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Heidi Tworek

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# THE CREATION OF EUROPEAN NEWS

## News agency cooperation in interwar Europe

Heidi Tworek

*This article explores the changes in news agency mechanisms that accompanied the restructuring of Europe after World War I. During the interwar period, a new form of negotiation replaced the pre-World War I conception of English, French and German spheres of influence with a more cooperative vision of the collection and dissemination of news. I argue that the private and business-oriented nature of news agency cooperation enabled it to outlast better-known political attempts at multilateralism. Indeed, it often produced more concrete results by offering different incentives for cooperation to all involved from large global agencies, such as Reuters, down to the small agencies of new Central and Eastern European nation-states. Overall, the agencies' cooperation until the outbreak of World War II suggests alternative periodizations of the interwar period than the division into a fairly internationalist 1920s followed by the increasing bilateralism of the 1930s.*

KEYWORDS cartels; cultural diplomacy; Europe; international cooperation; international relations; news agencies

### Introduction

In June 1935, Edvard Beneš, then Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, gave the closing speech of a conference held in the mountain resort of Štrbské Pleso in the High Tatras, Czechoslovakia. The man who would become president a few months later called the conference participants a factor for peace. Those present were neither diplomats nor politicians. They were news agency directors, who had enjoyed a similar opening speech at the same conference by Jan Malypetr, the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia. Malypetr had praised news agencies' maintenance of peace by placing objective truth above propaganda (Conference Report of Seventh Plenary Assembly of Agencies Alliées, Štrbské Pleso, High Tatras, Czechoslovakia. June 1935. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts [PA AA]. R121177. Berlin). Why did both the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia attach such importance to a conference of European news agencies, businesses that most citizens barely recognized as a factor in the media, let alone public life? The answer lies in the possibilities that news agencies offered for cultural diplomacy and the co-creation of European standards through journalistic networks, discourses and practices. As Andrea Orzoff (2009, 9) has shown for Czechoslovakia, "East-Central European interwar campaigns of cultural diplomacy rested on a discourse of Europe and Europeanness", though Europe connoted different qualities for different states. After World War I, many professional groups, such as engineers, developed a vision of cross-border cooperation and "technocratic internationalism" (Schot and Legendijk 2008) as an alternative to traditional diplomacy. Yet they often could not translate these ideas into concrete institutions (van Meer 2012). News agencies did not attempt to reconfigure public diplomacy, though they followed cooperative aspirations in confidential

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conferences. The private and business-oriented nature of news agency cooperation enabled it to outlast better-known political attempts at multilateralism. Indeed, it often produced more concrete results by offering different incentives for cooperation to all involved from large global agencies, such as Reuters, down to the small agencies of new Central and Eastern European nation-states.

Newspapers were not the only aspect of news that underwent massive change in the interwar period. News supply networks altered drastically too, transforming the content and structure of the popular press. News agencies are, in many ways, “news wholesalers”, distributing their material to their “retail clients” (newspapers) to repackage short sentences into articles and reports for a newspaper’s particular public (Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen 1998, 6). From the development of the telegraph in the mid-nineteenth century until 1914, news agencies operated through a cartel dominated by Great Britain, France and Germany. The three countries’ news agencies (Reuters, Agence Havas and Wolff’s Telegraphisches Bureau) divided the world into British, French and German spheres that exchanged news and supplied newspapers with global information (Nalbach 1999, 2003). Prior to World War I, the “Big Three” agencies negotiated with smaller news agencies within their spheres to exchange news. Terhi Rantanen has called this interaction between smaller and great power agencies “bi-directional dependency” (1992, 4), as smaller agencies could influence the news that the larger agency received. While cartel arrangements were often disputed amongst the major and mid-size partners, smaller agencies only had direct contact with one of the three major agencies and had no say in the overall workings of global news structures.

