tamed. I admit the highly praised merit of the splendor of this country, but it seems to me that it is missing charm and loveliness, although it is beautifully decorated by richly flowered meadows.⁶⁸

One of the minor issues was political oppression, especially when we talk about emigration from Bohemia and Moravia to Texas. The 'Lone Star State' was the destination of low social classes like farmers or artisans. Just a handful of them were publicly active or understood government or court politics at all. However, even here Menzel could be of influence:

German magazines and newspapers here are even more radical than in Germany, there are not enough topics to complain about and Germans are not that experienced in North American politics. Therefore, European monarchs and governments, the pope and the bishops must tolerate their outbursts of hatred.⁶⁹

Another motive to leave the Czech lands was religion, or better said, religious oppression. Bohemia and Moravia were very turbulent countries, regarding faith. The process of Reformation started here long before Western Europe. It is typically associated with the personality of Jan Hus, who inspired an eponymous and violent movement at the beginning of the 15th century. In the subsequent years after the wars, Czech monarchs were granting tolerance to the Protestants. This process culminated with the famous Letter of Majesty from 1609. It was signed reluctantly by Rudolf II, who was at the same time Holy Roman Emperor. This tolerance, however, ended after the Thirty Years' War. The deadliest conflict of the so-called religious wars. Its effects were disastrous for Bohemia. Not only was it at the centre of many military campaigns, but it was also affected by the Peace of Westphalia that settled the disputes. Catholicism was the only accepted religion in the country, and therefore many Protestants had to flee, amongst them the famous teacher and philosopher Jan Ámos Komenský (John Amos

66 Pánek and Tůma 2018, p. 297.

67 Machann and Mendl 2001, pp. 71, 83.

68 *Pražské noviny*, 30 November 1851, p. 2.

69 *Pražské noviny*, 3 December 1851, p. 1.

Comenius). This period was labelled by some historians or writers as the times of the deepest humiliation of the nation or the Dark Ages.⁷⁰

The situation remained the same until 1781, when Joseph II issued the Patent of Tolerance that permitted other than Catholic confession. Nevertheless, as the title suggests, it talked about the acceptance of Protestantism and not about equal status between both religions. Parts of these limitations were abolished in 1848, but it was not until 1861, when the Patent of Protestantism was issued by Franz Joseph I, that both faiths received the same rights. However, the position of administration was one thing. Another was the relations between people of both religions. Even at the beginning of the 20th century there existed, in the countryside, bitter rivalries that had a huge impact on education and government as well as emigration.⁷¹ For instance, František Skočdopole, born in 1830 in Humpolec, stated he had to flee the Austrian empire because of the ‘/.../ sordidness and vengefulness of the Catholic hierarchy’.⁷²

It is true that Menzel was a Catholic, and his letter was published in journals and newspapers of the same confession as well, apart from *Pražské noviny*. Therefore, it is doubtful that his works were also read in the Protestant areas of Bohemia and Moravia. After all, emigrants from these parts usually mentioned the letter of the Evangelical priest Ernst Bergmann as the reason why they had left. On the other hand, those who were thinking about religious freedom, and read Menzel’s writings, must have been persuaded while seeing passages like this:

On 20 April, I travelled to Friedrichsburg [Fredericksburg] eighty miles from Braunfels and I spent two months there. The Catholic parish has 40 families and has started to build a church, which will be finished soon. I liked the inhabitants here more: there is a great religious spirit amongst the Catholics. On Saturday, before the Pentecost, I erected, on a nearby steep hill, an impressive looking cross from a huge oak trunk. This symbol of redemption was also admired by the Protestants. Even the Methodists come here and preach with fiery eagerness; about 40 Protestants joined them, but no Catholic and therefore these devotees [the Methodist] condemn us from the very core of their heart, which can be only advantageous for us. Even the Mormons settled nearby – nice people are they, communism in the broadest sense – community possessions and women, the highest priest has 12 of them [wives], others as many as they please!⁷³

Menzel was not purposely inviting anyone with a different faith to Texas. From his letter, it is also visible how he, as a Catholic priest, despised other religions. However, indirectly he is pointing out that in Texas, and in the United States in general, there existed an overwhelming freedom. In the aforementioned excerpt, he enumerates Catholics, Protestants, Methodists, and even Mormons as present in just

70 Tomek 1850, pp. 432–435. The term ‘Dark Ages’ (*Temno*) was popularised by the historical novel of the same name written by Alois Jirásek. Detailed information can be found in the epilogue written by Zdeněk Nejedlý appended to the 1956 edition of the novel: Jirásek 1956, pp. 589–598.

