

EMANUEL ŠLECHTA, ENGINEER AND ENTREPRENEUR IN THE FIRST REPUBLIC OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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ABSTRACT. This article traces the political, economic, and technical activities of Professor Emanuel Šlechta in the pre-war period and just after 1945. The aim is to answer the question: “What were Emanuel Šlechta’s activities during the First Republic and how did they help him in his later role as Czechoslovak Minister of Technology?” The text covers in chronological order the period between the two world wars, when Šlechta completed his technical studies in Prague and completed an internship in industrial factories in the USA, then gained crucial experience in the Bata concern, and gradually developed into an important national economist and expert in the field of labour organisation. This led to his appointment as a minister after World War II.

KEYWORDS: History of science and technology, Czechoslovakia, Emanuel Šlechta, Stanislav Špaček, minister of technology after 1948, Czech Technical University in Prague, World War II, 1922–1938.

1. INTRODUCTION

The most important person in a technical environment is the engineer. At the end of the 19th century in the Habsburg Monarchy, and especially in the pre-Lithuanian Commonwealth, an engineer became the person who was the bearer of technical progress and at the same time served as a mediator of communication between the technically educated layers of society. The engineer’s publishing activities also contributed to the fact that new technical discoveries were described in the technical literature and explained in lectures to the educated and lay public. He also contributed to the improvement of Czech technical terminology (e.g. [1]).

After the middle of the 19th century, the individual inhabitants of various parts of the Habsburg Monarchy did not have to use German [2] for their business and technical practices, but it was still the language of the monarchy, including teaching at universities, and it also served for the social and professional advancement of, for example, nationally conscious members of the Czech nation. In the Czech lands, the Czech language was used in the school environment after the acceptance of the Hasner School Act (1869) [3, p. 73], [4, p. 202 – Hasner von Artha, Leopold (1818–1891), Rechtswissenschaftler und Ministerpräsident], first at the Prague Technical School. This enabled the rapid development of technical education in the Czech lands.

The economic, social, and cultural development of the Czech lands in the second half of the 19th century contributed to industrialisation, urbanisation, and the transfer of technical knowledge, especially from world exhibitions. This activity required well-educated technicians, most of whom were already sympathetic to

the idea of an independent Czechoslovakia and who contributed to the formation of a technical elite that influenced the development of the state after 1918.

In this context, the mechanical engineer, publicist, and politician Emanuel Šlechta (1895–1960)¹ was one of the representatives of the transfer of technological innovations from the United States to Czechoslovakia in the 1920s and 1930s. Šlechta used his stay in the USA not only to further his technical studies, but also to mediate the transfer of important technical and scientific information to his homeland. He then used the knowledge he gained throughout the rest of his career.

Šlechta’s intention was to bring to Czechoslovakia such knowledge that could be immediately applied in the economic and technological environment and that would suitably imitate the leader of the technical world at that time – the USA. Therefore, Šlechta devoted himself to consulting and publishing new technical information for the broadest professional public.

The main stages of Šlechta’s professional career can be characterised chronologically as follows – until 1921 he received a university technical education, between

¹There is a lot of archive material about the personality of Emanuel Šlechta in various Czech and foreign archives. In the Czech Republic, these are mainly archival materials in [5–9] etc. The specialist literature is quite extensive e.g. [10–17] but it is not established, nor is there a monograph-biography dedicated to E. Šlechta. However, student reference works are also available ([18], etc.), which provide some interesting information on Šlechta’s life, and Šlechta’s own works. From this perspective, it should be noted that some archival material on Šlechta’s daily life is also absent, having been lost after Šlechta’s imprisonment in 1939 and during his six-year stay in the Buchenwald concentration camp. The availability of other sources, e.g. from Poland, the USA and the UK, which would greatly assist in the collection and definition of research questions about Emanuel Šlechta in more depth, is problematic.

1923 and 1926, he completed an internship in the USA, in 1927 he took part in the reconstruction of the Bata factories in Zlín, between 1928 and 1939 he provided consulting services for Czech industrial companies, in 1946 he was appointed professor at the Czech Technical University in Prague, and between February 1948 and 1952 he served as Czechoslovak Minister of Technology.

2. EMANUEL ŠLECHTA'S PATH TO EDUCATION

Emanuel Šlechta was born in Kutná Hora, where he grew up at a time when the world was experiencing the second phase of the Industrial Revolution, based on technical innovations that influenced his view of the world and showed him the way to his professional direction. By nature, Šlechta was an unpretentious and ascetic man. This was related to his origins and upbringing, as his family lived a modest, spartan life: *"For myself, money is of no greater value than that it is the means of life and that books can be obtained with it."* [19, 16 February 1924]. Young Emanuel retained these habits during his studies. In his nature, however, the desire to travel and explore the technical world was significant. As a pupil of the Kutná Hora grammar school, Šlechta often commuted to Prague, he was intensely interested in mathematics and logic, and his main hobby was playing chess with technical students.

His study interest after grammar school was thus logically directed to the mechanical engineering department of the C. a k. Czech Technical University in Prague [20], where he was matriculated as a full student of mechanical engineering in October 1914. After one semester, he was drafted into the Home Guard soldier in the spring of 1915 and spent the First World War on the Russian and Italian battlefields, where he was severely wounded in the arm [20].

He was superannuated for his injuries, treated in a Prague hospital, and granted a partial pension of 600 Austrian crowns. Later, he was engaged in technical armament service. At the end of World War I, he was already enrolled again at the Prague Technical School and continued his studies.

For the first state exam, he was particularly engaged in the study of several areas of mathematics.² He took his first state examination in mathematics in December 1917 and October 1918, with excellent and very good grades, respectively [21]. On 31 March 1919, he passed his first state examination with distinction [21]. He continued his studies in 1918/1919 and 1919/1920, when he focused on the study of mechanical technology. He chose Josef Pazourek's lectures *Účetnictví v závodech průmyslových (Accounting in Industrial Plants from the optional subjects)*.³ He took

²He was already involved in higher mathematics at high school and in 1914, he won one of the first prizes for solving problems from the Union of Czechoslovak Mathematicians.

³Josef Pazourek (3 January 1862, Hořice–26 November 1933, Prague) was a professor of business sciences at the Czech Tech-

the second state examination on 20 February 1921 with a very good grade [21], already at the Czech Technical University in Prague, which was a continuation of the abolished C. a k. Czech Technical University in Prague.

After finishing his studies at the Czech Technical University in Prague, he joined the sugar department of the First Czech-Moravian Machine Factory in 1922, where he participated in the reconstruction of the sugar factory in Ovčary in the Kolín region. The more extensive reconstruction of the local sugar factory was carried out jointly by Brát a spol., Českomoravská továrna na stroje, and Škodovy závody [21].