During the interwar period, these relationships transformed into multilateral institutionalism within Europe. With the creation of nation-states in Eastern Europe after World War I, national news agencies emerged that challenged the 50-year cartel structure. The leading news agencies, Reuters and Havas, had to establish contracts with the agencies that sprang up in new nations such as Poland, Turkey and Latvia. Furthermore, Reuters and Havas had renegotiated their contract with Germany’s Wolff to restrict Wolff to German national territory. The interwar period saw a new working relationship amongst news agencies, where Reuters and Agence Havas sought to cooperate with the many new national news agencies through conferences, rather than just individual contracts. Mimicking the League of Nations’ increasing number of transnational conferences, European news agencies met ever more frequently. For the first time in 1924, Reuters and Havas invited European news agencies to attend a conference in Berne to discuss issues common to all agencies, such as intellectual property in news, competitors and new radio technology. The news agencies organized annual conferences and commissions right up to 1939 to discuss and coordinate European news supply. They established the idea of European news agencies as Allied Agencies (Agences Alliées) with headquarters in Paris, replacing the pre-World War I conception of an Anglo-Franco-German “Big Three” with a more cooperative European vision of the collection and dissemination of news.

### **Constructing Europe**

“Europe is not a continent; it is a concept”, declared Richard Evans in a special issue of *European History Quarterly* on definitions of Europe (2010, 594). Recent histories have sought to concretize that concept and find ways to investigate its emergence, as

documented in a historiographical essay by Philipp Nielsen (2010). Communications and media have played a surprisingly small role in these discussions, despite Ute Frevert's assertion that historians should consider "Europeanness as a web of communication or interaction" (2005, 11). Work on the interwar period has emphasized the importance of publicity and discussion under the aegis of the League of Nations, despite limited practical success (Pedersen 2006; Laqua 2011a, 2011b). Sometimes, however, the creation of European and global norms happened more consistently outside League structures, particularly in the world of news.

Communications scholars in turn have tended to neglect the longer history of European communications, tracing European origins to institutions explicitly linked to the European Union, such as the European Broadcasting Union founded in 1950. An overview article by Brüggemann et al. (2009), for instance, specifically deals only with policies after World War II. Combining the longer and broader history of Europe with a history of communications uncovers meetings and assemblies that might not explicitly have proclaimed themselves European, but performed many of the same functions under the radar. The International Telegraph Union, for instance, had promoted cross-border cooperation since the mid-nineteenth century (Laborie 2010). In this case, news agencies worked together using the business mechanisms of a cooperative cartel that shared information and sought to fold competitors into its organization. The meetings of *Agences Alliées* in some ways functioned akin to the work of the two League of Nations bodies dedicated to intellectual cooperation (Laqua 2011a). Their actions also paralleled the institutionalization of international journalistic activity with the establishment of the International Federation of Journalists in 1926, its creation of an International Court of Honour for Journalists in the Hague in October 1931 and the Conference of Press Experts organized by the League of Nations in 1927 (Lange-Enzmann 1991; Tworek 2010). While the League worked explicitly as a diplomatic body and conference coordinator, the *Agences Alliées* indirectly became another means for countries in Central and Eastern Europe to assert their authority in a transnational setting. Like European infrastructural projects (van der Vleuten and Kaijser 2006; Badenoch and Fickers 2010), *Agences Alliées* became a space to create European policies on news supply that built on pre-war relationships and networks to sustain cross-border cooperation.

In 1947, a British Secretary for Information in Oslo described the arrangement thus:

Before the war, such agencies operated in an international circuit known as "les Agences Alliées" and were very different in nature from the normal commercial news agency. Although they were in the main privately owned (often by the newspapers of the country concerned), the news they distributed was of a national and authoritative character, and the financial and editorial standards to which they adhered were correspondingly high. This circuit now no longer exists formally, but the tradition and relationships persist. (Letter to Director, Information Services Control Branch, c/o PRISC Regional Staff Hamburg from British Press Section, Oslo. October 13, 1947. The National Archives of the UK [TNA]. Foreign Office [FO]. 1056/232. London)

The *Agences Alliées* distributed almost all European governmental news and dominated the landscape of news provision. Their cooperation provides insights into some trenchant questions about the composition of Europe and how cooperation functioned, showing that different political and economic incentives could motivate a diverse set of news agencies to work together towards a common goal of collaboration.

