Britain, and the United States translated into attempts at establishing trading relationships with these countries. This was, nevertheless, a slow process for an unknown political entity that Czechoslovakia was. World's fairs, nevertheless, were believed to play a key role in enabling the new state to access new partners and markets.

Modern folk industries: Detva

To establish these external relationships, Czechoslovakia displayed the goods that it deemed most suitable for trade. They generally indicated the country's advanced modernity in production and technology, while they also tried to reinforce a consistent brand and identity of the new state. And that had to be consolidated internally too. To do that, objects and commodities representing the historicity and traditions were included. Apart from references to historic architecture in paintings and photographs, or to works of art, folk products, costumes or customs were commonly incorporated to explain how locally embedded contemporary Czechoslovak culture was. Folk art had also other useful functions. As it was often associated with rural regions of the eastern parts of Czechoslovakia, its inclusion in the national pavilions meant that these regions were represented there. While Bohemia and Moravia often displayed what was seen as advanced industries and arts, Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia would be represented by natural resources and folk products.

The political program of Czechoslovakism emphasized and largely invented the joint identity of the Czechoslovaks. At world's fairs, Czechoslovakia showcased the idea of a single nation that consisted of the two main Slavic groups of Czechs and Slovaks while in most cases Hungarians, Poles and Ruthenians were omitted. The only exceptions were German and Jewish businesses and culture that were present through artists and various companies until 1938. At the same time, the cultures of Czechs and Slovaks were represented far from equally, which—after all—reflected the general political, cultural and artistic predominance of the Czechs within the state and its administration.

Each exhibition committee, responsible for the organization of individual pavilions, their design and selection of objects consisted mainly of Czech members who prioritized Czech representation. Yet the committees were conscious of the political need to include Slovakia in some way. During the ministerial discussions of the 1925 exhibition, for example, Václav Vilém Štech of the Ministry of Education concluded that "there is only one way Slovakia and Slovak

politics can be represented at a world's fair and it is through folk art."[22] Slovakia was thus frequently reduced to displays related to the traditional cultures of the countryside. This imbalance, however, had also economic motivations. In his comment, Štech also noted that "Slovaks [would] not contribute [financially] towards the exhibition but [would] expect to be represented by their works. [Yet,] Slovak art shall not be omitted if for nothing else but the domestic politics."[23]

A suitable candidate for showcasing Slovakia was found in the company Detva. It fulfilled several requirements of the interwar state's representation at once: it was based in Bratislava and its products combined folk traditions manufactured for use in modern homes.[24] At world's fairs, Detva mostly presented itself by embroideries and lace with floral or geometrical patterns, but it also produced all types of other textiles, carpets, tapestries, glass, ceramics, bijou and provided interior design services. The company was established in 1919 out of the Hungarian association, Izabella, which had been founded in 1895 and had similar goals. When Izabella was dissolved by the Czechoslovak government, Detva was formed to elevate folk art and the home industries in Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, its production adjusted to the new needs of contemporary people and requirements of the culture of dwelling.[25]

During the interwar period, the full name of the company which had some 2,000 employees, changed a few times to reflect the position of the company and Slovakia within the joint state. In 1927, Detva became a shareholding company Detva,Československý ľudový priemysel / Volks Kunstgewerbe (Detva, the Czechoslovak Folk Art Industries) reflecting the increasing industrial orientation and expansion across the entire state in its title. The change, nevertheless, came with a necessary financial injection, in which the Czechoslovak state gained an almost exclusive majority in shares and helped the company survive an economic collapse. At the end of the interwar period, in 1939, the Czechoslovak company was renamed Detva, slovenský ľudový umelecký priemysel, účastinná spoločnosť v Bratislave (Detva, the Slovak Folk Art Industries, Shareholding Company in Bratislava) to stress its Slovak identity and affiliation with the Slovak State.

