

## **The Czech Question: People and Events**

### **The Old Czechs**

The earliest Czech political party was established in the beginning of the 1860s as a conservatively oriented party of entrepreneurs and landowners. Among its founders were the historian, František Palacký, the politician František L. Rieger and the lawyer, František A. Bare. Although its official name was The National Party, the delineation, 'Old Czech', became part of the political jargon as a result of the clash of opinions concerning its programme and strategy in 1893. The party programme had as its basis the Czech Historical State Law, thus allowing for co-operation with the Czech historical nobility. The last leader of the party was K. Matteš, who, from the early 1890s, was steadily to lose power. With the beginning of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Old Czech (along with other political parties), joined the Czechoslovak National Democratic Party.

### **The Young Czechs**

Originally, they formed the liberal-democratic wing of the National Party (the Old Czechs), from which they separated after a heated debate at the Congress at the end of 1864. The Young Czechs also endorsed the Historical State Law, but rejected the Old Czechs' programme of passive national resistance, stressing instead economic liberalism, civic equality and self-government. They were profiled as national and anticlerical. The founders of the Young Czech Party were Julius Grégr, Karel Sladkovský and Josef Barák. Karel Kramář and Alois Rašín, two of its last leaders, adopted a strong anti-Austrian stance during the First World War and belonged to the central organ of the home revolt which carried out intelligence and conspirative operations in the Czech lands (i.e. the Secret Board of the Mafia). After 1918, they joined the Czechoslovak National Democracy.

### **The Královédvorský and Zelenohorský Manuscripts**

These form a cycle of alleged old Czech epic, epic lyric and lyric poems, originating from the beginning of the 19th century influenced by the romantic conception of the nation and its culture. The custodian of the museum collections and the librarian, Václav Hanka, and his colleagues (known as Hanka's company) F. Hořejška, J. Linda and A. V. Svoboda, are considered to be the authors of the manuscripts. These poetically valuable falsifications were intended to prove the existence of home creation and their Slav roots prior to the Western-European influence of. Their patriotic tenor, emphasising the idea of national individuality and defence against intruders inspired both Czech literature (J. Zeyer), painting and plastic art (J. Mánes, J. V. Myslbek) right throughout the 19th century.

In 1886, the first articles in the magazine *Atheneum* from the pen of the linguist, Jan Gebauer, and the philosopher and sociologist, Tomáš G. Masaryk pointed to the inauthenticity of the manuscripts. These articles were immediately rebuffed by certain experts. This controversy expanded into a discussion on the principles of scientific research, soon extending beyond the university and scientific milieus, evoking vehement objections and a quasi-denunciatory reaction from nationalist-conservative circles; thus it

become a political affair. Gebauer, Masaryk, the historian Jaroslav Vlček and the palaeographer Josef Truhlář were confronted with opposition from the historians Václav Vladivoj Tomek and Josef Kalousek, the literary historian Josef Jireček, the linguist Martin Hattala, the literary theorist František Zákrejs and the politicians Julius Grégr, František Ladislav Rieger, among others. Nevertheless, it was scientifically proven that the Manuscripts were indeed falsifications.

#### **František Palacký (1798-1876)**

One of the most extraordinary personalities of Czech public life of the first half of the 19th Century, a historian and politician, an aesthetician and literary critic, and co-founder of the Old Czech Party. His most significant work is the five-volumed History of the Nation in Bohemia and Moravia, originally written in German. The conception of national history and of the Czech political history was constructed upon the romantic idea of the historical struggle between the Slavs (as the principle of ethical force) and the Germans (as the representatives of absolutism, authority and brute physical force). For Palacký, the Hussite period constituted the culmination of Czech history. Regarding policy, Palacký fought for equal rights for all nations then within the Austria. He was a Federalist and a moderate Liberal.

#### **Jan Kollár (1793-1852)**

An evangelical minister, poet and national revivalist of Slovak origin. His most significant work, *Slávy dcera* (Slava's Daughter), is a patriotic, lyrical epic, monumentally conceived and classicised poetic composition fuelled by the idea of pan-Slavism. As we can see, Kollár's intellectual activity and publications, his conception of Slav reciprocity was based on the notion of humanity taken from Herder's – and partly Hegel's – philosophy of history. Kollár linked nationality with religion and general humanity. Within the Czech reformation, he represented the nation's original contribution to the conceptual and ethical development of humankind. He became an advocate of the separation of the Slovak and Czech languages and struggled against the Hungarianisation of the Slovak nation.