71 Čejková 2011, pp. 4–5.

72 Skočdopole 1918, p. 278.

73 *Blahověst*, 4 December 1851, p. 585.

one city. There were condemnation and envy, yes, but without adverse effects such as oppression or violence.

Another important reason for leaving that the Bohemians and Moravians mentioned a lot was compulsory military service. It was one of the conditions of the Austrian government when issuing an emigrant passport, and former soldiers had to show their booklet, stating when and where they had served. It was also widely detested and many young men fled to America illegally so they would not get conscripted.⁷⁴ Some sources also say that, for instance, in the first eight months of 1852 a total of 87 families lawfully and 803 illicitly moved to America, probably because of military service. The fathers had some war experience and they did not want their sons to witness the same horrors they did.⁷⁵

Amongst those who acknowledged fleeing Austria because of military service, was also a famous figure of Czech Texas Anthony Michael Dignowity. He is considered as one of the pioneers, as he first got to Texas in 1835. In the late 1820s, he applied for a new passport in his hometown of Kutná Hora. However, he was refused by the officials until he would complete his conscription.⁷⁶ He declined and moved to Prussia because he considered military duty as an authoritarian measure:

This system of recruiting in Austria, at the period I am describing, deserves particular notice, as it is altogether consistent with the despotic rule of Austria. There was an annual census, called the conscription, of all the male inhabitants who were subject to military duty. In every city or district, where recruiting was ordered by the emperor, the number of able-bodied men, wanted for the service, was given, and an apportionment was made from the conscription lists for each district or city.⁷⁷

Dignowity described the situation at the beginning of the 19th century when service was for 14 years. In the middle of the century, the situation was not that severe, and the duty was reduced to eight years and after three it was possible to stay just in reserve. Furthermore, one more choice existed. It was possible to buy yourself out or find a replacement. Of course, this was not an option for an enormous part of society. Another change came after the Austro-Prussian War in 1868, when the service was obligatory just for three years.⁷⁸ It was also possible to receive an exemption from the Imperial War Department, but it was provided only under special circumstances and not very often.⁷⁹

Menzel also addressed the issue of military service in the United States. He was not an expert in the field and did not understand the background of it but he certainly

74 The reason to avoid military service is often mentioned by Czech emigrants in their biographies published in *Amerikán. Národní kalendář*; e.g. Wojtíšek 1897, p. 205; Kandlík 1932, p. 189. The latter did not want to enlist like his three older brothers, because their military experiences were not favourable at all.

75 Kutnar 1864, pp. 11–13.

76 Dignowity 1859, p. 182.

77 Dignowity 1859, p. 86.

78 Havel 2006. Digitalised version available at:

<http://dejinyasoucasnost.cz/archiv/2006/12/slouzit-az-do-roztrhani-tela/>.

79 Fořt 1876, pp. 10–11.

noticed the flagrant differences between both countries. The readers of his letters and potential émigrés must have been excited to read the following paragraph:

Nobody is forced to join the military; 10,000 soldiers in the whole Union are volunteers; even the highest-ranking officers do not mean more than the rest. Cavalrymen are paid 8 dollars per month and nourishment for the man and the horse. Rangers, volunteer corps, receive monthly 23 dollars and provisions each; they are the best soldiers. Helpers eat here as well as a merchant or a farmer. Eggs, meat, milk, coffee, cornbread can be seen daily on every table.⁸⁰

Bohemian and Moravian farmers and people living off the land, in general, could also be tempted to leave the Czech Lands because of the more suitable environment. From 1800 to the middle of the 19th century, there was a steep decline in the average temperature in Bohemia – from 50 degrees Fahrenheit to almost 48. The winters were bitterly cold. Similarly, the regular annual rainfall dropped from 500 mm in the beginning of the century to 400 in the 1850s and 1860s.⁸¹ It was becoming hard, especially for the peasants, to maintain their production and thus feed their growing families. Local chroniclers were also talking about the weather changeability, severe winters, floods in spring and droughts almost regularly between 1850 and 1875.⁸²