As Patricia Clavin (2010) has pointed out, Europe's members changed depending on the issue. While the League of Nations included the Soviet Union and Turkey in Europe for some committees, the League excluded them from Europe when discussing economic issues. For the *Agences Alliées*, Europe was an expansive concept, encompassing Turkey's *Agence d'Anatolie* and the Baltic states as well as the Soviet Union's TASS from the later 1920s. The United States even participated briefly. The American Associated Press (AP) became an increasingly central participant in cartel contracts from 1893 and maintained news exchanges with European agencies, though it played a rather small part in *Agences Alliées* arrangements. AP's general manager, Kent Cooper, only attended one *Agences Alliées* meeting in Warsaw in 1927 and left the alliance in the late 1920s, because the Sherman Antitrust Act (1890) meant that US companies could not participate freely in cartels (Silberstein-Loeb, forthcoming, chap. 7). In signing contracts with national agencies and then inviting them to *Agences Alliées* conferences, Reuters and Havas included agencies without specifications on the news agencies' owners, its country's political structures or the government's influence on the agency's news production. (For example, see contracts with *Polska Agencja Telegraficzna* [PAT] and ANA, the Polish and Austrian news agencies. Archives Nationales [AN]. 5AR/419. Paris). They prioritized an agency's access to official and national news, which generally meant cooperation with government-owned or government-influenced agencies in the new states in Central and Eastern Europe. Reuters and Havas concluded contracts with several agencies outside Europe, such as Japan's *Kokusai*, but did not invite them to participate in *Agences Alliées*. This effectively created more cooperation, negotiation and integration with European agencies than those with bilateral contracts outside Europe.

The changed landscape of Europe meant that Reuters and Havas needed to conclude agreements with the new nation-states of Central and Eastern Europe. Additionally, the renegotiated contract between Reuters, Havas and Wolff had restricted Wolff to German national boundaries, leaving Reuters and Havas new territory to cover. Although Reuters and Havas swiftly signed contracts with most new national agencies, they came to believe that regular conferences were critical to maintaining broader standards and managing the increased number of news agency partners. Most importantly, fear of competition spurred greater initial cooperation. Reuters and Havas, the dominant news agencies in Europe, invited smaller news agencies to the first assembly of the *Agences Alliées* in Berne, Switzerland. The conference minutes described the gathering as a way of "reinforcing mutual confidence" (Confidential Report of First General Conference of International Telegraph Agencies [*Agences Alliées*], Berne. June 6–11, 1924. *Archiwum Akt Nowych* [AAN]. Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych [MSZ]. 7639. Warsaw. 13). That June 1924 conference proved such a success that the group agreed to have regular general conferences. The agencies also set up a *Commission des Sept* (Commission of Seven), otherwise known as the Permanent Committee, to meet more regularly and examine important issues in greater depth. A Central Bureau of *Agences Alliées* was established in Paris; *Agence Havas* maintained the alliance's records and the official language was French, retaining Havas' central position in news agency networks. At the Budapest conference in 1931, the agencies rearranged their alliance structure, abolishing the Permanent Committee (21st Resolution. Budapest Plenary Assembly. 1931. AN. 5AR/469. 95). They agreed to meet as a group twice a year in Europe for ordinary assemblies, though they continued to hold plenary assemblies. The conferences' work was considered confidential (First Resolution. Third Plenary Assembly in Warsaw. May 1927. AN. 5AR/469.

37). Yet this secrecy did not preclude the establishment of common norms that affected the distribution of news throughout Europe.