Before that, though, Detva expanded across the country and ran several shops across Czechoslovakia, for instance in Prague, Brno, and many spa towns in Bohemia. As was the case with Baťa, Detva's management was entangled with the

22 Štech, quoted in Komora, *Hospodářské*, 204.
23 Štech, quoted in Komora, *Hospodářské*, 204.
24 "Zpráva o zvelebovací a propagační činnosti ústavu 'DETVY' v Bratislavě v období 1924/25 a 1925/26," I.B.1. SNA.
25 *Detva, československý ľudový umelecký priemysel, úč.spol.* (Bratislava: Detva, 1929).

cultural, economic and political elites in the state. The first director was Dušan Jurkovič, an architect known for applying folk-inspired decorativeness and color schemes in his buildings.[26] In later years, the company was chaired by, for example, Frances Crane Masaryková, the American wife of Jan Masaryk, himself a diplomat and the son of the President. Another member of the management, Václav Maule, a long-term vice chair of Detva, was a ministerial advisor for education who participated in Slovak school reforms. At the end of the interwar period, when nationalism in Slovakia was strengthening, Maule was replaced by the Slovak MP Ján Liška, a nationalist politician and businessman. He was closely affiliated with the People's Party of Andrej Hlinka, the Slovak Catholic priest and politician, who called for Slovak autonomy.

The board of the shareholding company also consisted of representatives of various ministries: trade, education, and finance, as well as of "significant personalities of Slovak economic, cultural and political realm."[27] The composition of the board also epitomized the gender imbalance in the state. The lists of the Detva board members consist exclusively of men, with Crane Masaryková being the only woman in an honorary position.

Detva's mission was to "redefine" Slovak folk art, inevitably deemed to extinction, with its characteristic production techniques, motives, and use of domestic materials. The company report from 1926 provides an insight into Detva's approach to production and workforce. It noted that the artistic director at the time, the Czech artist and designer Jaroslav Jareš, was the first to open a workshop in embroidery and weaving with the "humble but talented female workers from the [common] people," and this turned out to be a success.[28] The report also remarked that it was necessary to "educate the rural primitives [in Slovak original *sedliackych primitivov*] in the production meant for the cultivated classes of urban inhabitants in this country and abroad whereby this process of education these simple people" in methods that are new and unusual for them "is very difficult, time-consuming and requires not only a lot of patience but mainly substantial financial sacrifice."[29] The reference to the "primitives" of the countryside evoked somewhat crude character of the people and their work, rather than a belief in their evolutionary inferiority. At the same time, however, the

26 Dana Bořutová, *Architekt Dušan Samuel Jurkovič* (Bratislava: Slovart, 2009).

27 "Výročná zpráva DETVY československý ľudový priemysel, úč.spol. v Bratislave za správný rok od 1. septembera 1930 do 31. augusta 1931," SNA.

28 "Výročná zpráva DETVY československý ľudový priemysel, úč.spol. v Bratislave za správný rok od 1. septembera 1927 do 31. augusta 1928," 1929, inv. no.4, SNA, 4.

29 "Výročná zpráva DETVY 1927–1928," 4.

fact that the production of the "simple people" was meant for the "cultivated" inhabitants of the cities sharpened the contrast between the rural and the urban based on social and class prejudice.

During the interwar period, the eastern regions of the state remained predominantly rural; they did not benefit from the land reforms as much as the western parts and were also subjected to higher taxation.[30] This, combined with the efforts of industrialization and modernization, concentrated mostly in the Czech parts of the state, resulted in a slower economic development in the east. Compared to industries in Bohemia, Slovakia in fact de-industrialized during the interwar period and the divide between Czech and Slovak living standards only deepened.[31] The case of Detva could therefore be seen as symbolic; the company enjoyed the benefits of cheap labor in the countryside while at the same time profiting from intimate connections with the Czech establishment.