In Texas, the weather conditions were not magnificent, but at least the winters were mild and thanks to that the harvest could be repeated twice a year. Menzel clearly pointed out that the temperatures were better in Texas than back home:

Friedrichsburg with its neighbourhood seems to be the healthiest for Germans. The winter in the whole country is pleasant until the northern wind comes, that often settles down here and lasts for a long time. Suddenly, the temperature falls to -3 Réaumur; although last January and December, it was warm +20. In the summer it is often too hot in New Braunfels. No one would believe what kind of heat is +28 Réaumur and the thermometer at 7 pm still shows +27 grades.⁸³ Fortunately, the wind blows and curbs the heat.⁸⁴

Another observation Menzel made, as a natural scientist, regarded the local wildlife. It is, after all, the principal topic of his second letter to Franz Peters. People from Central Europe did not know much in the 1850s about the conditions in Texas and therefore were unsure what to expect. The far lands usually had the stigma of an uncivilised and wild world. They knew about the dangers of settling down in such an environment, where exotic species could harm them. Once again Menzel curbed some of their worst fears of Texas:

80 Menzel 1851, p. 86.

81 Change of climate in the Czech Republic, 2011.

82 For instance, chronicler Martin Tkadlec from Rožnov in Moravia. Státní okresní archiv Vsetín, collection Archiv města Rožnova, inv. no. 241, *Kronika Martina Tkadlce v přepisu Čejka Kramoliše*.

83 For better illustration, the conversion of the temperatures is: -3 degrees Réaumur is around -4 degrees Celsius, 20 °Ré is 25 °C, 28 °Ré is 35 °C, 27 °Ré is 33.75 °C.

84 *Pražské noviny*, 2 December 1851, p. 1.

Man does not have to be afraid of wild animals, even in the most remote areas, even leopards [Panther] when no one is chasing after them, leave every man alone. Rattlesnake, Mogassin [sic!],⁸⁵ and copper snake are the most dangerous; but they only bite when defending themselves, when someone steps on them as they are lying in the grass. That is why they are dangerous to the cattle on pasture. Death rarely results from snakebites. Tarantulas and scorpions hurt painfully but are not deadly.⁸⁶

Similarly, other dangers existed, not only coming from wild animals but also from the natives. A famous Czech author of the time, Jan Slavomír Tomíček, wrote about them obsessively, even though he, like another famous German writer of the era, Karl May, had never visited the American continent, and all his books were based on the recollections of other authors. He described some of the American tribes as immoral, as they lied and cheated. Every European had to be careful when encountering them because they did not comprehend laws and the Western system of justice. Also, they attacked the whites in a sneaky way with surprise attacks.⁸⁷ On the other hand, he noted them as a society in decline, because of the 'hard liquor plague'. One of the examples he used to prove his point and depict the Indigenous people as barbarous was as follows:

Every educated man treats a prisoner and defenceless kindly; however, the Indians [sic!] torture him with a cannibal delight: one rips off fingernails, the second one bites off fingers or crushes them between rocks; he roasts him with torches and eats him alive.⁸⁸

Menzel, however, told his readers a different story. He was not someone who only read about the Apaches and Comanches of Texas in books: he was an eyewitness. His experience was completely different from Tomíček's writings as well:

I have met hordes of these wild huntsmen especially on Clana [probably Llano River] but I have always got along well with them; they were often surprised that one man was brave enough to travel there without a weapon and they could not stop wondering at my glasses. He who acts completely fearlessly and amiably and the one who does not run away when they are harassing him gets along with them the best.⁸⁹

In his letters, Menzel did not only give a positive description of Texas. He also tried to dissuade those willing to come. These paragraphs, however, are only a few, because he did not know they would be published and did not think that his friend Franz Petters was considering emigration. On one occasion, Menzel mentions American health care and the environment suitable for colonization. He warns about the Texan coastline, with

85 Cottonmouth or water moccasin.

86 *Blahověst*, 4 December 1851, p. 584.

87 *Blahověst*, 4 December 1851, p. 584, p. 24.