Cooperation meant more than just dictation of terms by Reuters and Havas. Agences Alliéés conferences were a space to hammer out a transnational vocabulary of news and to establish cross-border standards of news distribution. The conferences aimed to provide information on myriad issues affecting news agencies and to encourage joint responses. It is hardly surprising, then, that legal protection of news featured in the first session of the first conference. Each country had different laws on news and the international nature of news meant that some agencies wished to harmonise rules and provide themselves with global protection of their hard-won and often expensively procured news items. Property rights remained a major concern throughout the interwar period, particularly given the development of wireless technology and radio and fears about illicit interception of news agency news. Concern with copyright and intellectual property rights in news inspired a joint motion in 1924 on intellectual property in news to the International Bureau of the Union of Industrial Property in Berne. The motion asked the union to investigate the possible unification of international legislation on the matter (AAN. MSZ. 7639. 42ff). The motion did not inspire binding international legislation and in fact, the British and Americans opposed the move. Still, it was an achievement to create any kind of unified response at all amongst countries with such diverse legislative attitudes and procedures.

While news agency directors occasionally disagreed, they often appeared as a lobbying block for certain items of legislation. The Agences Alliéés even produced coordinated responses for the first League of Nations Conference of Press Experts in 1927. The group appointed an expert committee comprised of six news agency directors to represent the Agences Alliéés at the preparatory meeting in 1926 for the first League of Nations Conference of Press Experts in 1927 (Resolution at Second Plenary Assembly in Rome. October 1925. AN. 5AR/469). Journalists had often affected diplomatic relations between countries, such as Great Britain and Germany in the decade prior to World War I (Geppert 2007). Only in the interwar period, however, did they have opportunities to lobby as a group at international conferences and events. The agencies combined to exert political pressure to combat any potential economic threats to their business model of being first to supply the news. For instance, Havas reported to Pierre Comert, Director of the League of Nations Information Section from 1919 to 1932, on the results of the first Agences Alliéés conference in 1924. On behalf of the Agences Alliéés, Havas requested more research into enabling greater exchange between the leaders of the international press on important issues such as broadcasting secrecy, intellectual property in news and the facilitation of communications through international telegraph, telephone and wireless agreements (Letter from Havas to Pierre Comert. November 14, 1925. AN. 5AR/483). Havas' letter certainly added to the League's incentives to organize the Conference of Press Experts a few years later and indeed, the items in Havas' letter received great attention at the conference.

During Agences Alliéés conferences, news agencies also reported on national and international competitors to coordinate responses to emerging global competitors, such as the American United Press in Germany in 1932 or the Soviet Union's report on the "rather serious progress" in China and South America of Transocean, a German wireless news agency, in 1935 (Second Ordinary Assembly, Igls near Innsbruck. June 1932. AN. 5AR/472. Seventh Plenary Assembly, Štrbské Pleso, High Tatras, Czechoslovakia. June 1935. AN.

5AR/473). The agencies even briefly considered setting up a central office in the 1930s to combat competition, particularly the United Press, though opposition from some participants such as the Swedish Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå quashed the idea (Note. March 18, 1938. AN. 5AR/469). Building on information about competitors, the agencies used the conferences to find out more about each other as well. They conducted surveys on multiple topics to find out about their partners' activities, such as circulars on agencies' working hours or their tariffs for financial and commercial services (Circulars 384 and 387. 1930. AN. 5AR/481). Agencies exchanged expert knowledge of technical systems too. They discussed each other's techniques and technologies to improve the speed and reliability of news exchange. As late as 1938, Havas even sent an engineer to Berlin to work with Siemens to improve the Hellschreiber, a wireless ticker machine (Oslo Conference Minutes. June 20–27, 1938. AN. 5AR/469).