3. WORK EXPERIENCE IN THE USA AND RESIDENCE IN AMERICAN COMPANIES (1922–1926)

A person who significantly influenced Šlechta's intention to do his internship in the USA was civil engineer Stanislav Špaček (1876–1954) [18]. Vojtěch Jarěš (1888–1965),⁴ later a professor who taught at the Institute of Materials Science and Metallography at the Mechanical Engineering Department of the Prague Institute of Technology and served on the editorial board of Engineering Horizon, to which Šlechta sent professional articles from the USA from 1924, who wrote a positive review of Šlechta's dissertation [22], and who was also a member of the committee for its defence (1929) [23], also played an important role in Šlechta's further professional development. He was also present at Šlechta's associate professorship (1932),⁵ nominated him to the Fourth Department

nical University in Prague (ČVUT) and an associate professor at Charles University. In the academic year 1929–1930, he was the rector of the Czech Technical University in Prague. He was the author of a number of textbooks and editor of Otto's Business Dictionary.

⁴Prof. Vojtěch Jarěš (26 December 1888 Chrást u Plzně–27 January 1965 Prague), professor of material science and metallography at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering until 1959. In 1917, he habilitated at the Czech Technical University and became a full professor on 1 September 1921. Member of the Masaryk Academy of Labour, chairman of the Czechoslovak National Research Council, later laureate of the State Prize, academician of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, appointed 12 November 1952 – in the field of material science, Klement Gottwald State Prize (1952). He worked at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering from 1920 to 1959. Dissertation Composition in theory and practice (manuscript, photos, tables), rigorosum held on 3 February 1917, unanimously excellent result. Vojtěch Jarěš previously worked for Breitfeld-Daněk, later for Waldes and Co., and at the age of 33 became a full professor at the Czech Technical University in Prague. In 1946, he was elected an extraordinary member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science and Art (CAVU), and in 1952, he became an academician of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (CSAS). It is interesting to look into Professor Jarěš's family background. His father, Josef Jarěš, as a professional head of the Ministry of Social Welfare, was one of the prominent Freemasons of the First Republic (Dílo Praha lodge). His sister, Alžběta Jarěšová, married the philosopher Ladislav Rieger and their son Ladislav Svante Rieger was a Czech mathematician, who was particularly interested in mathematical logic and axiomatic set theory.

⁵It has not been possible to find Šlechta's habilitation thesis in the Czech Technical University in Prague archives. Neither

of the Masaryk Academy of Labour (1934) [24], and significantly influenced Šlechta's obtaining of a professorship in the organisation of production and operation of industrial factories (1946) [25]. Together with Šlechta, he served on the Commission for the Ransko Factory (1945–1948), which was to become a model for the industrial and entrepreneurial activities of the employees of the Czech Technical University in Prague, and was in contact with him even when Emanuel Šlechta was Minister of Technology.

It can be concluded that in his scientific and practical beginnings, Šlechta met the technical elite of Czechoslovakia. In the following decades, his growth was largely curtailed by the rapid social changes in the period of occupation and after 1948, but this does not mean that the influence of this group disappeared completely.

During his scientific and pedagogical career, Emanuel Šlechta regularly published professional articles in the Czech professional press. In most cases, it was *Strojnický obzor* (Engineering Horizon) founded by the Czech Technical Association.⁶ He also published a number of articles during his internship in the USA in 1924–1927.⁷

In 1923, Emanuel Šlechta went to the USA with the formal support of the Masaryk Academy of Labour. Stanislav Špaček⁸ was behind his study trip to the

its title nor its scope is available. There is only a short note in the protocol of Šlechta's dissertation that it was borrowed by Professor Vojtěch Jareš in 1932 for the purpose of Šlechta's habilitation.

⁶In 1895, the *Česká matice technická* (Czech Technical Association) (ČMT) was founded, most of whose members were connected with Czech technology in Prague. The CMT was established to support the publication of scientific technical literature. In addition to the journal *Strojnický obzor*, the library *Technický průvodce* was founded, where technical literature is still published today. In its more than 100 years of activity, it has published nearly 500 articles with a total circulation of over 1.6 million copies. The CMT has gained great respect for its work among engineers and the public. It has cooperated closely with the Czech Technical University in Prague, the Society of Engineers and Architects, the Union of Czech Mathematicians and Physicists, the Czechoslovak Electrotechnical Association, the Czechoslovak Chemical Society, the Society of Czechoslovak Surveyors, etc. From an initial 377 members in 1895, the membership base has steadily increased, reaching over 23 000 members in 1949.

⁷Main publishing achievements in relation to Šlechta: [26–34].

⁸Stanislav Špaček (1876–1954) completed his studies at the Czech Technical University in Prague in 1901. Soon after graduation he entered practice, his first job was in a construction company, then he worked at the Directorate of State Railways in Plzeň, in a bridge factory, and from 1904 to 1920 in the services of the political administration, where he was mainly involved in road, bridge, and water construction projects. After the Provincial Commission for the regulation of rivers in the Kingdom of Bohemia approved his application for an extraordinary leave of absence for a study trip, he went to America for the first time in 1915. Another visit followed in June 1919, when he was sent on a political and economic study mission. Six months later, he advanced to the post of Secretary of State in the Foreign Office. In September 1920, Špaček was awarded the title of Legation Councilor by President T. G. Masaryk and in August of that year, he was assigned to the Czechoslovak Legation (embassy) in Washington as a technical attaché. Špaček was not the only

USA. Together with Šlechta, Ing. Vladimír Mužík. On the basis of an agreement with Špacek, Šlechta went to the USA for a three-year internship, where he worked in a number of industrial enterprises [36].

On his, on 18 April 1923, he was hired by *The Baldwin Locomotive Works* in Philadelphia as a student-worker in various departments, later working as a foreman on drilling machines and then as an assistant to the head of the shop department, which consisted of 180 workers. He left the firm on February 16, 1924, at his own request.

At the same time, he was admitted as a member of the *American Society of Mechanical Engineers* (A. S. M. E., founded 1880) and participated in the work of the shop committee (in the Philadelphia branch of the Society).

In February 1924, Šlechta traveled to Ohio, where he accepted a position as an engineer with the *Niles Tool Works* in Hamilton. He was first employed in the shops as the foreman's assistant, and later as a machine tool designer for the locomotive shops, in addition to being assigned to the standardisation and moulding systems department.

From 18 September 1925, he was employed by the *Great Western Sugar Co.* in Denver, Colorado, as assistant chief engineer. After managing the stock parts and machinery warehouse, he was put in charge of the construction of the new plant, which was completed in October 1926. He left the company when the work was completed on 1 December 1926. After completing his American internship, he returned to Czechoslovakia in December 1926.

