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Subseries: Chron File, 1989-1993

OA/ID Number: 13738
Folder ID Number: 13738-005

Folder Title:

[Czechoslovakia Background Material] 11/17/90 [OA 8318] [1]

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

VIENNA, MY VIENNA

PRAGUE

THE MYSTICAL CITY

Joseph Wechsberg

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Little Mother Has Claws

PRAGUE IS CALLED *Praha* in Czech, after *Prah*, "the thresh-old." The "a" at the end of the word denotes a woman's name: Prague is a feminine city. Not a glamorous young woman, like Paris, but *matička* (little mother) to her troubadours. Svatopluk Čech, the nineteenth-century poet, wrote:

Praha! To jméno samo zpěv,
Ten pouhý zvuk úchvatně
Do strun české duše sáhá . . .

(Praha! Your name is song,
The very sound of it touches strongly
The strings of the Czech soul . . .)

Many poets, before and after Čech, have agreed with him. Jaroslav Vrchlický calls Prague "the heart of the heart." Antonín Sova, a modern poet, writes, "In the depth of my soul / The echo of Prague lures me to her," and Josef Hora exclaims, "You are not mine—I am yours!"

Josef Kajetán Tyl, poet, playwright and patriot—he was a leader of the Czech Renaissance movement against the Habsburg regime, in 1837—wrote, “Once in his lifetime every Czech must see Prague, once he must make a pilgrimage there as a Moslem goes to Mecca. He who dies without having seen Prague didn’t know the focus of our national history and the cradle of our future.” Fifty years later, toward the end of his life, the poet Julius Zeyer wrote that once more he wants to see Prague, “of which I often dream, as I saw her from Hradčany Castle—mystical, big, silent, in the haze of poetry, my Montserrat.” To the Czechs Prague was always what Paris was to the French, “our *raison d’être* . . . the fireplace of our national literature” (F. X. Harlas). The writers in the countryside of Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, could never get away from the influence of Prague.

Men have been in love with Prague for a thousand years, often behaving irrationally, as people in love do. Detlev von Liliencron, the German *Junker* who became bewitched by Prague in 1866, during the Austrian-Prussian War, when he came there as a young Prussian officer and spent just one night in town, sleeping on a poolroom table, never forgot. Thirty years later, he wrote a German poem with the Czech title “Praha, Nazdar!” (Hail, Prague!) in which he said “Ganz Praha ist ein Goldnetz von Gedichten” (Whole Prague is a golden net of poems). Walking through the city he exclaimed, “Prague is more beautiful than my dearly beloved Palermo!” whereupon he confessed that he’d never been in Palermo. Goethe, with similar poetic license, called Prague “a truly royal and classical city . . . unlike Berlin, which one sees only when one is inside, one sees Prague only from the outside or from above.” But Goethe had never been in Prague though he made seventeen, well-publicized journeys to Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary) and other Bohemian

spas. He’d often been invited to Prague by Carl Ludwig von Woltmann, the German historian, because “after Rome and Jerusalem, to which Prague is said to be similar in location, no other town is such a varied and strange historical document.” Goethe wrote from Weimar, “Unfortunately the doctors send me to the restless Rhine stream; I would have a thousand times times preferred to visit the Moldau.”

In Prague’s Malá Strana district, an old house with a star above the entrance was shown “where Goethe might have lived, had he ever come to Prague.” Goethe’s poet friend Schiller, who had been in Karlsbad in the summer of 1791, didn’t miss Prague, where his plays were very popular. His guide, Count Prokop Lažanský, showed Schiller the sights—the Old Town Square, where the Bohemian patriots had been executed in 1621, the Jewish Cemetery, and the Waldstein Palace that fascinated the author of the *Wallenstein* trilogy. “After a fortnight Herr von Schiller left the capital of Bohemia that he’d come to love,” writes Josef Svátek.

Wilhelm Raabe, the German writer, called Prague “the mad, the solemn city, the city of martyrs, musicians and beautiful girls,” and exclaimed, “Oh, Prague, what a piece of my free soul you took away from me!” Prague was always a city of martyrs. In 1815, Woltmann wrote to Goethe, “Germans and Czechs have built and again destroyed Prague out of national passion. . . .” Others, too. Not long ago, Ivo Fleischmann, a Czech poet now living in forced emigration, remembered Prague, “in the center of the ill-fated Bohemian rectangle whose geopolitical location was the source of the tragedy of a spirited nation.” André Gide called Prague “the glorious, pain-filled and tragic city,” and Ernest Denis, the French historian, noted that “every stone reminds you of heroic deeds. Nowhere else were passions more violent and

battles more cruel." A monument of Denis, a friend of Masaryk's Czechoslovakia, was removed in 1938, after France (and the other Western powers) sold out Czechoslovakia in Munich. Earlier, in the same spot, there had been a statue of the Austrian Field Marshal Joseph Wenzel Radetzky that was removed in 1918, after the hated Habsburgs ceased to rule in Prague, although (and because) Radetzky was a native of Bohemia.

In 1826, Franz Grillparzer, the Austrian playwright, wrote that Prague reminded him of Venice, "because there is so much permanent here, the ancient next to the new," but that the Town Hall and the bridge towers reminded him of Florence. "The city somehow reconciled me with the Bohemian nation that I never liked," he admitted. "One really should never judge a nation before meeting it in its homeland." Chateaubriand called Prague "the celestial Jerusalem." Auguste Rodin called her "the Rome of the North." Fouquet said Prague was "queenly, indescribable, incomparable." Richard Wagner, an expert in romanticism, called Prague "romantic" and caused a sensation in 1863 when he conducted a concert on Sophie's Island, standing for the first time with his back toward the audience. Paul Valéry wrote, "There is no other place on earth where the great ensemble and the small detail are more beautifully blended." Guido Batelli compared the view of Prague to a symphony "in which all instruments merged their voices," and Bruno Walter wrote, "Walking through the old streets, I began to feel an intimate affection for the strangely overwhelming, romantically dark city."

"This is the Czech Athens," wrote L. E. Obolensky in 1899 from St. Petersburg which then was the Russian Athens. People have called her *Zlatá Praha*, the Golden Prague, though Prague is golden only in short, blessed

moments—on a mild evening in spring or again in the fall, when the last rays of the setting sun caress the Gothic church-towers and the cupolas of the Baroque palaces. They call her Prague of the Hundred Towers but there are one hundred and fourteen church towers, and a great many other towers in the city. (In the nineteenth century there were one hundred and eighty church bells in Prague.) Looking down from Hradčany Castle whose silhouette has dominated Prague for many centuries, the city's towers make you think of medieval knights guarding the Castle, with their spears pointing toward the sky.

Thomas Mann, whom Czechoslovakia made a citizen after the Nazis had deprived him of his citizenship, said that Prague was "one of the most magical cities on earth—in its old beauty she surpasses much of what is Italian." Egon Erwin Kisch once told Gustav Janouch, Kafka's friend, "Prague is different. Prague is a spell, something that holds you and always draws you back to her. One can't forget her." In 1902, Franz Kafka wrote, "Prague doesn't release you. This *Mütterchen* [little mother] has claws."

City-of-the-World

WRITING THE STORY of Prague is a thankless task. "When one reports the history of the Bohemian lands, one must not seek the approval of any of the nations, religions or social groups but will arrive at a useful achievement only

by making everybody dissatisfied," writes Johannes Urzidil, the German writer from Prague who had many Czech and Jewish friends there, and later lived in America. "In no other city of Europe had two forces loved and hated each other as strongly as the Czechs and Germans in Prague, and in no other city in Europe had the Jews such an important task of mediating between them," writes Traugott Krischke, a German writer. The Czech poet, Gustav Janouch, in his *Conversations with Kafka* writes about Oskar Baum, the Jewish poet from Prague who went to German public school there. On the way home, the Czech and German boys often started to fight. During such a brawl a boy beat little Baum with his wooden pencease over the eyes. Baum later became totally blind. (I well remember him, a white-haired, smiling, kindly man, walking on the arm of his wife.)

"Oskar Baum, the Jew, lost his eyesight as a German," Kafka said to Janouch. "As something that he really never was, and which was never given to him. Perhaps Oskar is only a symbol of the so-called German Jews in Prague." The emphasis is on "so-called"—Kafka knew how to put a whole world into one word. Hugo Siebenschein, a literary critic, writes, "Kafka and his friends were Germans according to their language, and Jews according to their origin, but they refused not to love, or even to hate, the Czechs with whom they shared their hope of civilization."

Today Prague is a Czech city but it would be wrong to write the story of Prague as a Czech city, or as a German city, or as a Jewish city. Prague is all three. The city was over a thousand years old in 1968, the year of the unforgettable "Prague Spring," and also the year of the brutal awakening from the short dream of freedom. Prague always was either battlefield or symbiosis. No matter how one approaches the city, one becomes aware of a strange, many-

faceted triality. Historically, culturally, linguistically, there are three peoples—Czechs, Germans, Jews. Spiritually, there is Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism. Socially, there were for centuries the rulers (emperors or kings), the nobles (known as "the Estates"), and *misera plebs*. Architecturally, there is the Romanesque Prague, the Gothic Prague, the Baroque Prague. What came later cannot be compared with the greatness of the past.

Even topographically, there is the same strange triality, though Prague, like Rome, was built on seven hills. First, the Old Town on the right bank of the Moldau—the town of mystical legends, of the Old Jewish Cemetery, of Jan Hus preaching in Bethlehem Chapel, of defenestrations and executions. Second, Malá Strana, the old *civitas minor* on the left bank of the Moldau, underneath the Castle—the aristocratic enclave of Baroque palaces, monasteries and churches, of astronomers, adventurers and alchemists. Third, the New Town, the personal creation of Charles IV, who in 1438 "ordered himself a Gothic town as other men order a new suit" (Jacques Guenne, the French art historian), today the modern metropolis between Wenceslas Square and the National Theater.

I am using present-day Czech names for localities, streets and squares, except in certain cases where established English translations exist. "Old Town Square" means more to the reader than "Staroměstské Náměstí," and "National Theater" is clearer than "Národní Divo." I have not translated certain names where translations might be ambiguous. "Malá Strana" literally means "small side" ("Kleinseite" in German) but has been translated into "Lesser District" or "Little Quarter." I'll call it "Malá Strana" though historically one could plead for "Kleinseite." Some German names are used because they are better known in the English-speaking

world than the corresponding Czech names. Concertgoers everywhere know Smetana's "Moldau," not his "Vltava." But I prefer Czech "Hradčany" to the German "Hradschin." *Hrad* is the Czech word for "castle," and the Prague Castle was built by the Czech Přemyslids. Confusion remains about many spellings. The composer Stamitz wrote his name in the German manner when he worked for the Duke of Mannheim but the Czechs now call him "Stamic." The Nostic dynasty, Bohemian nobles, are also known as "Nostiz" and "Nostitz." More important remains the fact that Franz Anton Reichsgraf von Nostitz began building the theater where Mozart conducted the world premiere of *Don Giovanni* in 1788, but he ran out of money and the Bohemian Estates had to finish the project. (Prior to the First World War, the boxes were inherited.) The street where Franz Kafka was born is called after Mordechai Maisel (or Meisel, Maisl, or Meisl), a rich man and former mayor of the Jewish town. Today the street is called "Maiselova."