The surveys were not just informative, but often meant to establish more concrete working relationships between agencies to expand their range of products. A small commission of agency directors inquired into news agencies' photo services in the early 1930s, for example. The commission distributed a questionnaire in 1932–33 to ascertain members' supply of photo reportage. The directors reported in 1933 that the Agences Alliées had far too small a market share of photographs, while the number of photographs in the daily press was increasing (AN. 5AR/469). That realization slowly led to closer cooperation in exchanging photographs. At the Eighth Plenary Assembly in Belgrade in 1937, agencies that already had photojournalism agreed to exchange photographs with other news agencies. The agencies hoped to build a photo archive for supplying photographs to the press and agencies that did not work in photojournalism agreed to facilitate the exchange of photographs (AN. 5AR/469). Had World War II not broken out relatively soon afterwards, the exchange of photographs and the creation of a common archive may well have helped to create a European visual vocabulary. It may also have encouraged other news agencies to initiate photograph services, as they had access to a ready repository of photographs to sell. Cooperation could thus drastically influence the decisions of national news agencies, promoting diversification and creating even greater dependence on and integration with European partners.

Conferences also enabled the news agencies to establish common standards and clarify the terms of their news exchanges. A 1928 resolution specified the labels that agencies should attach to telegrams for their fellow agencies. "Privé" indicated that the item's veracity paralleled that of news gathered by the agency itself, while agencies assumed no responsibility for the truth of news in telegrams labelled "particulier" (AN. 5AR/469. 45). Furthermore, the conferences attempted to clamp down on potential abuse of the Agences Alliées system to disseminate government propaganda or otherwise biased news. Each agency was allowed to send expedited telegrams, called Tractatus telegrams. The sending agency paid for the costs and decided which countries it wished to receive the telegrams. At a session of the permanent committee in 1930, the director of the Latvian Telegraph Agency, Berzins, proposed measures to ensure that agencies would not instrumentalize the Tractatus label for political purposes. Berzins' suggestions resulted in a resolution that Tractatus messages could not contain propaganda, but had to be journalistic and hold commercial value (Sixth Resolution at Fifth Session of the Permanent Committee. 1930. AN. 5AR/469. 91). Such resolutions began to establish more consensual norms and practices for news telegrams. Some agencies would disregard them primarily for political reasons, particularly as the 1930s progressed. Yet the concretization of

exchange standards required agencies at least ostensibly to obey certain norms, to create news paradigms (Pöttker and Høyer 2005) and to comprehend other European agencies' requirements and concerns. It certainly produced more tangible results than concurrent League of Nations Conferences of Press Experts in 1932 and 1933 (Lange-Enzmann 1991). These League conferences sent surveys just like Agences Alliées to ask the press how it combatted false news, but the information translated into few concrete actions (Tworek 2010). As long as the Agences Alliées continued to see the benefits of news exchange, they had far greater incentives to compromise on ideals and to ensure cooperation than any discussion at the League. The daily news supply mechanisms meant that the Agences Alliées system constantly demonstrated practical advantages. Furthermore, agencies could effectively punish transgressions by shutting out an agency or supplying it with less news, though this never appears to have happened. Finally, news agencies perceived a mutual need for each other's news to maintain national dominance by supplying newspapers with global news.

### Co-operation and Conflict

While the conferences themselves could prove beneficial to members overall, cooperation was advantageous for different news agencies in different ways. For the two largest and most powerful agencies, Reuters and Agence Havas, the conferences provided an easy means to communicate simultaneously with their many contract partners. It also enabled them to assure mutual cooperation between agencies as well as with Reuters and Havas themselves. For Germany, the alliance represented an opportunity to regain great-power status in news agencies. This paralleled German actions after Germany's admission to the League of Nations in 1926. The German government sought to adhere scrupulously to minority treaties, often for revanchist goals of regaining Germans outside German territory (Fink 2004). Germany similarly saw the Agences Alliées as a space for German aspirations to regain great-power status. The German semi-official news agency, Wolff, thus continued to work within the confines of its restrictions and decided to remain in Agences Alliées, despite protests from some German journalists and politicians.