Already at the beginning of 1925 in the USA, however, Emanuel Šlechta was thinking about what he would do after his return to Czechoslovakia. In a letter to Stanislav Špaček on 24 January 1925 [37], he wrote:

"... As far as my plans in the Czechoslovakia are concerned, I am not thinking about it yet. I correspond a lot with Director Palouš,⁹ and if nothing changes by the time of my return, I would go back there. There are better prospects there than at Skoda, which, apart from being outside Prague, pays a pittance. I don't know, but for us engineers Škoda has always had an unsympathetic reputation. Besides, I am in contact with the Union, where I would like to work, even unofficially, on the industrial geography and statistics of our Czechoslovakia after my return. I have been promised support in this matter."

Czechoslovak ambassador to the USA, but he was one of the few who could provide comprehensive information about his travels that could serve both theory and practice in the Czechoslovakia. He arranged internships for many Czechoslovak engineers in the United States, thus furthering the transfer of knowledge to practice. See [18, 35].

⁹Meant Ing. Gustav Palouš, Chief Director for Technical Affairs at ČKD.

4. RETURN TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND CONSULTING PRACTICE (1926–1929)

In December 1926, after three years in the USA, he returned to Czechoslovakia. It is clear from his letters to Stanislav Špaček that his return home was not exactly idyllic. Šlechta was already 32 years old, he had been away for too long, and his local contacts had broken down. Development in the new republic went on without him and he felt like a foreigner. He was essentially starting from scratch, i.e. he was to go back to the drawing board again. His American dreams were very different from the Czech reality and no one seemed to be interested in his hard-earned experience. From January 1927, he tried in vain to find a job that would match his qualifications. He was unsuccessful and considered going back abroad.

In January 1927 he wrote to Stanislav Špaček, bitterly:

“... surely you will understand how one feels if after a long time, one comes among one’s own-and, besides, among strangers, their envies, and petty intrigues. I have happily transported the luggage and am now at home sorting, writing things down, and restoring myself. I don’t think I shall be applying for anything any time soon until I have got it all straightened out and ready both on my desk and in my notebooks-and in my head.” [19, 11 January 1927].

In a letter dated 11 February 1927 [19, 11 February 1927], he was already openly complaining:

“... I am surprised at the heartlessness I have encountered in certain circles and, on the contrary, at the cordiality of those with whom I did not expect it. This partly changes my original lines. In all this, I still recognise that I must keep and rather emphasise the American one: with my own strength, to go in a zigzag way and the path of least resistance-like lightning, first to strike and then to thunder! But I am not enthusiastic. Which is understandable. It’s gone so far as to putting a picture of Denver on my coffee table.”

In a letter dated 7 March 1927, he wondered resignedly what to do next:

“... I am still working on various things, but since I observe that 10 weeks of “idleness” is already more than I can bear, I will decide during this month what I will do. If my parents were a little younger, it would be easier for me to decide.”

Finally, in the greatest need, he joined the Škoda plant in Hradec Králové in April 1927. The company had a depressing effect on him, especially the low quality and level of production. His aim was to get to the Prague headquarters as soon as possible and, if he failed, to leave the place as quickly as possible. So he went back to the drawing board again, but briefly. He had not been at Škoda even two months when fortune smiled on him and at the beginning of June 1927, when he got a job at the Bata works in Zlín [19, 5 June 1927].

He joined the company’s shoe company as a consulting engineer, which was at the peak of production and innovation at that time. He stayed with Bata for about 6 months. There, he gained invaluable experience of a large corporation (or rather, a company that was becoming a large corporation), and got back into the “American” work pace.

During his time at Bata, Šlechta completely rebuilt the machine shops, forge, and hardening shop and designed the location of the warehouse. He arranged the tool room and took inventory of all tools and machines, investigated the correct speed of the machines, standardised the knives and the production process, and participated in arranging mass production.

However, it soon became clear that the situation was not going to be rosy for Šlechta at the company. The stumbling block was that he was not going to blindly adopt Tomáš Bata’s views. According to Šlechta, he demanded nonsensical procedures such as assigning work to engineers and wanted everything to be done immediately, preferably overnight. Šlechta stated that, for example, it took not days or weeks, but at least a year to reorganise the administrative shop (basically a “shoddy” workshop) into a modern machine shop with machines. Nevertheless, during his time at Bata, he elaborated and supplemented a study based on the American practice, which became the basis of his dissertation *Hospodářská velikost výroby sériové* (*The Economic Lot Sizes of Serial Production*) from 1928, published in the same year by the publishing house František Hřivnáč.

In his letter to Stanislav Špaček, dated 28 August 1927 [19, 28 August 1927], he summarised his findings:

“Dear Mr. Councillor, I have been in Zlín for over a month and a half now and the experience I have gained is truly invaluable. There is not much technical in them, Zlín is still virgin ground in that respect, but rather psychology. I’m getting to know the flip side of it all, and I’m also learning how important the human element is in everything.”

I have come to the conclusion that the generation that will rationalise economic life in our country has yet to be educated. For after all, it is all a sense of order, an order that springs from moral necessity rather than material necessity. I think that the Czech man has no sense, no moral sense of order. He loves cleanliness and beauty, but organised order is repugnant to him, because our Slavic soul loves romanticism and spirituality and variety, which is mistakenly called freedom of life and spirit. We are somehow more instinctive, undisciplined, closer to nature. The Anglo-Saxon, the German by the sea, and the Swede have freed themselves from this influence of nature (which is just what prevents organised order), and order has become to them a necessity like justice. I do not know if I am expressing myself clearly. But I have the impression that to write to our present generation about order and rationalisation is like preaching to the pagans about the Christianity of Paul.”

It brings me back to the idea of being a teacher. I resist this idea tenaciously, it seems to me at times like a great weakness: instead of money, wanting to rot young souls? America has infected me, and I keep thinking of the fabulous growth of their people, and I think, shouldn't I try to do that too? I haven't written anything for a long time. I don't know what to do. It's more purely technical things that I'm coming back to today that I want to finish, because they've been in the works for 3 years. Dr. Zimmerler wrote me that MAP will publish my dissertation, but I don't know in what form. I read recently, in the journal "Organisation", a study on a similar matter, but very imperfect. I would almost like to publish it in German. What do you think? I wonder if they'll accept my work in the autumn. I'm told that Prof. Grossl has it already. Are you planning anything now, Mr. Rado? I am completely cut off from the world here, and when I had the opportunity to go to Brno recently, I appreciated it as much as my first trip to Prague. Your devoted Šlechta, address: E. Š., T and A. Bata Engineering Plant. Zlín!"

He left Bata in mid-November 1927, but continued to maintain contact with the company, as is evident from his letter to Stanislav Špaček dated 16 August 1928 [19, 16 August 1928]:

"Dear Mr. Councillor, in accordance with your wish, I have written to Mr. Cekota in Zlín to send you the published book on Bata and to give you more information during your visit to the factory."

His experience in companies in the USA and in Bata's factories made Šlechta convinced that he wanted to become independent. He found that he could not be a team player and submit to tasks with which he disagreed internally. He thought he was better than that.