In Prague, the change of a political regime was often reflected by the change of street names. Tolerance was never widespread in this city of cruel passions where the bizarre nomenclature reflects history. Sadova Silnice (Park Street), as it was originally called in 1875, in 1916 became Archduke Charles-Franz-Joseph Street, the following year Emperor Charles Street, and when the last Habsburg ruler lost his empire in 1918, it became Park Street again. In 1923, it was called "Hooverova," in honor of President Hoover, and in 1940, when the Nazis were in Prague, they renamed the street after Richard Wagner. In 1945, Wagner was out and Hoover was in again, but not for long. In 1947, Hooverova became Wilsonova, after President Wilson. And in 1952, the Communist regime renamed it Street-of-Victorious-Feb-

ruary, "in memory of the failure of the reactionary putsch in February, 1948."

The large street leading up from the National Museum, at the very top of Wenceslas Square, to the district known once as Královské Vinohrady (Royal Vineyards), and later as plain Vinohrady, was originally called Cerno-Kostelecká, after a town in Bohemia. In 1884, it became Jungmannova, in honor of Josef Jungmann, a leader of the Czech national Renaissance. In 1920, after the First World War, it became Fochova, a gesture of gratitude to Marshal Foch and France, then Czechoslovakia's close ally. Came the Germans and renamed it Schwerinova, after a Count of Schwerin. In 1945, Schwerin was swept into the trash can of history, following the collapse of the Thousand-Year Reich, and once more the street was named after Marshal Foch. Not for long though; when the Communists took over in 1948, "Fochova" became "Stalinova," in honor of the *new* ally. In 1958, after Stalin was swept out of his mausoleum, "Stalinova" became "Vinohradská," the Vineyard Street. At this writing it is still called that. A nice name that won't offend anyone.

Many old houses in Prague still have their signs and names though they are not always clearly visible. Their origin is often mysterious; sometimes they are remembered in connection with certain people. The house where Mozart stayed is known as "At the Golden Angel"; the house where Egon Erwin Kisch was born is known as "At the Two Golden Bears" (a Gothic house restyled during the Renaissance); the house where three families of Prague violin-makers lived successively is known as "At the Three Fiddles," at No. 12 Nerudova Street. No. 25, with its lovely Baroque façade, bears the sign of a donkey in a cradle, and nearby is the rococo palace of the Bretfelds, where Mozart

spent his first evening in Prague and met Casanova. No. 47, "At the Two Suns," is where Jan Neruda, the poet, who later gave his name to the street, lived during the last years of his life.

Some romantic names have survived below Hradčany, in the street called "Nový Svět" (New World), not meant as a synonym with America. This street was inhabited by poor people who lived off the crumbs that fell from the tables of the mighty ones in the Castle. Being poor, they gave their houses "golden" names: "At the Golden Horn," "At the Golden Star," "At the Golden Pear," "At the Golden Tree," "At the Golden Stork," "At the Golden Sun" and "At the Golden Plough," where the great violinist František Ondříček, who always ended his concerts with the national anthem, "Where Is My Home?" played on the G string, was born.

Nothing is clear and simple in Prague; everything is enigmatic and complex. The city's thousand-year-old history is constant flux and reflux, love and hatred, struggle and synthesis, contrast and symbiosis. Princes fight tribal leaders, kings fight the Estates, feudal rulers fight the upcoming bourgeoisie, the city fights the countryside, haves fight the have-nots. More recently, Czechs have fought Czechs. The social struggles have ended with the conversion of former have-nots into haves, and vice versa—but for how long? There are religious struggles throughout the centuries: pagans against Christians, Christians against "heretic" Christians, Utraquists against Jesuits, Christians against Jews. Architecturally, recent discoveries prove that the Romanesque Prague was superseded by the Gothic Prague, which in turn was systematically rebuilt by the Catholic Church into the Baroque Prague. Yet so strong is the *genius*

loci that all styles become imbued with the spirit of Prague. The Prague Baroque cannot be mistaken for the Baroque in Italy or Vienna.

In 1930, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the first President of the Czechoslovak Republic wrote, "Prague is a Czech city but it must also be a Czechoslovak city in which all inhabitants feel at home. It must become a city-of-the-world without losing its architectural, spiritual and cultural character." Earlier, Masaryk, the great humanist, philosopher and citizen-of-the-world had written, "Despite all enthusiasm for the Russians and all Slavs, despite all repugnance against the Germans, the Germans actually remain our teachers." František Palacký, the Czech humanist and nineteenth-century historian, called "the continuous contact of the Slav nation with the Roman nation and the German nation" the essentiality of Czech history. Much earlier, the seventeenth-century Moravian philosopher John Amos Comenius (Komenský) wrote in his *Panergesia*:

In truth Europe is separated from Asia, Asia from Africa, Africa from America and between empires and lands lie mountains and valleys, rivers and fields. One Earth, however, bears and nurtures us all, the same air embraces us, the same heavens rise above us, the same sun lights us all in our turn. We all live in one common habitation, one breath of life inspires us all. We are all citizens of one world—what then hinders us from gathering in one community, under the same laws? . . . For one and the same thing is natural to all people: one system of the senses, reason, will, and all vital forces.

But the voices of humanism and wisdom have been rare in the chauvinistic wilderness. The last time all national groups got together in Prague was in 1859, at the centenary of Friedrich Schiller. The story of Prague depends on who writes it. The same historical event takes on a completely

different aspect when it is "interpreted" by a liberal nineteenth-century German; a nationalistic Sudeten-German of the 1930s; an enlightened Czech historian prior to 1850; a Czech nationalist writing fifty years later; a liberal Czech during Masaryk's "First Republic" (now often derisively called "that bourgeois Republic"); a Prague Jew writing in German; a Prague Jew writing in Czech; a German writing during the Nazi occupation; or a contemporary Communist historian. ("From 1848 to 1939, each German writer in Prague had to decide whether he valued individual liberty more than national discipline," writes Paul Demetz, a German writer in Prague who valued individual liberty.) Max Brod, Kafka's closest friend, a Prague Jew writing in German who spoke Czech and loved Czech culture (he helped Leoš Janáček and translated Jaroslav Hašek before they were discovered by their own nation), calls Prague "a polemical city . . . where three nations fought each other: the Czechs as majority, the Germans as minority, and the Jews as minority within the German minority." An Italian writer, Orazio Pedrazzi, senses "the tragic soul of Prague, a city of contrasts . . . Polemical statues, polemical churches, polemical theatres, polemical universities, showing different cultures. Prague never smiles. Since the days of Hus, the Czech nation was always in a state of mobilization . . . But it is this fighting face that makes Prague so beautiful." Prague, the capital of Bohemia, which Goethe called "a continent in the middle of a continent."

The Czechs' "mobilization" for their national independence was always symbolized by their fight for their own language. Jan Hus, professor at the University of Prague who preached against the Pope and started the Hussite movement whose short glory helped the Czech nation to

preserve its identity during centuries of defeat and Germanization, is now revered both as the great Reformer and a national hero because he preached in Czech, not in Latin, proving that Czech was not just "a language for the peasants." He also wrote grammatical works that saved both the language and the nation. Reading and writing has always been important in this country. In 1444, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, the Italian poet who later became Pope Pius II, wrote that the Czech people knew the Bible better than the Roman prelates. He asked his friend Tušek in Prague to buy him a Bible, "because I am tired of literature and want to look into the depth of the Scriptures . . . Bibles are said to be rather inexpensive in Prague." A parchment Bible cost sixteen guilders, a paper Bible eight guilders. "Thus the later Pope bought his first Bible in Hussite Prague—a Bible which had perhaps belonged to a Tábor knight, the son of Satan," writes Josef Pekář, the Czech historian.

Occasionally, the desperate search for the Czech language led into dark side streets. On September 18, 1817, one Václav Hanka claimed to have found several pieces of old parchment underneath the church tower of Králový Dvůr in northeastern Bohemia. They contained fragments of old Czech epics and lyrical poems apparently going back to the late thirteenth century—welcome proof of the medieval existence of a Czech language and literature! It was just the time of the Czech national rebirth after two hundred years of Habsburg domination in Bohemia, and there arose enormous excitement about the manuscript. Josef Jungmann, educated on Voltaire, Wieland and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, declared that "a state cannot exist without nationality." Chateaubriand and La Motte-Fouquet wrote about the discovery, Jakob Grimm studied the translation and called it "original folk poetry," and Goethe translated the poem

"Kytice" ("Das Sträusschen," the small bouquet), "a Bohemian folk song."

The following year, the Czech Museum Society received from an anonymous sender, through the mail, fragments of the so-called Zelená Hora manuscript, epic songs about the foundation of Prague that had been—for reasons unknown—first published in Poland. Hanka, by that time a national hero and librarian at the National Museum in Prague, studied the manuscript and called it "authentic." But other people became suspicious. Abbé Josef Dobrovský, author of an old-Slavonic grammar, *Institutiones linguae Slavicae veteris dialecti*, expressed grave doubts about the manuscript (and was promptly labeled "a hypercritical traitor" by some ultra-nationalists). In the 1840s, the historians Pavel Josef Safárik and František Palacký wrote learned apologies. The manuscripts remained a national symbol, and when a newspaper, *Tagesbote aus Böhmen*, printed a series of unsigned articles accusing Hanka of forgery, Hanka sued, and the paper's editor went to prison.

Then, in 1886, Tomáš G. Masaryk wrote a sociological examination of the manuscripts in his critical review, *Athenaeum*, and Jan Gebauer, a noted scholar, wrote a scientific philological analysis, proving beyond doubt that both the Králový Dvůr and Zelená Hora manuscripts had been forged by Hanka (who long ago had died a national hero and had been given a state funeral). For many years, Professor Masaryk was hated by the Czech nationalists for revealing the awful truth. Later, he again made himself very unpopular when he came to the aid of Leopold Hilsner, an impoverished Jew who was accused of the "ritual murder" of a girl near the Czech village of Polná. With no outside help whatsoever (such as Emile Zola had when he spoke

up in favor of Captain Alfred Dreyfus in Paris) Masaryk proved Hilsner's innocence. When Masaryk became his country's first President in 1918, he adopted as his motto the old slogan of Jan Hus and King George of Poděbrady, *Pravda Vítězí*—Truth Prevails.