#### **Karel Havlíček Borovský (1821-1856)**

Journalist, critic and satiric poet, Borovský fought tirelessly against sentimental national romanticism (the demise of which was largely due to his efforts) with his enlightened realism. He earned respect not only by virtue of his literary and journalistic work, but also by the vigour of his personality and the emphasis he placed on inner truth and political courage. Initially an advocate of pan-Slavism, it was after two years' study in Russia (1843-1844) that he renounced this concept. Czech nationalism, political and economic liberalism and the economic and cultural rise of the nation form the point of departure in all of Havlíček's work. He rejected the separation of the Czech and Slovak languages. He constructed his political programme both against the revolutionary radicalism and reactionary tendencies of the changing Vienna governments. He was considered an enemy of clericalism, and championed the separation of church and state. In 1848, the year of revolution, he became a deputy in the Imperial Assembly, but was soon forced to abandon his political activities. In 1851, he was placed under police surveillance and was later forced to leave Prague. In 1851, he was deported to Tyrolean Brixen, where he fell seri-

ously ill. Borovský died a year after his return to Bohemia, quickly becoming a symbol of the Czech anti-Austrian position.

### **Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937)**

Student at the Universities of Vienna and Leipzig, philosopher, sociologist, publicist, Czech realist politician and Czechoslovak statesman, first President of the Czechoslovak Republic, lecturer at the University of Vienna (1879-1882), then associate professor (1882), professor at Prague's Czech University, founder of the first Czech scientific monthly, *Atheneum*, and the popular-scientific *Naše doba* (Our Time). (For an extensive bibliography of Masaryk's work please refer to the special appendix which follows.) His general world view can be classified as Christian positivist: he saw the theistically conceived notion of humanity, along with the concept of moral progress, as a continuation of the Czech reformation. He called for the spiritualisation of both national and individual life and ethical activism as a prerequisite for its implementation.

Masaryk's first phase of scientific activity was multithematic : in addition to the historical-philosophical essays *Plato jako vlastenec* (Plato as a Patriot), works within the sphere of applied philosophy, the philosophy of history and religion *Slovanské studie* (The Slav Studies), he produced his sociological, ethically inspired promotion thesis *Der Selbstmord als sociale Massenerscheinung der modernen Civilisation* (Suicide as a Mass Social Phenomenon of Modern Civilisation) and the positivist-inspired classification of science, *Základové konkrétné logiky* (The Principles of Concrete Logic).

The second phase is constituted by works concerning the problems of Czech politics and the philosophy of Czech history *Česká otázka* (The Czech Question), *Naše nynější krise* (Our Present Crisis), *Jan Hus, Karel Havlíček, Palacký's Idee des böhmischen Volkes* (Palacký's Idea of the Czech Nation) and in the socio-philosophical works *Otzáka sociální* (The Social Question) and essays *Moderní člověk a náboženství* (Modern Man and Religion), and *Ideály humanitní* (The Ideals of Humanity).

Masaryk gained international renown for his works on Russian culture, literature and politics (the essays on Kirejevskij's Slavophilia, Dostoevskij and the substantial work, *Rusko a Evropa* (Russia and Europe).

Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, Masaryk emigrated, becoming the leader of the Czech anti-Austrian struggle for independence abroad. He linked this struggle with American democratic traditions, the idea of civil liberty, the right to national autonomy. (At the beginning of the war, he moved away from the notion of Historical Law to embrace that of Natural Law, politically advocating the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian state.) The birth of the independent Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 saw Masaryk its first president. Of note in this, the final period of his activity is the main programme commenced in the middle of the Russian Revolution and completed in the USA: *The New Europe: The Slav Standpoint* and the reflexively-conceived 'report' on his activity during what the title refers to as *Světová revoluce. Za války a ve válce 1914-1918* (The World Revolution. During the War and during the Revolution (1914-1918).

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