In December 1927, he became a silent partner in the machine shop of businessman Aupěk in Kutná Hora [19, 11 November 1927], [38]. Apparently, he used the funds he had earned in America here. It was a machine shop with 15 machines, a foundry, and a forge, which at the time of the boom employed about 45 people. He wanted to introduce mass production here based on the American model and consulted Stanislav Špaček about it. He considered what would be the most suitable product (he suggested, for example, American locks with flat keys). He also considered items for modern households, e.g. burners, refrigeration, winterizing machines etc. He hoped to get a license for the production from American companies. His plans were somewhat hampered by the coming economic crisis. However, it also brought a demand from entrepreneurs to transform their companies into a different kind of production.

On 7 March 1929, he obtained his civil engineering licence for machine construction [19, 1 August 1929].

In a letter dated 1 August 1929, he wrote to Stanislav Špaček [19, 1 August 1929]:

"I take the liberty to inform you that on 1 August

this year, I opened an office as an officially authorized civil engineer for machine construction at the above address. The scope of my activity is: Reorganisation of plants, mainly in the metal and chemical industries; preparation of machinery plans; estimates of buildings and machinery; introduction of new methods of operation; introduction of economical machines for transporting materials etc., analysis of operations, market. Purchase and brokerage of machinery, equipment, raw materials, mainly foreign and transport machinery. Information concerning technical news, licensed production, and purchasing sources. Technical and economic information from the following countries: Czechoslovakia, Germany, England, France, and the United States, possibly also Japan. This information is made possible by my personal acquaintance in the technical and economic circles of the above-mentioned countries. Correspondence: Czech, German, French and English.

Remaining in constant direct contact with T. Aupěk's foundry and machine shop in Kutná Hora, I am able to supply, at competitive prices, all grey cast iron castings, both mechanical and commercial, all construction and locksmith work, especially transport machinery. In perfect respect Ing. E. Šlechta."

In addition to his interest in the Aupěk machine shop, he has focused on external consulting for industrial companies. He was on his own, had no employees, so it was easier for him to succeed in an increasingly difficult economic situation during the crisis years.

In the following years, he completely reorganised a number of companies, operationally, administratively, and economically. Through his consultancy work, he introduced American methods of production management into a number of then top Czechoslovak industrial enterprises. Among his clients were mainly domestic brands and institutions, the aforementioned Bata plants, the Plzeň Škoda plants, and the capital city of Prague.

As part of his consultancy work in the 1920s and 1930s, after his return from the USA, he published a number of professional works focused on the organisation of production,¹⁰ in addition to publishing professional articles in domestic and foreign journals.¹¹ He became the editor-in-chief of the journal *Organisace (Organisation)* and the *Bulletin of the Engineering Chamber (Věstník Inženýrské komory)*, a member of the editorial board of *Strojnického obzoru (Engineering Horizon)*, and gave numerous lectures for Czechoslovak Radio and in various professional associations.

He promoted Fordism and introduced American methods of production management through his con-

¹⁰These works included [39–45].

¹¹E.g., *Technicki List* in Belgrade, *Mechanical Engineering in New York*, *Zeitschrift für Organisation* in Berlin, *Buletinul Institutului Românesc de organizare științifică* and *Munci* in Bucharest; he also wrote and published a number of national economic articles in journals: *National Economic Horizon*, *Economic Policy*, *Economic Views*, *Accounting Letters* etc.

sultancy work. He based it on studies for his dissertation. Some of his books on the subject were anthologies of already published newspaper articles.¹² The book *Americký industrialism (American Industrialism)* was published by Emanuel Šlechta in 1928 in Prague by the *Prometheus*¹³ Mining and Metallurgical Publishing House [40, p. 2] on the basis of three documents. The first was a presentation titled *Vývoj průmyslové výroby ve Spojených státech amerických (The Development of Industrial Production in the United States of America)*, given on 21 March 1927 in the lecture series of the Masaryk Academy of Labour, titled *O americkém duchu v technické práci (On the American Spirit in Technical Work)* [48]. The second, titled *Americký industrialism (American Industrialism)*, was delivered by Šlechta on 6 February 1927 at the Industrial Club in Prague and later, his lecture was also printed in *Obzor národohospodářský (National Economic Horizon)* [49], and the third was the text *Vývoj kartelů a trustů v Severní Americe (The Development of Cartels and Trusts in North America)*, also published in *Obzor národohospodářský (National Economic Horizon)*. Šlechta gained a detailed knowledge of the problems of cartels and trusts while working at *The Baldwin Locomotive Works* in Philadelphia and *The Great Western Sugar Company* in Denver, Colorado. In his work, he outlined how these companies operate on a day-to-day basis. This experience proved pivotal, for example, during his time at the *Bata Works* in Zlín. He used his knowledge, which he gained from the developing situation in the USA in 1901–1902, when the economic crisis led to the creation of mammoth enterprises, such as *The Standard Oil Company* or *The United States Steel Corporation*.

He described the situation not only in the USA, but also in England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, France, where the 1910 Penal Code prohibited business combinations, Belgium, Italy, etc. He noted that the syndicate was a higher form of cartel. He stated that the earliest German cartels and syndicates had been formed in the 1860s. He realised that the distance of the headquarters from the actual factories was a disadvantage of trusts because of the loss of direct contact with the workers and the enterprise, and this led to a loss of understanding of the work assignments. The opposite is true of the current situation in the US, for example, where corporate headquarters are located at the centre of factories and companies. A case in point is the reorganisation of *The Niles Bement Pond Co.*

¹²For example, [46] was a collection of technical and economic lectures and debates grouped by Ing. These lectures were previously published in *Průmyslový věstník (Industrial Bulletin)* (1924), *Obzor národohospodářský (National Economic Horizon)* (1927 and 1928), *Strojnický obzor (Engineering horizon)* (1927) and *Lidové noviny* (1925).

¹³The book was published as [47] organized by Ing. Bedřich Mansfeld. It consisted of three separate texts of lectures delivered by Šlechta on different occasions in 1927. The texts were again based on his American experience.

Machine Tools, which has moved its administrative headquarters (outside sales) from New York to Ohio, where it is based. Also noteworthy are the Shecht's increases in employee leave or the use of their own sales organisation, domestic and foreign, to trade in commodities (e.g. oil and steel) other than native (e.g. coal and textiles). The *American Industrialism* was followed by Šlechta's *Energy and Labor in American Industrialism* [40, p. 2].