Around 1900, the language problem created a veritable inferiority complex among the Czechs. A French writer, André Chevadam, reported in 1902 that when educated people in Paris talked about Bohemia, they might say that "Budapest is a beautiful city," which created exasperation among the Czechs in Prague. They also complained because no one in Vienna, the capital, took real notice of them. In 1902, Max Graf, the Viennese critic, wrote, "If a kid breaks a glass window in Prague, the Viennese read about it a few hours later in their paper but no one in Vienna knows what a Czech poet or a Czech composer did in Prague." That year Guillaume Apollinaire came to Prague and was surprised when the first five people he met in the street didn't speak, or didn't want to speak, a word of German, only Czech. The sixth told him, in French, "Speak French, Monsieur, we hate the Germans more than the French hate them." The Czech word for "German" is *Němec*, from *němý*, "the mute one"—one who doesn't speak our language. The Czechs never forgave Shakespeare for placing Bohemia at the seashore in *A Winter's Tale*, and they were furious when Friedrich Hebbel, who should have known better, called the Czechs and "Polaks" *Bedientenvölker*, (nations of servants), "with the unkempt heads of caryatids." They were not pleased when Jerome K. Jerome made fun of the Czech alphabet "which consists of 42 letters and reminds the foreigner of Chinese . . . Czech is not a language that one quickly comprehends." Today no one in Prague's ruling circles would

like to remember that Karl Marx, in 1852, was quoted in *The New York Daily Tribune* as calling the Czechs "a dying nation . . . in a land that can only exist as part of Germany."

Czechs, Germans, Jews

THE CROSSROADS CITY of Prague, barrier between East and West, was divided by invisible and impenetrable walls. In 1900, less than half a million Czechs lived there, ten thousand Germans and twenty-five thousand Jews, of whom fourteen thousand spoke Czech and eleven thousand spoke German. The Czechs, who were not permitted to call themselves a nation, nevertheless said they were Czechs when asked about their "nationality." Most Germans in Prague, loyal to the Habsburgs, called themselves "Austrians." The Jews were allowed by regulations to fill out only the column headed "language" on official documents, and they wrote either "Czech" or "German." Only after 1918 was the Jewish "nationality" recognized by the First Republic.

Between the half million Czechs and the German-speaking people in Prague, of whom there were twenty-one thousand—some Germans, some Jews—no communication whatsoever existed. "There was no German-speaking proletariat in Prague," wrote Egon Erwin Kisch, the well-known Jewish reporter who wrote in German and early joined the Czech

Communist Party, died in Prague in 1948 and is now highly regarded by the present regime:

The Germans who accounted for five per cent of the city's population had two beautiful theatres, a large concert hall, two universities, five *Gymnasiums* [secondary-grade schools], two daily newspapers, big club localities, and an interesting social life. They had no private contact with their Czech fellow citizens. No German ever appeared at the Czech Burghers' Club. No Czech ever went to the German Casino, as their *Deutsches Haus* was called.

Czechs and Germans had their own banks (German Hypothekenbank vs. Czech Živnostenská Banka) and industries (Prager Eisen vs. Křižík), their own gymnastics societies (the Czech "Sokol" vs. the German "Turnverein"). When Emperor Franz Joseph I came to Prague to open the Chain Bridge, the Sokol members demonstratively made an "excursion" to nearby Kolín. The Germans made jokes about the Czech National Theater. "Why do they play every day? A Sunday afternoon performance would be enough for all the tailors, shoemakers, artisans and waiters who have a free afternoon."

When I first came to Prague in the 1920s, it seemed perfectly natural to me that each national group had its swimming pools, parks, playgrounds, restaurants, shops, coffee-houses. My innocence (which in retrospect seems rather stupidity) was shared by all my friends; we took complete segregation for granted. The Czechs had their *korso* (the popular promenade) in Národní Třída, and we in Graben, which no one would have called by its Czech name, Příkopy. As a student at the German University I didn't even know for over a year where the Czech University was. Prague's venerable Charles University, founded in 1348 by Charles

IV, had been split in 1882 into the Czech and the German universities of Prague. Each university had its own professors, institutes, laboratories, clinics, libraries, even its own observatory. The Germans had inherited the astronomical instruments once used by Johannes Kepler, the Czechs the equipment of Tycho de Brahe. Between the adjoining botanical gardens of the two universities a wall prevented the observation of plants in the other garden.

It seems grotesque now but it must have been worse prior to the First World War, according to reports of my older friends. Czechs and Germans had separate churches. A group known as Deutsche Fortschrittspartei, German Progress Party, showed its true colors by viciously attacking Richard Wagner, Oscar Wilde, Auguste Rodin. Prague's German soccer club, D.F.C. (Deutscher Fussball Club), never played against Slavia, the leading Czech club, but both played against the same league clubs outside of Prague, which created fascinating discussion about the "paper form" of both clubs: which one was better?

No Czech was ever seen in a German theater in Prague, and no German would go to a Czech theater. Prague's German newspapers might write about a premiere in faraway Vienna but ignored the guest performances of the *Comédie Française* at the Czech National Theater. Czech newspapers retaliated by taking no notice of Enrico Caruso's guest performances at the German Theater. When Czech and German actors in a fraternal spirit got together at a *Stammtisch* (the regulars' table) in a coffeehouse, they were reprimanded by the Czech and the German newspapers. The "liberal" German newspaper, *Bohemia*, had a strict rule against printing Czech names. (How liberal can you be?) A Czech girl whose name was Božena was rechristened

Theodora and thus lost her identity, and didn't recognize herself.

Even the coffeehouses where the intellectuals met were nationally segregated. In Vienna, the coffeehouses were separated by subtle literary, political and social distinctions: there were coffeehouses for expressionists and coffeehouses for naturalistic writers and artists, coffeehouses for conservative civil servants and liberal lawyers, and so on. In Prague, nationality was the only distinction. The Czechs met at the Národní Kavárna, across from the National Theater, while the German-speaking citizens congregated at the Café Continental in Graben. At the Café Louvre, a group of German philosophers met twice a month in a backroom facing a courtyard. At the Café Arco in Hybernská many writers enjoyed what chroniclers have called "the highly cultured atmosphere." The coffeehouse had its private library of "privately printed works." The headwaiter would approach a habitué, whispering, "I've got something for you, Sir, that is positively obscene." Among the "obscene" works (that would now be sold everywhere) were the works of Aretino, Franz Blei's *Der Amethyst*, an anonymous masterpiece called *The Marquise's Reading Manual* and that Viennese classic, *Josefine Mutzenbacher*, allegedly written by Felix Salten. To convey the impression of respectability, there was also an incomplete encyclopedia. Max Brod remembers the ambiance at the Café Arco as "scurrilous, frivolous-inquisitive, and youthfully lecherous, but also free and open to new ideas, people crowded in four rooms where the air was thick with smoke and the aroma of strong coffee."

The only ones who dared break out of the cultural ghettos and the confines of linguistic segregation were the writers of

Prague. Among Czech, German and Jewish writers (and some artists) there was stimulating contact and often close friendship. The city's Jewish poets, traditionally Prague's cultural mediators, became interpreters of Czech poetry and art. Friedrich Adler translated the work of Jaroslav Vrchlický; Hugo Salus promoted the music of Antonín Dvořák; Brod became interested in Smetana, whose "popular simplicity and profundity" he compared to Mozart, and he translated Janáček's *Jenufa* which became a worldwide success. Rudolf Fuchs translated the rhapsodic *Silesian Songs* of Petr Bezruč, the poet from Ostrava, and Werfel wrote the introduction. Otakar Březina, the Czech mystic and poet, was beautifully translated by the bilingual Jewish poet, Otto Pick, who also translated the works of František Langer and Karel Čapek. Another bilingual essayist, Pavel Eisner, translated the great Czech nineteenth-century writers Božena Němcová (whose *Babička*, Grandmother, is a classic), Jan Neruda and Karel Hynek Mácha.

"We were no longer unconditionally German in the political sense of our fathers, and we started contacts with older and younger Czech poets," writes Willy Haas, the Jewish-German literary critic who became Werfel's closest friend. Paul Demetz, Rilke's biographer, calls Rilke's friendship with the Czech poets "a way of escape for the German-writing poets of Prague. Here they found warmth . . . in Slav motives and themes."

René Rilke, who later called himself "Rainer Maria Rilke" and is now considered one of the great lyric poets of this century, came from a Sudeten-German family in Prague. His mother was a strong-minded woman and a terrible snob. "It was her greatest sorrow that she hadn't been ennobled," writes Demetz. She hated the Czechs, refused to learn the Czech language, and would not hang out the Czechoslovak

flag on October 28, the country's Independence Day. Rilke started at the Piarists' Convent in Prague's elegant Panská, or Herrengasse, where I spent my early journalistic life on the editorial floors of the *Prager Tagblatt*, across from the Piarists' Convent; nearby was a tavern patronized by complaisant girls. At the age of nineteen Rilke published, and later renounced, his *Erste Gedichte*, First Poems. Later he wrote, edited and personally distributed a slim magazine, *Wegwarte* (Watchtower), which he sold at street corners, wearing either the black habit of an abbé with long locks, or dressed as a *Belle Epoque* dandy, wearing white gloves, lorgnette and an elegant walking stick. He called himself "a tragic outsider," and hated "the cold, philistine world of the Prague Germans." He didn't like to admit that he was admired by many poets in Prague, Werfel and Kafka among others. In spite of his mother's Czechophobia he became attracted by Czech language and culture. As a boy, he wrote from a holiday, "Here are three small girls, and although they are Czech, we understand each other well."

Rilke didn't speak Czech, but with a poet's somnambulistic instinct he sensed the sound and the rhythm of the Czech language so well that he once used the words of the Czech national anthem in one of his poems. He wrote poems about Jan Hus and the legendary Dalibor who played the violin in the Hradčany Castle Tower known as "Daliborka" where he was imprisoned, and about the playwright Josef Kajetán Tyl. Rilke's first love was Valerie David-Rhonfeld, the niece of the Czech poet Julius Zeyer whom Rilke addressed, "You are my master." He dedicated poems to Svatopluk Čech and Jaroslav Vrchlický, and in his novel *König Bohusch* (King Bohusch) he writes about the sad, dreamy people of Prague's mysterious Malá Strana. ("I know the heart of my dear little mother Prague," says Bohusch, "for this is her heart, Malá

Strana with Hradčany. The most secret things are always in the heart, and there are so many secrets in these old houses.")

König Bohusch retells the sensational assassination of Rudolf Mrva, a hunchbacked glovemaker whose body was found on Christmas eve, 1893, in a dark room in Malá Strana. The story has fascinated many Prague writers because of its cryptic elements. Mrva had been a member of an illegal Czech organization, called "Omladina" (Rejuvenation), which specialized in insulting the symbols of the Habsburg Monarchy in Prague, smudging the Austrian coat of arms, flinging dirt at the monuments of Emperor Franz Joseph I and Field Marshal Radetzky, and spreading such confusion that martial law had to be proclaimed in Prague. Suddenly the police managed to arrest the members of Omladina. It seems that Mrva, working for the police, had joined Omladina's terror group, "Subterranean Prague," and revealed the names of its members. A few days later, two men, called Doležal and Dragoma, who knew the secret code word, "the red-blue-seven," entered the hunchback's flat and stabbed the traitor to death. Ever since, folk songs have told the story of "the Prague Rigoletto."