Nevertheless, both Weimar and Nazi governments also saw Agences Alliées as a system to instrumentalize and even abuse. During the Weimar period, the government attempted to regain higher status within the alliance system by setting up rival news agencies that Agences Alliées would be forced to integrate. In the early 1920s, for instance, the German Foreign Office and Postal Ministry helped to establish and provide exclusive wireless access to Eildienst (Express Service), a financial wireless news agency. The domestic conflict between Wolff and Eildienst spiralled into the first meeting of Agences Alliées, as Eildienst had also expanded into neighbouring countries. Wolff reprimanded Hungary for concluding a treaty with Eildienst and thus cooperating with a competitor (Confidential Report of First General Conference of International Telegraph Agencies. June 6–11, 1924. AAN. MSZ. 7639. 23). Increasingly troubled by Eildienst's success, Reuters and Havas called an emergency meeting of the agencies in Vienna in May 1925 to discuss the issue. The conference concluded that Europradio (as Eildienst was known abroad) posed a "grave danger" to certain Agences Alliées and asked Wolff to negotiate a news exchange agreement with Eildienst (AN. 5AR/179). Eildienst agreed and became another member of the Agences Alliées fold. Yet Eildienst extracted important concessions from the German



point of view. Altering the structure of Agences Alliées to Germany's advantage, Eildienst became the key point of contact with other Agences Alliées in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Eildienst director, Arthur Rawitzki, became the chief negotiator signing up news agencies for Reuters', Havas' or Eildienst's financial services. By 1928, Eildienst was so integrated into the Agences Alliées cooperative structure that Rawitzki even suggested a central office to publish a handbook on stock exchanges and to combat competition through a joint service (AN. 5AR/179). While the central office never emerged, the very proposal shows how Germany had used Agences Alliées structures to advance from a country ranked below Reuters and Havas up to suggesting partnerships and equal exchanges.

In contrast to leaving the League of Nations in October 1933, the Nazis remained media internationalists right up to the outbreak of World War II, even if leading Nazis such as Joseph Goebbels simultaneously poured money into other secret initiatives to promote German media abroad outside cooperative arrangements. The advantages of news exchange and cooperation simply outweighed the disadvantages. In particular, the Nazis attempted to use Agences Alliées networks to repudiate what they saw as false reports of Nazi activity. News agencies could disseminate denials of news items through the Agences Alliées headquarters in Paris to all members; Paris became a central clearinghouse for denials of reports and information on false messages. The Nazis often instrumentalized this mechanism for propaganda purposes in the mid-1930s, eventually resulting in complaints from other news agencies (AN. 5AR/482). Without the Agences Alliées network, the Nazi denials of various wrongdoings could never have reached so many news agencies nor by extension so many potential reading publics.

Even smaller countries in the alliance found ways and reasons to influence the global production of news. Eastern European agencies played an active role in regulating the exchange, tone and content of news. The conferences and alliance functioned as a form of cultural diplomacy for nations whose governments effectively controlled their news agencies, such as Poland. These new agencies tried to fit into existing paradigms of news creation and dissemination, though their journalists also sought to assert their autonomy from previous Western European hegemony. While scholars have recently turned to examining cultural aspects of traditional diplomacy (Mösslang and Riotte 2008; Steller 2011), the aspirations of countries like Poland within Agences Alliées remind us how those untrained in diplomatic corps used international conferences and structures to project cultural diplomacy.