In a follow-up publication, Emanuel Šlechta attempted to statistically capture two components of production costs in the United States, energy and human labour. In the introduction, Emanuel Šlechta briefly describes the content of the book: “*It is impossible to value industrial production well if we do not know the components that make up the cost of production, namely, materials, energy, and human labour. The relative proportion of these components determines the nature of production. If in America, there is an excess of energy and an abundance of materials, but rather a scarcity of human labour, in Europe the opposite is true*“ [41], he wrote in *Kutná Hora* in April 1929. In the first part of *Energy Statistics* of the United States, Šlechta analysed energy resources (coal, kerosene, natural gas, water power, total energy production, energy, and human labour) and in the second part, titled *Labor Statistics of the United States*, he discussed the environment of American factories (in chapters on Worker Statistics, Wages and Hours, Profit Sharing, Working Conditions, Working Methods, Working Resources, How America is Reducing the Cost of Production, and Injury Statistics).

At the same time, Šlechta also served as a member of the Fourth Department of the Masaryk Academy of Labour, a corresponding member of the Social Institute, a member of the Society of Czechoslovak Engineers and the Board of Directors of the Engineering Chamber, a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, a member of the International Committee for Scientific Organization in Geneva, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Ministry of Post [21].

The creation of large economic units in particular branches of industry and commerce were an inspiration to Šlechta after 1948, when he attempted to merge them with the Soviet model of state management of the economy and to apply it in the nationalisation of industrial companies in Czechoslovakia into national enterprises administered by the state.

5. BUSINESS ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICE AS AN EXPERT WITNESS (1929–1938)

Emanuel Šlechta expanded his activities tirelessly. From 1929, he held the position of permanent expert witness in the field of general engineering at the Regional Commercial Court in Prague. From 1930 to 1938, he was a permanent advisor on the financing



FIGURE 1. Administrative building at 7 Lazarská Street.

of industry by Anglobank and the Land Bank in Bohemia [50].

He also had a share in the *Továrna na gramofonové desky ESTA (ESTA phonograph record factory)*. Together with František Hašek,¹⁴ Mr. Šolcký, director of the consumer cooperatives, and Jaroslav Šalda, who significantly influenced the operation of the Melantrich publishing house as a shareholder.

He opened a consulting office in Prague, first at 12 Na Poříčí Street (in the YMCA palace), then at 18 Národní třída (near Reduta). In 1931, he moved to the new modern building of the Mining and Metallurgical Society at 7 Lazarska Street in Prague II, where the Czechoslovak National Committee for the Scientific Organisation of Labour was also located. He also lived in this building until his arrest by the Gestapo in 1939 (see Figure 1).

He put his extensive experience in the banking sector to good use in the board of directors of the Prague branch of the Moravian Bank (*Moravobanka*), which provided contact between the head office and the *Živnostenská banka*. His work at *Moravská banka* was closely related to his work for the shoe concern *Bata*, whose Prague branch was unofficially

headed by Václav Verunáč (1893–1960), Šlechta's long-time colleague and collaborator from the *Československý národní komitét pro vědeckou organizaci práce (Czechoslovak National Committee for the Scientific Organisation of Labour)*.

His participation in the committee, frequent contact with Václav Verunáč [53], and foreign trips probably had another purpose besides basic scientific advisory activities. This was the intelligence work in American and German factories for the Bata concern [50, interview with Rudolf Sedláček, owner of a banking establishment at 26 Anglická Street, Prague 2, Irská, formerly no. 6 (4 November 1946)].

Just before the outbreak of the Second World War, Šlechta held 3 600 shares in the *Pražské továrny na barvy a laky, akc. spol., (Prague Paint and Varnish Factory, akc. spol., Praha-Vysočany)* [50]. In the same period, he also owned 300 shares of the company *Sublima, akciová společnost pro impregnování dříví (Sublima, a joint-stock company for impregnating timber)* [50]. In both cases, the aim was to save the property of the Jewish owners so that their companies would not be confiscated. In the case of the *Prague Paint and Varnish Factory, Akc. spol., Praha-Vysočany*, it was about helping the Jewish Klein family, who had been deported to Terezín. Although Šlechta himself was later arrested and imprisoned, he managed to keep the shares of the *Prague Paint and Varnish Factory* in his possession throughout the war, and then returned them to the Kleins [50].

The shares in *Sublima, a joint-stock company for impregnating wood*, were intended to save the property of the Jewish Fröhlich family, relatives of his wife Anna. Members of this family were not as fortunate

¹⁴František HAŠEK, the founder of *Bankovní dům Hašek a spol. (Banking House Hašek)*, was the president of the stock exchange and one of the main shareholders of the Melantrich publishing house. He was executed on 5 June 1942 for his unwillingness to cooperate with the Nazis. Hašek was a successful banker with roots in southern Bohemia. As a young man of 22, he was already appointed prokurist of the Central Bank of Czech Savings Banks. It was said that he was the youngest ever bank procurator ever in Austria-Hungary. Two years later, he joined the management of the Prague Real Estate and Credit Bank and in 1925, he founded his own Banking House Hašek a spol., see [51, 52].

as the Kleins and perished in Auschwitz during the war.

In 1928, Emanuel Šlechta became secretary of the *Czechoslovak National Committee for Rationalization* [21]. In the same year, he became a member of the *American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the Taylor Society* [21]. He was also delegated to the Prague City Council on behalf of the National Socialist Party. At the membership meeting of the *Masaryk Academy of Labour* on 28 November 1928, on the recommendation of Stanislav Špaček and Václav Verunáč, he was elected an expert of the VI. National Economic and Social Department of the MAP. The election was valid for a period of 6 years, after which he could be re-elected. On 14 December 1928, he took the oath of office in the hands of the President of MAP, Ing. Emil Zimmmer [54].

He remained in constant contact with Stanislav Špaček. On 21 June 1928 [19, 21 June 1928], Šlechta wrote to him:

“Dear Mr. Councillor, Enclosed I beg to send you a copy of a letter which I have sent to all members of American engineering societies (about 25) other than the Taylor Society and Industrial Eng., which I do not know and whose affiliation could be discussed separately. I now intend to proceed as follows: when I have received most of the replies, I shall write to Hatsford and Clark and to the Paris Section (Mr. Webb) to tell me “By-Lanes” and at the same time I shall write to the ...centre to see if we can count on a minimum of financial support. Then I would draw up a financial plan, the party, and call a meeting. I’m counting on your advice and help in this, Mr. Rada. Your devoted Šlechta.”

In times of the economic crisis, his thorough knowledge of technical English kept him afloat and became one of his main sources of income. At a time when Czechoslovak industrial enterprises were stagnating due to the economic crisis, Šlechta tried to select high-quality technical literature abroad, which he hoped would find an audience in Czechoslovakia.