Rilke regularly attended the Thursday evening meetings of the liberal-German "Association of Graphic Artists." (Its competitor was the "Concordia," which met at the "Deutsches Haus," or German House, also known as "Casino," though there was no gambling.) Rilke became a close friend of the Jewish painter and graphic artist Emil Orlik. Rilke admired Orlik because "he mirrored the world so honestly" and grasped "the essence of things"—which was exactly what Rilke tried to do in his poems. Orlik was a remarkable craftsman who could draw equally well with both hands and occasionally astonished his friends by "blindly" drawing, on a paper that he kept in his trousers pocket. His brother was a

respected tailor. Well-dressed members of Prague's German society would irritate Orlik by asking him whether he was "the brother of the famous tailor," or where he had his "workshop." Orlik would angrily say, "I have a study—my brother has a workshop." The tailor admired his artist-brother and artists generally, and often made suits for them, at reduced prices, or even for nothing, becoming in his way part of Prague's cultural establishment. (Even in my Prague days, between the two World Wars, a successful tailor was more appreciated by the bourgeois society than a struggling poet or painter.)

Literature, the arts and love brought the nationalities together in Prague. "Our Czech girl friends loved Czech folk songs which they sang and taught us," writes Brod. "We began again to speak Czech, as we had done as children. We breathed more freely than before, and felt firm ground under our feet . . . We sensed (as the most liberal of our Czech men and women friends told us) that old Austria was unfortunately finished in Prague. It was the guilt of our fathers though they were not the main culprits. The guilty ones were the German nationalists in Aussig, Eger and Vienna, and we had as much reason to dislike these forerunners of Hitler as our Czech friends did." (Among the forerunners were two Sudeten Germans, Georg Ritter von Schönerer, later much admired by Hitler, and Karl Hermann Wolf. But there were also half-educated Czech lower-middle-class people who considered Prague's Jewish merchants and intellectuals their "rivals" and had their own anti-Semitic slogans.)

Willy Haas writes "I loved the poems of young František Šrámek . . . We had Czech girl friends and wives. Franz Kafka's love letters to Milena Jesenská, a gifted Czech writer, are a document of desperate love and also of the hopelessness of his bourgeois, Jewish, German existence." Kafka's deep feelings for Milena Jesenská lasted two years

and ended in unhappiness. (She was the only one who translated some of his prose into Czech, while he was alive, and she wrote the only obituary after his death in a Czech paper, *Národní Listy*, of June 6, 1924. Milena Jesenská died in a German concentration camp.)

Kafka asked her to write to him in Czech because "... I never lived among the German people, German is my maternal language and thus natural to me, but Czech is closer to my heart..." In one of his letters to her he comments on the Czech word *nechápu* (I don't understand) that she wrote to him:

A strange word . . . it is so severe, indifferent, cold-eyed, parsimonious and above all nutcracker-like; three times in the word the jaws crack on each other, or more exactly: the first syllable attempts to seize the nut, it doesn't work, then the second syllable opens the mouth widely, wide enough for the nut, and the third syllable cracks it; can you hear the teeth?

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the locally spoken German language in Prague had become a stagnating idiom that had no inner connection with the German spoken elsewhere. "One restricted oneself defensively to pure grammar, the sentences became stone, the verbal treasure got poor. Franz Kafka wrote this pure, hard, almost abstract language in which there were few words for color and warmth," writes Paul Demetz. Johannes Urzidil who spoke at Kafka's funeral (and who calls Prague "the lost beloved"), in his book *Da geht Kafka* (There Goes Kafka) analyzes the phenomenon of the poets in Prague who wrote in German:

We German poets wrote in the language in which we lived and which we spoke all day long. That went for Karl Egon Ebert, Rainer Maria Rilke, Egon Erwin Kisch. Between written poetry

and spoken idiom there was no abyss . . . The complete coincidence of the daily language with the language of poetry is probably the strongest secret of form and effect of the Prague writers, especially of Kafka. Whoever heard him speak, now hears him down to the subtlest nuance in each of his lines. That is the secret of an inner identity that we *Prager* guarded as long as possible and which now disappears with the last ones of us.

The writers in Prague, Germans or Jews, who wrote in German, felt as though they were "sitting on a thin glacier with its rims slowly thawing." In Vienna and Berlin it was often said that "the best German" was written and spoken in Prague. Living in a linguistic ghetto, the German writers in Prague set their standards by the finest examples—Goethe, Moerike, and Adalbert Stifter who dedicated his beautiful *Witiko* over a hundred years ago "to the old, venerable city of Prague in faithful love." Few writers in Austria or Germany approach the sublime beauty of the language written by Rilke or Werfel or Kafka. Demetz writes that Rilke, "blessed and damned with a poor, grammatically precise but lifeless language in an isolated society, was intoxicated by Liliencron's poems."

There existed a local German dialect in Prague, called "Prager Deutsch" or "Böhmakeln," but it was used only by Czechs trying to speak German, or by comics imitating such people. They would use the double negation of the Czech language ("I don't have no money") and transitive words ("I bathed myself"), and it was also characterized by the Czechs' inability to correctly pronounce the umlauts *ö* and *ü*. It was popular in suburban comedy theaters and variety shows in Vienna and Germany making fun of Czech servants and tailors. The German-speaking people in Prague would never use it, not even as a joke; it just wasn't funny there. On the contrary, among German "society" in Prague it was

extremely gauche to use such *Tschechismen*. The Prague Germans liked to be recognized by their rather hard accentuation, very different from the "softly" speaking Viennese and the "martial" dialect of the Berliners.

The Czechs in Prague had their linguistic problems, too. In 1874, Jan Neruda wrote, "In school, the boys from the countryside looked down upon us boys from Prague and laughed." In 1883, Jan Herben, a friend of Masaryk, wrote that the Czechs in Prague were proud of their German fellow citizens who spoke such good German "though the Czechs themselves spoke the most miserable [*nejmizernější*] Czech." Urzidil points out that

... almost all educated Czechs knew more about third-rate French writers than about their next-street neighbors, whose names might be Rilke, Kafka, Werfel or Brod . . . Somehow one could understand the Czechs' lack of interest because they were still drunk with, and perhaps awed by, their sudden national sovereignty. How could they know that the name of a German-Jewish writer would once be insolubly associated with the name of their charismatic capital, Prague? How were they to divine that once people everywhere would subconsciously associate "Kafka" with "Prague," that this historical city of European eminence would mean to many people so much because it happened to be the hometown of Kafka?

"Everything in Prague excites the fantasy but reason doesn't come off second-best; it must be wonderful to be born in this city, with its mysteries and miracles," wrote Friedrich Hebbel, the German poet, in his diary in 1854. It reads like an early answer to the question, often asked since—how was it possible that Prague produced so many great poets and writers in one generation, and became the center of German literature in Europe during the first quarter of our century? Certainly Prague's "mysteries and miracles" partly accounted for it; but there was another, negative reason. Oskar

Wiener, the friend of Liliencron and a member of the older group of Prague's German poets, wrote, "The German writers of Prague remained martyrs of being at home there. They remained sons of an isolated society surrounded by their Slav fellow citizens."

Kafka, Werfel, Rilke and others created in Prague in an atmosphere which Willy Haas called "*vis-à-vis de rien* . . . Around 1910 we read Kierkegaard and Pascal's '*Pensées*.' They corresponded exactly to our vague existence that, seen from everywhere, seemed to be hanging in midair." The German and Jewish writers of Prague were "on a historical tilt," says Haas. "They strongly felt their sense of loneliness and isolation, of having no ground under their feet, as one feels in Kafka's despair, in Werfel's ecstasy." Many escaped out of the narrow ghetto of Prague—but they never forgot it. Long after Werfel had left Prague, he wrote about "the old Czech women"—the nursemaid Barbara, and Teta Linek, the cook, and many others:

Ah, those old women
always carry on their old hands
The earthless, weeping
dream light of the early day.

Heretics and Saints

PRAGUE REMAINS a mystical city although the present Communist regime tries hard to demystify it. "Social realism" does not recognize supernaturalism as a latent, powerful

force; what cannot be rationally explained, simply doesn't exist. Mysticism, never mentioned in the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin, is "a decadent relic of the bourgeois past," hovering about dim churches, the statues of St. John Nepomuk, and above the gravestone of Jehuda Liva ben Bezalel, the "High Rabbi" Loew, who died in 1609 and is buried in the Old Jewish Cemetery. According to the old Prague legend, Rabbi Loew, a student of the Cabala, created the Golem, the clay robot which did all hard work, split wood, carried water and cleaned the streets. "Such self-built domestic servants are valuable," it says in the *Gallery of the Sipurim*, a collection of Jewish sagas and legends, published in Prague in 1847. "They need neither food nor drink, work all the time, and you can scold them without fearing that they will talk back at you." They won't quit either.

But mysticism was in the hearts of the Czech people long before the Golem. In 1100, Cosmas of Prague, the first Czech chronicler (whose *Book About Bohemia* begins: "According to the geometric division of the earth's surface, Asia covers one half, Europe and Africa the other half . . .") wrote down the oldest Czech legend of Libuše who had the gift of prophecy, and in the presence of her husband, Přemysl, declared that she had seen

the town, whose glory reaches the stars, thirty miles from here, in a forest, washed by the waves of the Moldau . . . When you get there, you will meet deep in the forest a man who makes the threshold—*Prah*—for a house. And because even great rulers bow to the low threshold, you will call the town that you will build there Praha . . . All tribes of Bohemia and the rest of the world will honor Praha with their offerings.

Libuše also prophesied the arrival of the Jews in Prague. She told her son, Nezamyšl, that she had seen the Jews in

her dream. One of Nezamyšl's descendants, Prince Hostivit, had an apparition of Libuše who told him "to summon the Jews that were expelled from Moscovia by the Wends."

In Prague, legend is built upon legend. In 929, the leaders of the Jewish Community decided to build a synagogue. As the workers excavated the ground, they found the remains of a wall, made of white, square stones, and a Holy Bible, written on parchment. Two wise men from Jerusalem who then happened to be in Prague said, "There must have been some Jews here at the time of the Second Temple who built a synagogue . . . We advise you to build your synagogue after the picture of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The Almighty will protect your house of worship against fire and water." Another legend claims that the Old-New Synagogue, now the oldest in Europe (it was called "Old-New" in the seventeenth century when the "New" Synagogue was built in the Jewish quarter), survived all conflagrations in the ghetto because two mysterious white doves would sit down on its roof whenever fire broke out in the neighborhood, to warn the people. (The mysterious white dove also appears in Wagner's *Lohengrin*, not exactly a Jewish legend.)

Another myth which I heard mentioned in Prague in the 1930s concerns a subterranean corridor "leading straight from the Old Jewish Town in Prague to Jerusalem." Such wishful dreams made life perhaps more tolerable in the crowded medieval ghetto. But no dove appeared on the roof of the Old-New Synagogue when the Nazis marched into Prague on March 15, 1938. And people who tried to run away didn't find a secret corridor (though some of them saved their lives by entering the subterranean corridor of a coal mine along the Czechoslovak-Polish border and getting out on the Polish side). In 1938, many people felt that the saga of the Old Jewish Town had come to its end.

And in 929, while the ground was broken for the Old-New Synagogue (other sources claim it was built as late as 1270), Prince Wenceslas was murdered by his brother, Boleslav I. (Wenceslas' grandmother was said to have been murdered by one of her daughters. Murder must have been the Přemyslid family syndrome.) "Good King Wenceslas" became a legend abroad, and a mystic cult at home. According to an essay, *The Prague Castle*, an official (1965) government publication,

the pious ideologists of the new [Přemyslid] state managed to turn this ruthless struggle for power to surprisingly good account: already in the second half of the tenth century a complete legend of martyrdom arose which explained the death of Wenceslas . . . as a sacrifice in the interest of the Christian faith.