This was visible also in the chain of production in the company which followed a top-down trajectory: while the commodities, Detva offered, were made locally, the design was mostly done by artists educated at art and design schools in Czech cities.[32] Detva also cooperated with artists and designers of various institutions, mainly with the Association for Czechoslovak Werkbund, that was intimately involved in the representation of Czechoslovakia at international exhibitions. Detva's commissioning of trained artists was based on the belief that the traditional production of folk art in the countryside, even though technically skilled, was insufficient in terms of taste, and therefore unsuitable for urban consumption. To rectify the tastes (and increase the sales), Detva started running workshops across mostly Slovak regions, where there had been, "until now, primitive and uneconomical forms of production to contribute to the economic development of Slovakia."[33] And while folk art was framed as a tra-

30 Eduard Lukáč, Katarína Mayer, and Martina Lenhardtová, "Development of Adult Education in Interwar Slovakia (1918–1938)," *Ad Alta: Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* (2019): 173–80.

31 Petr Pavlínek, "Regional Development and the Disintegration of Czechoslovakia," *Geoforum* 26, no. 4 (1995): 351–354; and Milan Olejník, "The Development of the Slovak Industries during the First Ten Years of the Czechoslovak Republic," *Človek a spoločnosť: internetový časopis pre pôvodné teoretické a výskumné štúdie z oblasti spoločenských vied* 6, no. 1 (2003): 13–21, https://individualandsociety.org/storage/uploads/casopis/2003/1/the-development-of-the-slovak-industries-during-th/the-development-of-the-slovak-industries-during-the-first-ten-years-of-czechoslovak-republic.pdf; Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 120; Ramet and Skalnik Leff, "Interwar Czechoslovakia – A National State for a Multiethnic Population," in *Interwar East-Central Europe*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet, 75–108.

32 Vojtěch Merganc (textiles), Jaroslav Jareš, Ľudmila Rambouská-Jarešová and Elena Hollá (embroideries and lace). "Zpráva o zvelebovací a propagační činnosti ústavu Detvy v Bratislavě v období 1924/1925 a 1925/1926," Detva Archive, inv. no. 2, I.B.1, SNA, 1.

33 "Zpráva o zvelebovací a propagační činnosti," 1.

ditional and archaic practice, Detva set out to use it to its own economic benefit and to some extent the benefit of the Slovak region.

The company therefore drew on the available resources and workers in the impoverished parts of the countryside, to whom it provided training and sales opportunities. Such practice was nothing new. In the late nineteenth century, training schools for the so-called house industries, or Fachschule für Hausindustrie in German, were established around the Habsburg monarchy. As Rebecca Houze has argued, they aimed to reintroduce the disappearing folk arts to the peasantry, give them a form refined enough for urban tastes and thus provide peasants with an independent source of income.[34] Detva should therefore be seen as a company that utilized labor in the countryside, portrayed—using the common Czechoslovak stereotypes—as primitive, under-education and unmodern, for commercial gains at national and international markets. At the same time, it found a suitable place in the national pavilions to present Czechoslovakia as a country both traditional and modern.

Detva on display

Detva was a frequent exhibitor at international exhibitions, although it often needed state support and subsidies. Its predecessor Izabella had appeared at, for instance, the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900, the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition in St. Louis in 1904, or the International Exhibition in Milan in 1906. After the First World War, Detva continued to be a frequent and successful participant in the Czechoslovak pavilions at interwar world's fairs, winning grand prizes in Paris in 1925, Philadelphia in 1926, and Barcelona in 1929, where it received hors concours prize for embroideries and grand prix for its carpets.[35]

The links with the exhibition elites meant that the presence of Detva in the national pavilions was encouraged by the government. For example, it received subsidies from the Ministries of Trade and Education to promote its activities at future exhibitions and trade fairs.[36] This meant that it could take part not only at the previously mentioned exhibitions, but also at the national exhibition in Brno in 1928 and at the world's fairs in Chicago (1933), Brussels (1935),

34 Rebecca Houze, *Textiles, Fashion, and Design Reform in Austria-Hungary Before the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2017), 80.

35 "Výročná zpráva DETVY československý ľudový priemysel, úč.spol. v Bratislave za správný rok od 1.septembera 1928 do 31.augusta 1929," 1930, Detva, inv. no. 2, I.B.1, SNA, 4.

36 "Výročná zpráva DETVY," 1930, 7.