88 Tomíček 1846, pp. 22-23.

89 *Blahověst*, 4 December 1851, p. 584.

its swamps, where considerable threat of disease and death existed. He illustrates his point with the example of Germans who settled there six years prior to his arrival. They fell ill and died in number because, amongst other things, they were not accustomed to the humid environment and the German doctors did not have proper qualifications. He recommended newcomers to settle inland near Fredericksburg. There were no medics there either but at least the country was so healthy that they were not needed.⁹⁰

In his final remarks, Menzel also observes that emigrants should not only be determined but also travel with a substantial amount of money:

Whoever comes here and does not want to work cannot remain here; unless he takes a lot of money with him, America quickly turns its back on people like that. It's not supportive of do-nothings and no beggar can be seen.⁹¹

Later on, Menzel summarises his observations and makes a final laconic verdict regarding the 'Lone Star State': 'Texas, like any other country, is no paradise; man here is not free of all his woes.'⁹²

However, Menzel and Bergmann dedicated only a short portion of their texts to dissuading migrants. Meanwhile, Bergmann was constantly (and unjustly – see note no. 48) criticised for exaggerating the opportunities in Texas and giving people false hope. We lack evaluation of the work of Menzel. We can only assume that analogically, as in the case of Bergmann, that his readers only focused on the positives and omitted the negatives of emigration. After all, when one reads both letters, the benefits clearly outweighed the problems, not only in terms of quantity but also quality.

Conclusion

This study tried to determine whether the Catholic priest Bohumír (Gottfried) Menzel could be called an influence on the beginnings of the Czech mass emigration to Texas or not. Based on the evidence, this argument can be confirmed. Although his sojourn in Texas was shorter than the sources were implying (not ten but just two years), his merits regarding Czech and German immigrants cannot be overlooked. The historic material proves that he went to Texas as the leader of a Czech-German expedition in 1849, which makes him, in the case of the Czechs, the first person who organised such a venture.

He also wrote two important letters. The first one, especially, was very inviting to Texas. Once again, the Czech translation of his writing was the first one to appear in a Czech newspaper, before the famous one written by Josef Arnošt Bergmann. Menzel describes Texas as not necessarily a paradise but certainly as a better place to live than the Czech Lands. The thematic analysis proved that his letters contained positive information about almost all the concerns of the Czech society in the middle of the 19th century. Concerns that eventually turned into the principal reasons of the immigration to Texas.

Menzel presented Texas as great economic opportunity for both farmers and artisans. He described Texas as fertile and vacant land where the plants grew easily and raising cattle was not demanding. Artisans and workers, according to Menzel, were

90 *Pražské noviny*, 2 December 1851, p. 1; *Pražské noviny*, 3 December 1851, p. 1.

91 *Pražské noviny*, 2 December 1851, p. 1.

92 *Pražské noviny*, 30 November 1851, p. 2.

the aristocrats of Texas which meant that the social stratification was not as rigid as in Europe. Menzel also put emphasis in his letters on political and religious freedom in Texas. He himself was not writing enthusiastically about these topics, but we can assess that the information was inviting for those who were persecuted for their political views or religious beliefs in Austria. Similarly, Menzel also addressed the topic of compulsory military service by stating that it is voluntary in the United States. This theme was stimulating especially to the young man who wanted to escape this duty in Austria. Lastly, Menzel presented the interior of Texas having more agreeable climate than the Czech Lands and, at the same time, diminishing the possible natural or indigenous threats. Regarding all the evidence that can be presented, he can be placed amongst other influential Czechs that inspired the immigration to Texas in the 1850s and should be put in that pantheon alongside Bergmann, Lešikar, and Mašík.

On the other hand, we can only speculate whether he himself would agree with this assessment of his stay and writings. Firstly, he wrote everything in German,⁹³ so he did not mean his letters to be read by a Czech audience. Secondly, his writings were private, and only his friends Franz Petters or Bishop Odin could have sent them to the publisher, as Menzel returned only after they were released. Lastly, in his memoirs, he mentions with pride, and celebrates the fact, that his book about the United States, published in 1853, prevented migrants from Germany from coming to America.⁹⁴ Therefore, it can be said that Bohumír Menzel was an unintentional influence behind Czech emigration to Texas. The information he offered his letters that circulated eventually in Bohemia and Moravia presented almost everything what a potential emigree would like to hear before deciding to move to Texas.

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93 This was the language of the scholars of his era. From other sources, we know he spoke and wrote fluently also in Czech.

94 Menzel and Helbig 1893–1894, p. 97.

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