The tomb of Wenceslas in the south apse of the rotunda (today in St. Vitus Cathedral) became the focal point of the St. Wenceslas cult, "the most important Czech state cult of medieval times."

For pious-minded people the Castle of Prague was from that time much more than a fortified place and the seat of the reigning dynasty. It became for them above all the mystic shrine of St. Wenceslas, the protector of their country and of its feudal order. After all, the Castle is more effectively protected by the supernatural power of the saint than by the strongest ramparts . . . The St. Wenceslas cult continued to influence the building development of Hradčany for centuries. Were we not to realize the strength and intensity of its operation, many things at the Prague Castle would be incomprehensible for us.

The St. Wenceslas cult has remained very much alive in Bohemia, notwithstanding the ironical or exasperated comments of present-day political historians. Even non-religious Czechs feel strongly about St. Wenceslas. In 1929, during

the thousand-year celebrations in honor of the country's patron saint, Arne Novák wrote in *Lidové Noviny*, then the leading Czech newspaper, close to President Masaryk:

Smetana, our national composer, wished that his opera, "Libuše," should be performed only "in great national moments." In such moments we should always make a pilgrimage to St. Wenceslas. Even the non-religious will realize that in the great St. Vitus Cathedral there began Gothic Christianity; and there the boastful Catholic Baroque filled the altars with its magnificence; and finally, spiritual romanticism brought there the neo-Gothic style. In all these spiritual manifestations our nation finds its mother tongue.

Lately, so many people have come to pray or place flowers at the foot of the statue of the Bohemian patron saint, on top of Wenceslas Square, that the authorities last year surrounded it with a scaffold, "to carry out some repairs," and later laid out a small lawn around it. People were not permitted to step on the grass. But the lawn couldn't keep the "St. Wenceslas cult" out of the heart of the people; it belongs to the multi-faceted mysticism of Prague that survived all regimes and all ideologies in the past thousand years.

It was at the statue of St. Wenceslas that the resistance of the Czechoslovak people was focused during the glorious week of August 21, 1968, when the whole nation, united as never before, rose morally and spiritually against the invading forces of the "fraternal" Warsaw Pact troops. Soon the statue was covered with don't-give-up posters. Every night the Soviets tore off the banners and slogans. Every morning young patriots put up new ones again. On the first day of the invasion, a fourteen-year-old boy was killed by the Soviet soldiers in front of the monument. Later, a seventeen-year-old girl was wounded there. Soon the space around the monument was covered with fresh flowers. "I saw a boy killed

there who had carried our flag," a Czech recalls. "The Soviets pierced him with their bayonets."

All week long the marble socle accurately reflected the people's feelings. During the first days, there were fighting slogans saying that the word was stronger than the gun. A red-white-blue flag was put into the hands of the saint. Later, during the Moscow negotiations, the slogans were replaced with pictures of President Svoboda and Alexander Dubček, and with banners exhorting the leaders to remain firm. And after the delegation had returned from Moscow to Prague and the whole, terrible truth became known, the pictures disappeared, and then there was the black flag of mourning in the hands of St. Wenceslas. But underneath, it said, "We don't give up."

And in front of St. Wenceslas, on the morning of January 16, 1969, Jan Palach, a young philosophy student at Charles University, doused his clothes with gasoline and set fire to himself, as a protest against the occupation. It was perhaps the last gasp of the nation's spiritual solidarity and created an immense impact on the people. Historically, the death of Jan Palach, who is already one of his nation's martyrs, will continue to have a permanent meaning: life is not the most important human value.

In time of a national crisis the people of Prague instinctively turn for help to St. Wenceslas. If they have private worries, they are likely to go to Charles Bridge and light a candle at the statue of St. John Nepomuk. According to a Prague legend, Johannes de Pomuk (as he was then called), the general vicar of the Prague Archbishop, was tortured on March 20, 1393, by King Wenceslas IV "who burned him with a torch and ordered the dying man tied by his arms and legs." He had him dragged through the streets of Prague. At midnight Johannes was thrown from the stone bridge

into the Moldau. The King, in a drunk, brutal mood, was furious because Johannes, the confessor of the Queen, "wouldn't reveal the confessional secrets." Ever since, John Nepomuk, as he was later called, remains the martyr of silence and of all who suffer in silence. The historical truth is different from the legend. The general vicar represented his Archbishop in a dispute with the King, who ended the dispute by having Nepomuk thrown into the river.

The canonization of Nepomuk, in 1729, created a furor that still hasn't quite died down. The Czech foes of the Jesuits have never retracted their accusation that the Church had to create a Czech saint in order to neutralize the memory of the "heretic" Jan Hus among the people of Bohemia. Everybody agrees that they succeeded. In 1800, Arthur Schopenhauer, then a boy of thirteen, wrote in a letter: "The *bygotted* [bigoted] inhabitants of Prague would consider it the worst sin to cross the bridge without doffing their hats." There are now more statues of St. John Nepomuk in Prague, and in Bohemia, than of any other saint; every little village has at least one. The last strophe of Rilke's poem "Heilige" (Saints) is dedicated to the many Nepomuks,

Aber diese Nepomuken!
Von des Torgangs Lucken gucken
und auf allen Brucken spucken
lauter, lauter Nepomucken!

and is an amusing assonance on the abundance of Nepomuks—nothing but Nepomuks everywhere. And the chronicler Johann Basilius Küchelbecker writes in 1730:

The inhabitants of this country . . . are very *superstitieux* and great connoisseurs of religious fables and tales. They revere their new saint, Johanne von Nepomuk, with countless masses and build for his glory the most beautiful altars, statues and

monuments. You see his picture on all highways and it wouldn't be easy to find someone who doesn't wear a small Nepomuk, framed in glass, or made of metal, on his chest . . . they think he will protect them against shame.

When Charles Patin, the noted French physician, was in Prague in 1695, he was told that Prague consisted of seven different towns and was "as wide as London was long . . . The 1300 apothecaries of London proved the wealth of London, and the 2000 Jesuits did the same in Prague." Patin noted that the people were very religious and soon learned about "zeal":

I wouldn't believe anything that their zeal made them say. In a church they showed me three stones and a broken column that "the devil brought from Rome to deceive the priests." Then St. Petrus was said to have thrown the devil and his column three times into the sea. Thereupon they said, the devil became furious and broke the column. I remained silent which didn't please them at all. Then I said, I'd never heard such a thing though I considered myself well informed about the miracles of St. Peter. When did all this happen? "Many thousands of years ago," they said. "But," I said, "the Church exists only sixteen hundred years since Christ." "Yes," they said, "but the miracle is much older." I became so confused that I almost believed the Catholic Church to be much older. . . .

Today many people in Prague take their worries and wishes to St. Thaddeus, whose face, exultant with pain and suffering, looks down on them in the small front-court of a church in Náměstí Republiky (Republic Square). People used to bring with them small, framed cardboard pieces on which they wrote their requests; there were so many of them that the saint was surrounded by a small picture gallery of secret wishes. Others prefer to light a candle which they place under a metal dome so that wind and rain won't blow

it out. Or they go to pray before the Jezulátko, the small Jesus Child at the St. Savior's Church in Karmelitská Street in Malá Strana, which was brought there in 1628 from Spain. The Carmelites spoke of the miracles done by Jezulátko that "saved Prague from the pestilence and the Seven Years' War," and Jezulátko became the subject of books published in Würzburg, New York, Madrid and Genoa. Paul Claudel, who lived in Prague as a French diplomat, wrote a beautiful poem about "the Jesus Child watching until dawn over the small brothers." The small statue wears a different dress every day of the year. Jezulátko's dresses were donated by noble, pious ladies who had them made from their former wedding dresses, many of them decorated with precious stones and gold embroidery. Every morning a priest dresses the Jesus Child and puts the previous day's dress back into a vault. Unfortunately some people became more interested in the dresses than in Jezulátko. Thieves tried to steal a dress, and forty years ago a sacristan was murdered by a burglar. The mystical city was always a violent city.

The Golem

THE GOLEM is the most famous of Prague's mystical legends. *Golem*, a Hebrew word, means "germ," and also "formless," "mindless." The creator of the Golem was allegedly the High Rabbi Loew who lived in sixteenth-century Prague

during the reign of Rudolph II of Habsburg, the mystic-minded, eccentric Emperor who became fascinated by the mysterious, occult atmosphere of Prague and moved his residence there from Vienna. (When Grillparzer planned a play about the strangest Habsburg of all, he wrote in his notebook, "The tragic idea would be that he senses the advent of a new era . . . and that whatever he does only serves to accelerate its advent.")

The Golem is part of Prague's occult mood—a man-like figure of clay that was said to have become alive when the High Rabbi put the *shem*, a capsule containing the magic formula, into the Golem's mouth. At the beginning of the Sabbath, the High Rabbi would always take the *shem* out of the Golem's mouth, for the Golem must not remain alive during the Sabbath. One Friday evening (so the legend goes) the High Rabbi forgot to remove the *shem*. The Golem went berserk, "uprooting trees and creating terrible damage in the streets of the ghetto." The High Rabbi, summoned by the terrified inhabitants, found himself in the predicament of Goethe's *Zauberlehrling* (The Sorcerer's Apprentice). Fortunately, the Sabbath had not yet been consecrated at the Old-New Synagogue. There was still time! Rabbi Loew ran after the Golem and pulled the *shem* out of the robot's mouth. The clay figure fell to the ground and broke into many pieces. "Even today some pieces of the Golem are said to be kept in the attic of the Old-New Synagogue," we read in the *Gallery of the Sipurim*.

The Golem legend has fascinated mystagogues, cabalistic scholars, poets and historians ever since. As in the case of all legends in Prague, historical facts are blended with myths until truth and fiction can no longer be discerned. The destruction of the Golem is said to have happened after a midnight audience which Emperor Rudolph II granted to Rabbi

Loew, "on the 10th of Adar, 5352, after the Creation of the world." This audience actually took place on February 23, 1592. Isak Kohen, son-in-law of Rabbi Loew, notes in a manuscript that Rabbi Loew was taken one night to the Castle by Prince Bertier, where the two men talked for a while in a dim room. "Suddenly a curtain was pushed aside and the Emperor came in, asked my father-in-law several questions, and then retired again behind the curtain." In best *discretion oblige* manner Kohen concludes, "The subject of the conversation must be kept secret as is the custom in Imperial matters." David Gans (1541–1613), the Renaissance astronomer and historian (his grave is in the Old Jewish Cemetery) who was Tycho de Brahe's friend, also reports about the audience with the Emperor.

Rabbi Loew kept the secret; mystics don't talk. But the meeting of the occult-minded Emperor with the cabalistic scholar must have created enormous excitement in the dark, crowded streets of the ghetto. Later sources claim that the "midnight audience" took place earlier. The Emperor, who was concerned about the Golem, is said to have made a deal with the High Rabbi: the Golem would have to disappear, and in return the Emperor would permit no more persecutions of the Jews, no accusations of "ritual murder."