On 16 August 1928 [19, letter from E. Šlechta to S. Špaček dated 16 August 1928], he told Stanislav Špaček, the chief trade union councillor of the Ministry of Public Works: *“I looked at Clark’s book and estimated that the translation would take 4–6 months. I would estimate the fee at 2–3 thousand CZK. The difficult part of the translation would be the creation of new terminology. After your return from vacation, I hope to discuss the translation in more detail.”*

On 12 September 1930 [19, 12 September 1930], he wrote again to Špaček (Mr. Dr. Ing. Špaček, Chief Trade Union Councillor of the Ministry of Public Works, Presslova Street No. 6, Prague-Smíchov):

“Dear Mr. Councillor, I acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 11th of this month, and I believe that the books proposed for publication by ORBIS would not be suitable at the present time, when there still seems to be a lack of translations of good valuable works and

organisations. If ORBIS is to publish a book dealing with a particular rationalisation problem, I believe it would be W. Clark’s Gantt Diagrams, a translation of which is fully ready, and in which there has been a considerable interest in my lectures at the Industrial Club, the Society of Chemists, etc. The book could be prepared for the press in a fortnight with the prefaces.”

The book was eventually published in 1931 under the title *Wallace Clark, Gantt charts: an aid to business management, graphical control of work*. On 22 June 1931, he wrote to Stanislav Špaček [19, letter from E. Šlechta to S. Špaček dated 22 June 1931]:

“Dear Mr. Councillor, I have spoken to Mr. Person (director of the Taylor Company) in Geneva. He hopes that he will be able to keep to his plan and will come to Prague on Saturday, 1 p.m. He had no particular wishes regarding his stay. I believe that the 1st Saturday could be a meeting with Persephone at SIA – Sunday would be free – Monday Zlín – Tuesday back and departure to Prague. I don’t think there will be time for much more. Only Ing. Voprsal for a meeting with Mr. Person – no one else so far. I’m afraid this is a very bad time to do this...”

He also contributed to the publication of the *Encyclopedia of Performance* [55].

On the contrary, the overall difficult situation contributed to the fact that he fully immersed himself in the study of foreign technical publications and had enough time to analyse them in detail. When the economic crisis subsided, he had an extraordinary technical knowledge that made him a true expert in his discipline.

Šlechta’s participation in international congresses of scientific management.

In addition to technical literature, international congresses were an important source of information for Šlechta on technical innovations in his field of work management. In the interwar period, he attended seven international congresses of scientific management, in Prague (1924), Brussels (1925), Rome (1927), Paris (1929), Amsterdam (1932), London (1935), and Washington (1938) [56]. Businessmen, engineers, civil servants, and trade union leaders organised these specialised international meetings on the best way to modernise the production process.

Emanuel Šlechta was staying in the USA at the time of the First Congress in Prague, but he wrote with interest to Stanislav Špaček on 8 November 1924 [19, 8 November 1924]: *“Hamilton: Dear Mr. I have followed in detail the course of the Pimco Congress, firstly from our magazines and newspapers, secondly from American reports, and finally, from German engineering magazines and also from personal reports of some of my acquaintances. I regretted that it was not attended by the Reich Germans, who, under working conditions very similar to ours, had advanced considerably further and in many respects more scientifically than even here in America. Otherwise, the Congress was certainly a success for the cause and helped our*

industry to publicity or wider recognition. The general tenor of the various American reports on our industry is that it is not as bad as they thought. And that, incidentally, is my present opinion. All we're missing is dollars and advertising. I can imagine your pains, Mr. Rado, in organizing the Congress, for I know our conditions, which are full of envy, hostility, and all the vices of a small and petty life. I know it myself: since I left for the United States I have lost at least half of my friends in Prague!"

After the first congress of the International Labour Organisation in Prague in 1924, others were held. Since 1928, Šlechta attended them as secretary of the Czechoslovak National Committee for Scientific Organisation, as well as the conferences of the International Institute for Scientific Organisation in Geneva (1930 and 1931) [21].

In 1931, he went to Vienna [21] for a study visit and subsequently received a scholarship from the curatorship of the Rašín Fund for a study trip to Germany. The Rašín Fund was established at the Council of Researchers and was headed by the botanist Bohumil Němec (presidential candidate for the Agrarian Party) together with Dr. Domin. During the First Republic, the Czechoslovak National Research Council (CSNRB), which began its activities in 1924 and was incorporated into the International Research Council on 1 January 1925, was an important institution.

Šlechta went to Germany after his habilitation to study working methods and used the knowledge he had gained for his lectures at the CTU in Prague. On 9 January 1933 [19, 9 January 1933], he wrote to Stanislav Špaček:

"Dear Mr. Councillor, forgive me for bothering you with this private matter: I would like to go to the United States this summer and I would like to combine my trip with a visit to factories, but mainly to schools-universities and faculties for industrial management. I think I could also give a few lectures on various industrial topics. I would like to cover part of the costs for this trip from the lectures – and the rest I would like to cover with some scholarship from American funds (Carnegie, Rockefeller, etc.). Could you help me in this matter, dear Mr. Rado? I would take the liberty of visiting you in this matter. I would especially appreciate your support in obtaining lectures in the USA, as your name will be a great recommendation to me in engineering societies. I hope you will not refuse me your assistance, and I am your very devoted Šlechta."

On 4 May 1933, he wrote to JUDr. Přemysl Šámal:

"Dear Brother..,

Forgive me for bothering you with this request: I am now negotiating with the Rockefeller Foundation in Paris for a study grant for about three months next year in the United States to study especially the effect of rationalisation on unemployment. I have been collecting material on this topic for several years and am now gradually working it out – last year I brought

back some data from Germany and Switzerland (from the International Labour Office mainly) and I have quite a bit of data from my own work at home.

The fellowship I am applying for is under the so-called Social Studies Rockefeller Foundation. My aim now is to gain personal influence directly at the headquarters of the Foundation in Paris so that my application will be favourably received. The Ministry of Education has already promised me, unofficially, that it will support it, for the reason that as a private lecturer, I am lecturing on the technical organisation of industrial plants.

I would ask your kind opinion whether our envoy, Dr. Osusky, could intercede in the Foundation for this request of mine. Mr. Osusky, however, does not know me – and I wanted to ask you if you could recommend me to him.

For your information, I would like to inform you that I have been in the United States for four years in the years 1923–1927, so I know the conditions there very well – I was employed in factories there, first as a worker – a machinist, later as an engineer.

If you wish, I will send you my curriculum vitae so that you can be better informed. I beg your pardon for bothering you with this request.

I would like to address this issue of unemployment – I already have much evidence that it is not an insoluble problem.

Yours sincerely, your devoted Šlechta" [57]

On 2 June 1933, he applied for a passport for Geneva. In the following years, congresses on the organisation of labour were held in Amsterdam (1932), London (1935), and Washington (1938) [56].

The 5th International Congress of Scientific Management was held at the *Colonial Institut* in Amsterdam, from 18 to 23 July 1932. Topics discussed included costs, markets, technical and intellectual training of masters to rationalise, promotion systems, rationalisation as part of education, retail distribution costs, agricultural labor, and rationalisation in various types of industry. Papers from many countries were submitted through national associations or committees and were published in two volumes prior to the meeting. Only abstracts were read at the congress sessions. Excursions were arranged to Amsterdam, Eindhoven, Zuider Zee, and Rotterdam as well as a ride on the Continental Railway.