The Polish news agency, PAT, had signed its first contract with Reuters and Havas in July 1919 and concluded a formal agreement in 1922. On June 26, 1924, the Polish government confirmed that PAT was a state enterprise and thus forbidden from taking any independent political action (Bates 1998; Notkowski 1987, 240–263; Rudziński 1970, chaps. 2 and 5). For the Polish government, PAT represented a relatively inexpensive means for the Polish government to reach wider publics. This held particular relevance just after World War I, when elites had become increasingly convinced of the importance of public opinion. PAT claimed to the Polish Association of Newspaper and Magazine Editors in Warsaw in 1930 that PAT's service equalled that of Reuters, Havas and Wolff because it exchanged news with those agencies and others around the world. Aside from seeing the Agences Alliées as key to providing world-class news to Poland, the Polish government used PAT to try to spread beneficial news about Poland abroad. The receiving agency generally covered the cost of receiving news from foreign news agencies, essentially

creating a cheap form of “propaganda” (Letter from PAT. May 6, 1930. AAN. *Polski Związek Wydawców Dzienników i Czasopism w Warszawie*. 64/314). The Polish government’s belief in PAT’s propagandistic value contrasted starkly with the Agences Alliéés resolution of 1930 that Tractatus telegrams, for instance, should not contain propaganda. Despite such obvious disagreement, PAT and the Polish government compromised their views to ensure their membership in Agences Alliéés.

PAT aspired to more than just using the Agences Alliéés networks to disseminate positive news about Poland. The director, Roman Starzyński, hoped that PAT could influence the structure and workings of the alliance itself by becoming a member of the Commission des Sept (Commission of Seven). PAT took steps to raise its prestige within the alliance by hosting the Agences Alliéés conference in Warsaw in 1927. The meeting was particularly important, as the AP’s general manager, Kent Cooper, attended for the first (and only) time. In an attempt to capitalize on the Warsaw conference, Starzyński travelled a few years later to Bucharest, Tallinn, Riga, Helsinki, Geneva, Paris and Berlin to campaign for a Polish place on the permanent committee. Starzyński lamented to the Polish Association of Editors in mid-1930 that PAT still had not secured its place in the permanent committee despite PAT’s relative size and importance to Agences Alliéés. The mechanisms of inclusion, Starzyński had discovered, did not rely upon size, but upon active participation and relations with mid-size agencies. During his travels, Starzyński had learned that PAT’s problem stemmed from its concentration on the “big guns” of Reuters and Havas. PAT had not established friendly enough relations with mid-size agencies in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Their votes were essential for PAT to secure a place on the permanent committee. In addition, an agency won a place on the permanent committee by virtue of “efficiency” in its mechanisms and the agency’s “activity” in the alliance (Letter from PAT. May 6, 1930. AAN. *Polski Związek Wydawców Dzienników i Czasopism w Warszawie*. 64/314). That explained the membership of Sweden, Finland, Bulgaria, Turkey and Hungary in the committee, while Italy, Spain and the Soviet Union had never been elected to serve, thought Starzyński. To enter into the permanent committee required cooperation with as many other countries as possible and active participation within the Agences Alliéés.

The most obvious method of active participation left was to contribute ideas and points to the agenda. PAT tried to show its loyalty to the Agences Alliéés by reporting in 1937 that it had rejected the advances of United Press, an American competitor (Report of Eighth Plenary Assembly, Belgrade. August 24–September 9, 1937. AN. 5AR/467). Other smaller agencies often suggested resolutions or contributed actively to discussions. Representatives could also function as rapporteurs on particular issues. PAT does not seem to have taken this route, but Czechoslovakia certainly did in addition to hosting the 1935 conference. Director Kalman from Czechoslovak news agency, *Československá tisková kancelář (ČTK)*, for example, compared the radio services of the allied German agency, Wolff, with its nationalist competitor, Telegraph Union. The report concluded that Wolff actually provided a better service in terms of speed and quality, attributing any differences to the two agencies’ different transmission times rather than their news collection mechanisms (Confidential Minutes of Warsaw Conference of Agences Alliéés. May 23–27, 1927. AN. 5AR/464). Kalman’s assessment provided the alliance with its basic information about the two agencies’ news, possibly influencing the alliance’s rather passive response to the Telegraph Union’s inroads into Central and Eastern Europe.