Clemens Brentano, the Catholic romantic poet, wrote in 1814 in Vienna's *Dramaturgischer Beobachter*: "The Master who created the figure must extinguish from the word '*an-mauth*' [truth], that he'd written on the Golem's forehead, the syllable '*an*,' leaving the word '*mauth*' [death], whereupon the Golem becomes a lifeless figure of clay." According to the Jewish legend, the matter was more complicated. After his return from the Castle, Rabbi Loew is said to have told "Joseph Golem" (the Golem had a first name!) that Joseph would no longer sleep in the courtroom but henceforth in

the attic of the Old-New Synagogue. On Lag Be-omer, "the thirty-third day after Pessach" (Passover), High Rabbi Loew and two other men walked up to the attic, where the Golem had also been created.

"They were standing at the head of the sleeping Golem, their faces turned toward the Golem's feet . . . Then they walked seven times around the figure, speaking magic formulas. In one corner Abraham Chajim, the old temple servant, stood holding two burning candles. After the seventh rotation, all life had gone out of the Golem." Then the clay figure was clad in two *talesim* (prayer shawls) and concealed under a heap of books and parchments. The following day, the story was circulated in the ghetto that the Golem had escaped. No one was permitted to go up to the attic of the Old-New Synagogue. "But smart people knew that the lifeless figure of Joseph Golem was lying there."

Numerous books and publications about the Golem have since claimed that the clay figure remained concealed in the attic of the Old-New Synagogue—which must have been a paradise for cabalists, mystics and believers of the transcendental, especially at midnight, with the pale light of the moon falling in. Victor Hugo transferred the Golem saga from the early-Gothic attic of Prague's oldest synagogue to the French-Gothic towers of *Notre Dame de Paris*, where King Louis XI meets the great magician, Claude Frollo, who creates the frightening Quasimodo. The automaton falls in love with Esmeralda. (In some Prague legends, Joseph Golem became infatuated with Rabbi Loew's lovely daughter.) The death of Rabbi Loew is also surrounded by legends. He was so wise and learned that death was afraid to touch him: But one day the old Rabbi met a pretty young girl who offered him her rose and asked him to try its scent. The High Rabbi took the rose. Death, hidden in the flower,

jumped out, and took Rabbi Loew away; a not-so-subtle reminder that even the wisest old men sometimes behave like fools when they meet pretty young girls.

In 1910, the celebrated Prague reporter Egon Erwin Kisch obtained permission to go up to the attic of the Old-New Synagogue, which wasn't easy. He had to climb up the iron clamps that had been fixed to the outside wall after 1883, by order of the Prague fire police, after the terrible fire of Vienna's Ringtheater that killed hundreds of people. It was an arduous journey. ("A tiler named Vondřejc had earlier fallen off the steep roof and was instantly killed.") Kisch was deeply impressed by the mystical atmosphere in the dim attic; what had begun as a journalistic stunt became a memorable experience.

"This is truly a place to create and bury the Golem, at moonlight," he wrote. Through the garret window he could see the Hebrew clock on the wall of the Jewish Town Hall. He noticed that the stones of the vault were "gray, geometric, regularly arranged in wave-like patterns, jagged and rough . . . If the clay figure is buried there, it will remain here until Doomsday. If one tried to exhume it, the synagogue might collapse." Kisch, a true child of Prague (he was born in a mystical house, "in an atmosphere of chiaroscuro," in nearby Leather Street), knew better than to destroy a cherished local legend.

That might be the end of the saga, except that yet another legend claims the Golem was taken from the attic a few nights after Rabbi Loew put it there, by one Abraham Secharja, servant at the nearby Pinkas Synagogue. (On Secharja's gravestone in the Old Jewish Cemetery it says that he died in 1602, "after thirty years in office"; again, there is some fact blended into the legend.) The clay figure was taken to a place fittingly called "Gallow Hill," in the

suburb of Žižkov. (The spot is marked, with wheel and gallows, on a map of "Prage Bohemica, Metropolis Accuratisissima Expressa 1562," that is kept at the Municipal Museum.) All public executions took place on Gallow Hill, the last in 1866, when Wenzel Fiala, a waiter, was guillotined for murdering his pregnant mistress, while a crowd looked on happily, and peddlers of *párky* (hot dogs) and "Turkish honey" did a land-office business. Later Gallow Hill became a disreputable place where couples sought brief solitude between ash cans and garbage dumps. If the Golem is buried *anywhere*, it might well be on Gallow Hill.

The most famous literary version of the old Jewish legend was written by Gustav Meyrink whose novel, *Der Golem*, published in 1915, made him world-famous. In Prague he was admired as the high priest of the town's literary mysticists. Meyrink was not from Prague, and he was not Jewish. (He actively promoted rumors that he was the illegitimate son of an illustrious member of the Wittelsbach dynasty in Bavaria.) Actually he was born, on January 19, 1868, in Vienna, in the "Blauer Bock" (Blue Buck) Hotel, as the illegitimate son of a Viennese actress, Maria Meyer. His father was Karl Freiherr von Varnbühler, an aristocrat from Wuerttemberg. Gustav Meyer grew up in Vienna, Hamburg and mostly in Prague. He became a private banker—a profession that may have a certain *mystique* and a great many mysteries but hardly any mysticism. That the *Herr Banquier* Meyer turned into the great expressionist of mysticism could happen only in Prague. Max Brod reports in his autobiography that Meyer was anonymously denounced to the authorities for doubtful business transactions and was arrested. His innocence was later established; a woman and a jealous man were involved; but though Banker Meyer was officially re-

habilitated, he had lost the confidence of his clients and was ruined. He became a misanthropic, disillusioned man and began to write. (His bitterly sarcastic essay, *Prr-aha*, begins: "Rarely do the English or French know where Prague is located for they have chosen the better part, as the Bible says . . . The Moldau may appear to the innocent from abroad like the mighty Mississippi, but it is only four millimeters deep, filled with leeches.")

Nothing is known about the ability of Meyer, the banker, but he certainly emerged as a writer of considerable talent when he took on the name of Meyrink. The noted German magazine *Simplicissimus* began to print his bizarre stories. Around 1910, Gustav Meyrink was one of the most famous writers in Prague. It was then that he began to "discover" the esoteric sciences. He told his admiring friends that he was suffering from a "mysterious" disease. He had consulted the most famous doctors on earth, who couldn't help him. At last he was healed by a recipe which he'd discovered "in one of the old philosophical tracts of Paracelsus." Max Brod, a young admiring friend, described Meyrink as a slim and elegant-looking man, "like a retired army officer, with an arrogant face, and big, blue eyes filled with scorn." Meyrink called himself "a student of the secret sciences, theosophy, spiritism, and the phenomena of para-psychology, an expert of the exotic and the bizarre."

Meyrink's headquarters was a table in a corner of the chess room of the Café Continental, a coffeehouse in Graben (Příkopy) popular with Prague's German society. There the Master held court, surrounded by his novices, talking in a soft voice about the latest scandal in local society—Meyrink never forgave them for making him an "outcast," though he enjoyed playing the part—or discussing strange chemical formulas and mystical terminology. The novices were con-

vinced that the Master was "haunted." Prague does that to people. Young Brod, who occasionally joined them, reports:

Among Meyrink's friends was a man who collected thousands of dead flies, and a second-hand bookstore dealer specializing in mysterious and incredibly rare books. A black raven with clipped wings was patrolling the pavement in front of the bookstore, and from the raven's behavior the dealer knew whether a customer entering the store was "an enlightened one." Everything connected with Meyrink seemed magically transformed: even the glass of water which the waiter brought, the coffee spoon, the small bowl with three lumps of sugar. The chess room had leather tapestries with red-and-gold lines on black ground: I thought of them as Turkish and Arabic designs. Late at night, when the coffeehouse was almost empty, filled with stale smoke and dust, we feared that a ghost would grasp the legs of the table and strangle our throats . . .

Meyrink lived in a deserted factory building near the gas works, and the novices were terrified at the thought that the Master's "divine spark" might set fire to the giant gas container. He received his friends in a dark library, talking vaguely about "manifestations of spiritistic powers," or showing them two intact, wooden, unbroken rings that "had been joined by the fourth dimension," which he'd received from the astro-physician Zoellner in Leipzig. Among Meyrink's prized possessions was a porcelain clock. The dial was set in a drum, which a devil kept between his knees while holding a hammer in his hand that seemed about to fall down any moment on the porcelain drum. Next to it was the painting of a pale man with a phosphorous-covered face surrounded by snakes. Meyrink called the figure "the guardian of the threshold."

After the success of *The Golem*, Meyrink moved from

Prague to a pleasant villa on the shore of Starnberger Lake in Bavaria, where he lived happily with a wife and children. Young Brod visited him there and found him "healthy and sun-burned, much younger than in Prague where people always made life for one another more difficult." Yet years later Meyrink wrote, "There is no other city on earth which one likes to leave as happily when one lives there and none for which one is as homesick as soon as one has left it."

Among Meyrink's novices was Paul Leppin, the now forgotten poet of Prague's mystic Bohemia. Brod calls him "the true and chosen singer of dying Old Prague—of sinister streets, drunken nights, of tramps and empty faith in front of luxuriously Baroque statues of saints." His roots lay somewhere among Heine, Verlaine and young Rilke, and his verse had a rhythm of its own. A tall, thin man with a dead-white face and a big mouth, Leppin liked to demonstrate his permanent disgust of life. He was fascinatingly ugly, had to submit periodically "to the terrible malaria cure," spent his nights in small cafés, played the lute like the German poet Fritz Wedekind whom Leppin admired, and sang his own, mostly unprintable verse. Occasionally he led a strange procession of his friends on Sunday noon across Graben, the German *corso*. They wore dark suits, cut in Biedermeier style, very narrow around the waist, large black hats and each had a dark red rose in his hand.

The critics called Leppin the poet of sadness and sin, of wild protest and bizarre exultation. Leppin writes about "the old, decrepit house of my parents where I spent my childhood. Wooden stairs creaked on dark landings, *Pawlatschen* [backyard balconies] with shaky iron banisters ran along the rear, opening up into the courtyard where cats and barefoot children were playing . . . a milieu of sorry hardship and

petit-bourgeois wilderness." He called his main work, *Severin's Walk into Darkness, ein Prager Gespensterroman* (a Prague ghost novel). Sample:

The twilight was getting dimmer as Severin turned through the tower entrance of Kleinseite toward the monument of Radetzky. Severin climbed up through Spornergasse to the Hradshin. The city he knew was different. Its streets led into nowhere. Evil was everywhere. Its heart beat between damp, treacherous walls. Night crept past blind windows and strangled the soul in its sleep. Everywhere the devil had set traps—in the churches and in the houses of the courtesans . . .

Leppin was the great "decadent neo-romantic." One of his early books was called *Glocken, die im Dunkeln rufen* (Bells That Call in the Darkness). He loved the churches of Prague and often praised them in his poems,

Nun bin ich verdorrt und von Sünde umstellt,
Aber die Kirchen von Prag sind die schönsten der Welt,

(Now I'm dried up and ensnared in sin
But the churches of Prague are the most beautiful in the world.)