From 15 to 20 July 1935, the VI. *International Congress for Scientific Management* was held in London, where Emanuel Šlechta gave a lecture on the *Reorganisation of work in the locomotive workshops of the Czechoslovak State Railways* [58, p. 2] and was also elected a member of the executive committee of the organisation.

The conference was hosted by the Council nominated by a number of companies interested in one phase or another of the management movement and technical societies who appointed an executive committee consisting of outstanding industry entrepreneurs

and management figures. The Chairman was Sir George Beharrell and the Patron was H. R. H. The Prince of Wales. The organisation was in the hands of committees, the chairmen of which were Dr. E. F. Armstrong, Sir Henry Fowler, Mr. G. R. Freeman, Sir George Courthope, and Professor Winifred Cullis. The object was to show that Britain had factories and business organisations entirely in accordance with the most modern practice, and to raise public interest in the subject of scientific management generally.

In September 1938, Šlechta and his wife Anna¹⁵ went to the USA as official delegates of the Czechoslovak National Committee for Scientific Organisation to Washington D. C. to the *VII. International Congress for Scientific Management CIOS*, where he presented a paper on the topic of *Continuous and Intermittent Production*. At the same time, he was sent by President E. Beneš to visit the 32nd President of the USA, Franklin D. Roosevelt, to inform him about the growing political crisis surrounding Czechoslovakia. Instead of President Roosevelt, who had fallen ill, he was received in Washington in a private hearing by Secretary of State Cordell Hull (1871–1955). He became the longest-serving U.S. Secretary of State in history, a position he held for 11 years (1933–1944) in Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration during much of World War II. In 1945, he won the Nobel Peace Prize for his part in the creation of the United Nations; President Roosevelt called him the father of the United Nations.

The financial background to this journey was recounted many years later by Hynek Konečný, a former Brno businessman and vice-chairman of the Moravian Bank. In the minutes of 26 April 1955 he literally stated:

¹⁵Anna Šlechtová (1910–1960) – born Anna Frölichová. She was the second wife of the post-war chairman of the Czechoslovak Socialist Party (previously a member of the National Socialist Party) and a member of the post-war government, Emanuel Šlechta, who had a son from his first marriage (he died in a glider crash). She was 15 years younger than E. Šlechta and the marriage took place in 1937. Just before World War II, A. Šlecht gave up her Israeli religion and was baptised. During World War II, when her husband was imprisoned in Buchenwald, she stayed in his summer residence built in the 1930s in Slapy and lived off the dividends of the Klein company, whose holdings before the war Šlechta took over to save Jewish property. At that time, she employed a housekeeper and a personal driver. After the liberation, she headed the Melantrich publishing house as director from August 1949, and published in *Svobodny Slovo*. The status she gained helped her become a patron of visual artists, a rarity in the 1950s. She had an ARS gallery built on the ground floor of the Melantrich building on Wenceslas Square (the collection Šlechtová created was admirable) and tried to run Melantrich as a publishing house independent of the Communist Party. Nevertheless, both spouses signed up for the StB several times. In January 1959, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia decided to withdraw the Czechoslovak Socialist Party from its affiliates. At the same time, there were purges in the Melantrich management, mainly due to the embezzlement of 159 000 crowns. Anna Šlechtová, who together with her husband committed suicide by taking barbiturates on 17 March 1960, had to leave the management of Melantrich and the newspaper *Svobodné slovo*. Both are buried in the family tomb in Kutná Hora. See [59, p. 1275].

“Hynek Konečný, a former Brno businessman and deputy chairman of the Moravian Bank, mentioned in an interview that during the First Republic the Moravian Bank paid a certain amount of money for industrial espionage to Dr. Ing. Šlechta, who was then sent to America for this purpose.” [50].

Upon his return to his homeland, E. Šlechta was arrested for the first time and his wife, Anna Šlechtová, was also interrogated by the Gestapo. The results of the investigation were not preserved in any materials. Both Šlechta and his wife were released. Later, however, Emanuel Šlechta was arrested again, and his imprisonment in the Buchenwald concentration camp between 1939 and 1945 led to the violent interruption of his publishing activities.

It was only many years later, as a professor at the Czech Technical University in Prague, that he was able to present the lectures he had delivered at the last two congresses in the form of a publication. In 1947, he published a technical book, *Increasing Performance* [58, Chapters: Economy of transport, 52. Economy of driving gears, 53. Use of machinery, 6. Working methods, 61. Reorganisation of box production, 62. Reorganisation of work in locomotive workshops, 63. Continuous and intermittent production, 7. Human factors, 8. Accounting, 81. Production and business statistics, 82. Calendar reform and industrial statistics, 9. Administration, 9.1. Office organization and operation, 10. Conclusion]. This was an updated version of the lectures he presented at the *VI. International Congress for Scientific Organisation in London* (1935) and at the *VII. International Congress for Scientific Organisation in Washington* (1938). The most comprehensive chapter of the book, *Reorganisation of Work in Locomotive Shops*,¹⁶ was based on Šlechta's long-standing interest in this subject, which had its origins in his American experience in the Hamilton locomotive shops.

Šlechta said, *“The purpose of scheduling is to avoid waiting times that were caused by poor and inconsistent arrangement of individual work tasks in succession. This saving is especially noticeable in continuous production. As an example, I refer to the planning of the work of the crews in the repair of locomotives in the workshops of the state railways. This planning was carried out as part of the reorganisation of the workshops which I described at the International Congress for Scientific Organisation in London in 1935.”*¹⁷

¹⁶The author expanded the originally contemplated newspaper article into a comprehensive study, “Reorganization of Work in Locomotive Workshops of the Czechoslovak State Railways,” which he presented at the International Congress for Scientific Organization in London in 1935.

¹⁷[58]. It is mainly a treatise on tact work, which was first theoretically elaborated by the author at the 6. International Congress for Scientific Organisation in London in 1935, the 7th International Congress for Scientific Organisation in 1935, and the International Congress for Scientific Organisation in Washington in 1938. In practice, tact work was introduced in the workshops of the state railways from 1933 onwards.

The next chapter of the book, Continuous and Intermittent Production, was based on a paper presented at the VII International Management Congress in September 1938 in Washington, D. C. In the preface, Šlechta wrote: *“Every economy of labour is a reorganisation. And although every enterprise, as a living organism, is different, the same principles and the same thought process apply to its reorganisation for the purpose of economy and efficiency. The above principles are given in this paper. It is based on practical knowledge and experience in the reorganisation of various enterprises in Czechoslovakia before this war. It is not a textbook, nor does it fully exhaust the subject, but is only a practical guide to how to proceed in the reorganisation of enterprises. It contains, therefore, in addition to considerations, practical examples, which were mostly published in the form of articles at various times before the war, in so far as they are relevant to present-day questions of reorganisation of enterprises. In particular, it is a treatise on tact work, which was first theoretically elaborated by the author at the 6th International Congress for Scientific Organisation in London in 1935, the 7th International Congress for Scientific Organisation in 1935, and the International Congress for Scientific Organisation in Washington in 1938. In practice, tact work was introduced in the workshops of the state railways from 1933 onwards. I am presenting this file to the industrial public and hope that it will contribute to the practical application of the principles of economy of labour in our enterprises and thus to an increase in their efficiency. Prague, February 1947, Professor Dr. Emanuel Šlechta.”* [58].