## Conclusion

With all the political and economic incentives for cooperation, the agencies continued to work together and meet right up to the outbreak of World War II. Some accounts have measured the news agency cartel's success by American and Russian participation (Rantanen 1994, 2006, 2011; Bielsa 2008). Yet there is another story within Europe. Although the cartel lost part of its value for Reuters and Havas in particular when it became less global, smaller European countries still saw the Agences Alliées as a key means to discuss news, a subject that never stopped transgressing boundaries. Thus, the history of Agences Alliées complements prior work on why cartels and cooperative agreements can disintegrate and how they can function (Fear 2009). The Agences Alliées created a cooperation that outlasted the Great Depression, American departure from the global cartel and political turmoil in Europe. At the conference in Štrbské Pleso in June 1935, the president of Agences Alliées noted that the Associated Press had adopted the principle of non-exclusivity, which effectively ended any participation in cooperative arrangements. Now, the president proclaimed, the remaining European agencies still had to stand together (AN. 5AR/466). And stand together they did, planning a meeting in Rome in mid-September 1939 right up to the outbreak of World War II (AN. 5AR/467). The news agency vision of the interwar international order outlasted the high point of the League of Nations that slowed to an excruciating halt with the Mukden Incident in 1931, the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 and the German withdrawal from the League of Nations in October 1933. By contrast, the Nazi news agency, DNB, continued to attend news agency conferences until the start of World War II stopped any conferences at all.

Alongside incentives inherent to the news business of needing access to global news, the alliance survived until 1939 because repeated meetings built up trust amongst participants. Christopher Leslie (2004) even argues that trust built on repeated interaction (or plays in game theory vocabulary) is probably the key element of long-term cartels and cooperative arrangements. Over and above typical cartel mechanisms, however, the forum of Agences Alliées conferences and meetings allowed new nation-states in Central and Eastern Europe a space to enact their aspirations for greater influence and power in international affairs. Although others such as United Press, Exchange Telegraph Company and Telegraph Union attempted to build up alliances outside the cartel, League of Allied News Agencies or "Ring Combination" as the group was sometimes known, none ever achieved the same range and prominence in so many countries. Even Nazi Germany saw Agences Alliées as a structure too important to leave. Furthermore, the constant reports on competitors and occasional absorption of those agencies ensured that the alliance adapted to competition and maintained effective cooperative structures. Finally, the alliance structure enabled Reuters and Havas to keep tabs on their smaller partners, but allowed those smaller countries to participate in decisions that up to World War I had simply been taken over their heads. The opportunity to influence international news structures and the vital importance of access to global news meant that no European news agency left Agences Alliées until the structure began to disintegrate with the outbreak of World War II.

Ironically, in his speech at the news agency conference in June 1935, Czechoslovak Prime Minister Jan Malypetr had praised the Nazi news agency, DNB, for its speed, reliability and objectivity (PA. AA. R121177). The other politician speaking at the

conference, Edvard Beneš, would be pushed to resign as president on October 5, 1938 under German pressure after the Munich Agreement. Yet focusing on political disintegration and the build-up to World War II can ignore structures that simultaneously fostered integration. Just as Ute Frevert (2005) has proposed for examining European connections, the *Agences Alliées* established best practices by both looking to foreign patterns and sharing knowledge between experts. The conferences' continuation until the outbreak of war suggests other periodizations of the interwar period than a fairly internationalist 1920s followed by the increasing bilateralism of the 1930s (Steiner 2005, 2011; Cohrs 2006). While political histories have concentrated upon the growing competition between European nations in the 1930s in particular, an examination of news agencies tells a very different story of growing collaboration, where ambitions for national representation resulted in greater cooperation rather than antagonism.

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**Heidi Tworek**, Department of History, Harvard University, USA. E-mail: hevans@fas.harvard.edu