Yet the poet who was "fascinating through his contradiction" (as he was described by Brod) also wrote frankly spiritistic prose. In his novel *Severin's Walk into Darkness* (Leppin, as so many writers in Prague, was obsessed by night, moonlight, darkness) he describes the home of one Herr Nikolaus, who is obviously modeled after Meyrink: "In his elegantly furnished apartment there were many strange, unusual things, bronze Buddhas with crossed legs, mediumistic drawings in metal frames, scarabs and magic mirrors, a portrait of Blavatsky, and a genuine confessional. It was rumored that in his room a man had died once under mysterious circumstances . . ."

Leppin had great influence on the young Rilke and the neo-romantics. The younger generation (Kafka, Werfel, Urzidil, Brod) loved his poetic language but not his mystical prose. "The historical inheritance that Prague left to her poets was mystic ecstasy," writes Paul Demetz, Rilke's biographer. "In the shadow of the hundred towers emotions often came dangerously close to religious ecstasy." But Demetz correctly distinguishes between "the true mysticism of Franz Kafka or the magnificent poetry of Werfel," on the one hand, and the merely occult terror of Meyrink or the spiritualistic novels of Leppin and Otto Perutz, on the other hand.

In his novel *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* (At Night Below the Stone Bridge), which Perutz calls "a novel from the Old Prague," Perutz exhumes another old legend from Prague, about the sinful love between Emperor Rudolph II and Esther, the beautiful wife of Mordechai Maisel, the rich mayor of the Old Jewish Town. The Maisels had no children. Mordechai was a philanthropist, built two synagogues, a bathhouse and a hospital. He was also His Majesty's banker, often lending money to Rudolph. ("He knew the arrow that pierces even iron doors . . . the arrow was made of gold.") The High Rabbi Loew knew about the love affair between the Emperor and Esther, and was perturbed by it. Could it be that Esther, not the Golem, was the subject of his midnight audience with the Emperor? At night, the High Rabbi went down below the stone bridge (Charles Bridge) where earlier he'd planted roses and rosemary.

Black clouds raced across the sky, and the pale light of the moon shone on the pillars and arches of the stone bridge. The Great Rabbi stepped to the bank of the river and threw the rosemary into the water. It was carried away by the waves and disappeared. That night the epidemics of pestilence came to an end in the Jewish town. That night Esther, the wife of the Jew Maisel,

died in her house in Three-Wells Square. That night, up in the Castle of Prague, Rudolf II, ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, roused out of his dream, cried out.

Perutz is better in his descriptive passages of Old Prague. "There was much to see in the Old Town of Prague . . . In Týn Church a colored baby was baptized, the child of a servant of Count Kinský, and many nobles attended the ceremony." (Next to Palais Kinský, Kafka's father later had his haberdashery warehouse.) In his epilogue, Perutz describes the Old Jewish Town of Prague around the turn of the century, when he was fifteen, a student at the Gymnasium:

. . . old, decrepit houses, about to fall down, with built-out fronts and small wings that blocked the narrow streets. Crooked streets where I could get lost when I wasn't careful. Dark entrances, dim courtyards. Broken walls and cavernous rooms, where pawnbrokers offered their wares. Cisterns and wells whose water was contaminated with the disease of Prague, and on each corner a dive [*Spelunke*] where Prague's underworld met.

Perutz remembers that once he went to see his tutor, Jacob Maisel, a student of medicine and member of the famous Maisel dynasty (there again is the fine thread between legend and fact). Maisel talked about the old houses that were systematically torn down to make room for modern buildings, among them the house of the High Rabbi Loew, which had lately served as storeroom of a manufacturer of boxes. Perutz and his tutor went there and found large holes in all the walls. "They didn't serve any mystical purpose," writes Perutz. "Rabbi Loew kept his cabalistic books there."

An earlier-generation mystic was Alfred Meissner, a liberal German writer and a close friend of Heinrich Heine in Paris. Meissner wrote a fine book about the great Jewish-

German (or German-Jewish) poet in 1856. ("I loved Heine, the poet and the man; the kindness of his heart, so often questioned by everybody, was certain to me.") Meissner came from the Sudeten-German town of Teplitz, and studied at the Old Town Gymnasium, which was also Kafka's school. He later had great influence on Kafka; Brod calls him "the Old Master of Prague's literature." Yet the healthy German immigrant from Teplitz was completely bewitched by Prague's mystical magic:

Prague is really a chronicle in stone with beautiful illustrations and fantastic ornaments. The memory of Libuše in lonely Vyšehrad, the little chapel where Hus preached, the majestic Týn Church with Brahe's motto "Better to be than to seem to be," the Jewish cemetery sown with tombstones, and beyond the bridge the palace of the Friedländer (Wallenstein), the Alchemists' Street . . . the Wladislav tract of Hradčany with the large window through which two royal governors and their secretary were thrown out into the moat . . . all this and a hundred other memorable ruins, graves, houses, palaces I saw again and again, until the past became alive in my mind . . .

In Rilke's *Larenopfer*, his early poems about Prague, "the past became alive," as Meissner had said two generations earlier. Rilke became fascinated by Rudolph II, Jan Hus, Rabbi Loew. The eternal motif of death and All Saints' Day hovers about these poems. Even in his later years, when he left Prague, which had become too small for him, and lived in many places abroad, he always returned in his poetry to the cemeteries of Prague, the catacombs and convents. In his poem "Der Hradschin," he sings of the beauty of the Prague Castle, seen from Charles Bridge, which generations have associated with Prague (and which has sold more postcards from Prague than any other view):

Und es grüssen selbst die eiligen
Moldauwellen den Hradschin,
von der Brücke sehn die Heiligen
ernst auf ihn.

(Even the Moldau's swiftly flowing waves
salute the Hradschin,
and from the bridge,
the saints look gravely at the Castle.

Around the *fin de siècle*, the poets of Vienna, a scant two hundred miles away, sensed the imminent end of an era and the decadence behind the glitter. The writers of the "Young Vienna" School reacted with melancholy and symbolism (Hugo von Hofmannsthal), or with bittersweet irony (Arthur Schnitzler). But Prague with her black saints and black synagogues, her "deadly struggle with the angels," was light-years away from Vienna. There was no decadence in Prague (the exception of Paul Leppin confirms the rule), where life was mystical and polemical, but never charming and *gemütlich*. When Paul Leppin's and Liliencron's friend, the poet Oskar Wiener, who had just published a much admired ballade about the death dance of children in the Old Jewish Cemetery, was attacked during a public discussion for "the decadence of Young Prague," he shouted, "*Wir sind ja pumperl g'sund*" (Come, come, we're bursting with health), and everybody laughed.

Nowhere but in Prague would George Langer have been possible. He called himself Jiří (a Czech name) Mordechai (a Jewish name) Langer (a German name); he was the younger brother of František Langer, the famous dramatist. Brod calls him "a bizarre personality, often provoking protest but also closer study among those who tried to look more deeply." Langer became disillusioned with the world

around him, turned his back on Western-European culture and immersed himself in Eastern Galicia's Hasidism. He studied Hebrew and Aramaic, and became an authority on rabbinical and cabalistic literature. For years he lived among the Hasidim in Hungary and in the house of a "wonder rabbi" in Galicia. After his return to Prague, he wore—much to the dismay of his Czech-assimilated, bourgeois family—the long, black silk caftan and the broad felt hat of the Hasidim, looking not unlike one of the "Mastersingers" in the third act of Wagner's opera as they arrive on the festival meadow. No wonder. The Jews brought this hat from Nuremberg (which later became the city of Streicher's *Stürmer*) and other places in Southern Germany to Poland and kept it there, out of loyalty to "the old country."

Langer walked through Prague, a living rudiment of the Middle Ages. Like many mystics he was a somewhat paradoxical character. Brod writes that "Langer was less proud of his thorough knowledge of cabalistic science than of his mastery in ice skating, and often performed for my wife and me his beautiful figures in the Prague Ice Stadion." A genuine son of Prague, Langer wrote equally well in Czech, German and Hebrew. He wrote in German *Die Erotik der Kabala* (The Eros of the Cabala), and in Czech *Nine Gates, the Secret of the Hassidim*. The latter was later translated into German by Friedrich Thieberger, an excellent essayist who wrote a monograph on Rabbi Loew. Thieberger also happened to be the Hebrew teacher of Franz Kafka. Thieberger's sister, Gertrude, later became the wife of Johannes Urzidil. In 1969, Jaroslav Langer, a Czech writer whom Jiří Mordechai's brother František, the noted playwright, called his "adopted nephew," published in Vienna his essay *Franz Kafka's einziges erhaltenes Theaterstück*, (Franz Kafka's Only Preserved Play). Langer is trying to prove that

Ein Flug um die Lampe herum, of which no original manuscript exists, is an authentic work, and the only play, written by Franz Kafka. One character in the play is called Rabbi M., which may be a symbol for Jiří Mordechai Langer. Mystical Prague was, and still is, a small world. "If the play should have success," writes Heinz Politzer, Kafka's biographer and a friend of Max Brod, "it will be due to the name of Kafka whose bearer didn't write it. This contradiction and absurdity is the only trait that *Ein Flug um die Lampe herum* could have borrowed from Kafka."

In 1930, Langer published his journal *Imago*, a Freud-influenced, psychoanalytical investigation into Jewish phylacterics. Later he became a Hebrew teacher and taught Jewish religion in Czech schools. In 1939 he bought, for a small gold bar, passage on an illegal steamer to Palestine, where he soon died. One of his last Hebrew poems describes the death of Kafka, "the wedding of a pure soul with the infinite."

The strange atmosphere of what is now called Old Prague was perfect for the development of literary eccentrics, mostly in beer parlors and coffeehouses where they belonged, like the furniture and the mood. Werfel, Haas and Urzidil have written about Weissenstein Karl, a true bohemian and vagrant poet. Another local celebrity was Franta Sauer, whom Janouch describes as "half a former engine-fitter and half a former insurance agent, a Prague idler and practical joker with a serious note of social criticism." He was well-known in the lower-class taverns where he would help Jaroslav Hašek to peddle the cheap installments of the first edition of *The Good Soldier Švejk*.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Jewish community in Prague was best known for its legends, sagas and

monuments of the past. For almost six hundred years the Jews of Prague had been excluded from trade, the crafts and agriculture and restricted to live in the ghetto, whose entrances were closed on Friday night with heavy chains for twenty-four hours. The Jews had to make a precarious living as small artisans, money changers, hired laborers. During the Hussite era, the restrictions were briefly lifted, only to be re-introduced in 1434, after the end of the Hussite movement. Not till late in the eighteenth century did Emperor Joseph II, the Emancipator, give the Jews greater freedom.