6. CONCLUSION

Emanuel Šlechta, thanks to had a very good technical education (mechanical engineer from the Czech Technical University in Prague in 1921), which was supplemented by more than three years of work experience in the USA in the 1920s and participation in international congresses in the 1930s. In the inter-war period, he became an ambitious representative of the modern technical elite who wanted to work on building the ethos of the first Czechoslovak Republic.

Already during his studies, Šlechta was able to gain important contacts through his professors (Josef Pazourek, Vojtěch Jareš) and during his time in the USA, he came into contact with civil engineer Stanislav Špaček, a prominent figure in Czechoslovak politics and technology who had been sent to the USA as an attaché to prepare the *World Engineering Federation*. This was not eventually established because of the approaching World War II. In his efforts to obtain opportunities for Czechoslovak engineers to practice in the USA, Špaček assisted not only Šlechta, but also about 123 other engineers who, especially during the economic crisis of the 1930s, sought employment and experience in the USA. Even after his stay in the USA ended, Šlechta corresponded with Špaček for a long

time and consulted with him not only his views on his stay with American companies, but also his subsequent inclusion in work activities in Czechoslovakia. Emanuel Šlechta became familiar with the modern, scientific organisation of work in American factories (Taylorism), and was interested in cartel, trust, and syndicate organisation of companies. He himself had been employed in such companies, was interested in the working hierarchy in the enterprises, and usually rose to higher positions in them thanks to his skill and organisational and technical knowledge. However, to Czechoslovakia, he mainly transferred his knowledge of standardisation, Taylorism in cooperation with Václav Verunáč, statistics and national economic indicators of energy, and economic development. He also published a number of articles on these matters for Czechoslovak institutions, such as the Masaryk Academy of Labour (IV. Department of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering), the Czechoslovak National Research Council, the Czech Technical Matrix, and for specialist domestic and foreign journals, of which the Czech journals *Strojnický obzor* and *Obzor narodohospodářský* are particularly noteworthy. In addition to journal articles, Šlechta also published monographs in various Czech publishing houses.

After returning to Czechoslovakia from the USA, Šlechta sought employment in larger factories, especially in Škoda, ČKD in Hradec Králové, Bata's plant in Zlín, but also in smaller companies such as Aupěk, a foundry and machine shop in Kutná Hora, where he had a share in the machine shop and where he tried to rationalise and streamline the production. He soon discovered that he preferred to work alone, that he was not a team player. Therefore, he focused on building a consulting office in Prague for industrial companies. This activity provided him with a good livelihood even in times of the economic crisis. In 1937, he married Anna Fröhlich for the second time. During the Second World War, Šlechta was active in the resistance, tried to save Jewish property (the Klein company in Prague-Vysočany) from confiscation, and was eventually imprisoned by the Nazis for basically the entire six years of the Second World War near Weimar in Buchenwald.

Šlechta did not give up his teaching career either, as he was habilitated as an associate professor in 1935 and as a professor at the Czech Technical University in Prague in 1947. He also tried to secure a background for the CTU in Prague in the form of business activities (Továrna Ransko, 1945–1948), which would help the technical school financially, especially in the modernisation of teaching.

Even after World War II, Šlechta climbed the social ladder. He became the chairman of the national administration of Živnobanka and next to Ing. Jiří Hejda, he was one of the leading national economic experts among the National Socialists. His post-war participation in the consolidation of the arms industry was also interesting. At that time, he did not

hold purely left-wing views, but in his position he had already cooperated with the Communists on some substantive issues before 1948. After February 1948, he became chairman of the Czechoslovak Socialist Party. He also obtained the position of minister. In the second government of Klement Gottwald, he was Minister of Technology from February 1948 (see Figure 2). He retained the post until 1950 in the governments of Antonín Zápotocký and Viliam Široký. Subsequently, in 1950, he became Minister of Construction Industry. He also held this position in the second government of Viliam Široký, until 1956. From 1956 to 1960, i.e. until his suicide, he served as chairman of the State Committee for Construction.

The aim of the paper was to present the type of educated technician, politician, and economist within Czechoslovak society between the wars and just after 1945. In the case of E. Šlechta's professional activity, time played an important role, even determined it. Already at the beginning of his professional career, Emanuel Šlechta had a chance to become a leader of his generation and to become a leader of the technical elite of the time, thanks to his excellent technical engineering education at the Czech Technical University in Prague and his many years of practical experience in the USA. He succeeded to a certain extent in the inter-war period, being successful not only in business but also in scientific and teaching activities. He was imprisoned during the Second World War, and the events that unfolded after 1945, when Šlechta was admittedly included among the social elite of the time, disappointed him. This was despite the fact that he became a minister (he was involved in the creation of the New Ironworks in Kunčice) in several governments and chairman of the *State Committee for Construction*. Unfortunately, his life situation also led him into the ranks of the State Security Service (StB) and eventually led to his joint suicide with his wife in the spring of 1960.

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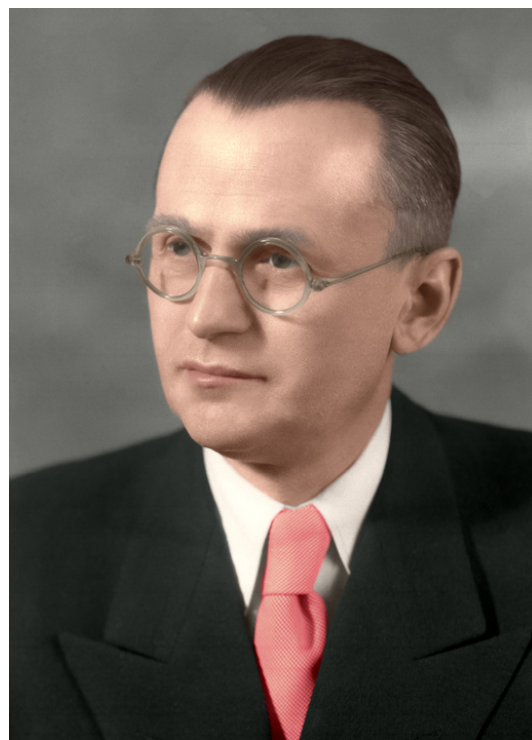


FIGURE 2. Emanuel Šlechta as Minister of Technology in 1948 (official contemporary portrait) [60, p. 39].

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