But though most people in the ghetto were poor—wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few families, such as the Maisels—there was a lively spiritual, literary and artistic life. In 1512, the Gersonides, who had come from the Provence, set up in Prague the first Hebrew printing plant in Central Europe. The ghetto was a center of rabbinical thought; great scholars, such as David Oppenheim, poet, bibliophile and interpreter of the Cabala, had been Chief Rabbi in Prague; also great scholars were Ezekiel Landau, Solomon L. Rapoport, Marcus Hirsch and Nathan Ehrenfeld. Heinrich Brody published an anthology of Hebrew lyrical poems from the Spanish epoch. The ghetto had physically disappeared after the modern town-planning law of 1893, but the atmosphere of the Jewish Prague remained unique in Europe. The Jews of Prague took the legends and the memories for granted. Walking past the Jewish Town Hall in Maiselova, they hardly looked at the old clock with the Hebrew dial and the hands moving in an anti-clockwise direction which so fascinated Guillaume Apollinaire and other visitors in Prague. The scarlet flag with the embroidered Shield of David in the Old-New Synagogue was a museum piece for many local Jews who didn't know that it was a reminder of the courage of the Jews of Prague in the battle

against the Swedes in 1632. One might go to the Old Jewish Cemetery in the company of visitors from abroad, but rarely alone.

On the whole, the Jews of Prague were economically secure after the beginning of this century. There were many doctors, lawyers, professors, bankers, merchants and industrialists among them who lived in large apartments or in beautiful villas far away from the dark houses of the former ghetto. Many were delighted with their official titles, "Imperial Councillor," or *Kommerzialrat*, "Commercial Councillor." They lived in a "liberal" atmosphere; many professors of the legal faculty of the German University were Jews. They were not very rich, as some Jewish families in Germany, but they lived well, and had time for their artistic or literary interests. Willy Haas remembers that his father "read Spinoza and Goethe, and owned precious first editions of Spinoza's work."

It was no accident that Jewish Prague became an early citadel of Zionism. "Prague was well-suited to revive the romantic longing for an individual past, for proud self-consciousness," Hans Tramer writes in *Prague—City of Three Peoples*. "In Prague, in the presence of the old palaces or the royal castles without a king, one could learn to appreciate the yearning and the dream of people for its mighty past and new future." There was not a large number of conversions to Christianity among the local Jews. In his autobiography, Brod describes how he and Kafka were slowly drawn from the German culture in Prague (which Kafka loved "in all sincerity and, so to speak, in innocence of heart") into the world of Jewish problems and eventually Jewish culture.

During the First World War, Prague which until then was considered a "provincial" city, compared to the Imperial capital of Vienna, suddenly emerged as the capital of Ger-

man literature in Europe. Within a few years there appeared Meyrink's novels, Werfel's first volumes of poetry, Brod's *Tycho Brahe's Way to God*, the early books of Franz Kafka, Oskar Baum's *Die böse Unschuld* (Evil Innocence). Most among the German and Jewish creative artists were poets and writers; music remained the domain of the Czechs; and the only important Jewish painter was Eugen von Kahler, a fellow student of Paul Klee and Vassily Kandinsky at the Royal Academy of Munich. Kahler was also a gifted lyrical poet. Kandinsky calls him "the only Prague painter who could be counted among the representatives of a new trend in Prague painting. . . . The tender, dreamy, gay soul of Kahler that had something of a pure Hebraic resonance, an unquenchable mystic sadness, was repelled by one thing only—the ignoble . . . It seemed that a hidden aim had brought this soul along secret paths from Biblical times to our own . . ." Kahler died five days before the exhibition of the Blauer Reiter Group was opened in Thannhäuser's New Gallery in Munich, on December 18, 1911.

In 1890 Paul Cohen-Portheim, after a visit to Prague, wrote about "Hradčany with its legends, the house where Dr. Faust lives, the whole atmosphere of magic and mystic, of the supernatural and mysterious that is stronger here than in any other city . . ." Poets, artists and many sensitive people have always strongly felt "the magic and mystic" in Prague. The poets of Prague who wrote in German often revolted against the oppressive power of local mysticism. They felt isolated between the cemeteries and synagogues, the catacombs of Santa Maria della Victoria and the Alchemists' Street, the Faust House and the statues of ecstatic saints. Yet they always remained under the mystic spell of their native town. Rilke loved cemeteries; Werfel meditated in the

Stadtpark; Kafka walked through the quiet, narrow streets of Malá Strana and the Old Town. Hans Tramer calls their Prague "a strange kind of enclave. The character of the town, its culturally isolated existence, the inevitable contact with an intellectual elite that was nationally alien and spoke a different language, have all left their ineradicable and visible traces on the poetic works of many authors in Prague."

People in Prague have always loved poetry; they either read or wrote it. Two famous part-time poets were Friedrich Adler, a lawyer, who translated the beautiful poems of Jaroslav Vrchlický into German, and Hugo Salus, noted gynecologist, whose poem "Einfältiges Lied" was set to music in 1901 by Arnold Schönberg. Salus kept his collected poems on a shelf next to the white operating table in his doctor's office. Rilke professed his "enthusiastic" gratitude to the two poets who carried on a lifelong rivalry, and alternately read their poems at the "Concordia," a group of poets and artists that met regularly in the "German House," the meeting place of the older, liberal Germans and German-speaking Jews.

The family background of most of Prague's German-writing poets was similar. The fathers, or perhaps the grandfathers, had prospered in "the province," somewhere in Bohemia or Moravia, and had moved to the big city. Rilke's uncle was a court councillor; Werfel's father was a rich glove manufacturer; Brod's father was a high-ranking civil servant; Haas's father was a renowned lawyer; Kafka's father was a prosperous textile businessman. Their sons were solidly bourgeois, though many later revolted; but none wrote revolutionary poetry, as Bertolt Brecht did in Berlin. Vienna's neo-romanticism was closer to them than Berlin's naturalism.

"We were suspended in a vacuum—that was our curse and

also our blessing," remembers Willy Haas. "Everybody had to think for himself, to start at the very beginning, with the truth and the lie of our existence." Many became oppressed by the myths and legends, the dark symbols and invisible walls, and broke away. Rilke thought he would be happier abroad—but his memories always took him back to the mystical city. Kafka created his own world of reality-cum-metaphysics. And Werfel who went to Vienna, not so *gemütlich* after the First World War, found mysticism again in Lourdes and later in California, where he wrote *The Song of Bernadette* and remembered the lowly Czech servants of his Prague childhood.

The Czech Poets

IT WAS EASIER for the Czech poets in Prague. They too were caught in the web of the mystical and the supernatural but they could always find temporary escape in the healthy, tranquil countryside of Bohemia. The countryside was inhabited by sturdy Czech peasants who might have been the protagonists of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, with its songs and dances. They knew nothing about the Golem and Dr. Faust, though they too were not free from the mystic spell of St. Wenceslas, St. Nepomuk and all the other saints.

Julius Zeyer and Jakub Arbes were among the earlier Czech poets who heard the strange voices in the darkness around the palaces in Malá Strana and wrote about the old

corners in forgotten cemeteries. Zeyer, in 1896, calls Prague "a big stone book, full of pathos and enigma . . . The chapel of St. Wenceslas at the Castle, Daliborka, Týn Church—they were not just buildings for me, but reached deep into the early conscience of my childhood . . ." Arbes was hypnotized by the painting of St. Xaverius in St. Nicholas Church in Malá Strana. F. X. Palko, the painter, had said shortly before his death that the picture showed "the secret of the redemption of millions of people." In *St. Xaverius*, Arbes writes, "The moment I looked at the painting I didn't see in the face of the dying man the fanaticism of a monk who renounces all earthly pleasures but the worst pain softened by the hope for redemption and strength of his faith . . ."

Later, Antonín Novotný, in *The Carmelites of Prague*, writes about the Convent of St. Joseph in Malá Strana where the Carmelites have been since 1655. Their first Abbess, Maria Elekta, was later sanctified after her grave was opened: and when they opened the grave, they were looking at a real miracle. The shroud in which Elekta had been buried was gone, but the body hadn't changed, lying before them as on the day of her death, though her eyes were darker . . .

Jan Neruda, the nineteenth-century creator of modern Czech prose, wrote about the mystic mood of Malá Strana where he'd been born and lived.

My dear, my golden Malá Strana, cradle of thoughts and dreams! The *Malostránák* [the citizen of Malá Strana] may be a little strange to you; he's certainly different in his thoughts and behavior. The secret life of the silent streets doesn't bother him, his walks always take him to some little corner, to the forgotten walls "At the Capuchins" where it is so quiet, or to the military cemetery . . .

No one would believe how beautiful Prague is at night. People are asleep but the stones wake up, and the statues on Charles Bridge become alive . . . And the moon looks on until it is chased away by the jealous sun. The moon is getting around a good deal and sees a lot. And the moon told me that no city is as beautiful as Prague.

The Czech writers were fascinated by the "Faust House" in Charles Square, a beautiful sixteenth-century building where according to a later legend Dr. Faust lived. Again two facts are connected with the legend: in 1585, Edward Kelley, a former parish clerk from Lancaster, who came to Prague and became one of Rudolph II's most famous alchemists, bought the "Faust House" where Prince Wenceslas Opavský had already installed an alchemist's laboratory; and in 1770 one Ferdinand Antonín Mladota lived in the house "and carried on strange chemical experiments." Alois Jirásek, the author of *Old Czech Tales*, tells the story of Dr. Faust who "had lived in this house many, many years ago, read in conjuring books, called the devil and sold his soul . . . And in the end the devil took him along."

Alchemism created one of the ineradicable legends of mystical Prague—that Golden Lane, a miniature, fairy-tale street in Hradčany Castle, was the home of the local alchemists. Actually, many alchemists lived in Prague but not in Golden Lane (called "Goldsmiths' Street" until the end of the eighteenth century). After the great fire of 1541 that destroyed most of Malá Strana and the Castle, many poor people squatted in wooden dwellings under the Castle arches, among them a few goldsmiths. Later Emperor Rudolph II, a dedicated believer in alchemism, allotted the dwellings to his imperial archers. They must have been exceptionally

short people. The houses, often rebuilt, are tiny. The rooms have a floorspace of six square yards and are so low that most people have to bend their heads as they step in. Prior to the Second World War, some famous fortunetellers lived there, among them Madame de Thèbes, who—not unlike the former alchemists—made gold out of people's ignorance by predicting their future and casting their horoscopes. Gustav Meyrink writes in *The Golem*,

According to an old myth there is a house in Alchemists' Street that can be seen only during the fog, and even then only by Sunday children. It is called "The Wall at the Last Lantern." In daytime one sees only a gray, big stone . . . Underneath the stone there rests an immense treasure, the founding stone of a house laid by the Order of the Asiatic Brethren who allegedly created Prague . . . Methusalem himself keeps guard there to keep the Devil from conceiving a son with the stone, the so-called Armilos . . . who would have golden hair, crescent-like eyes, and arms reaching down to the feet . . .

Alchemism became a passion in sixteenth-century Prague, and the expensive hobby of the idle rich who spent good gold on phony experiments. Emperors, kings and princes sponsored adventurers and crooks who knew there was real gold in their patrons' exchequers. Ignaz von Münsterberg, the son of King George of Poděbrady, had his house alchemist installed in a laboratory in Kutná Hora. Wilhelm von Rosenberg spent a fortune employing several charlatans in his house. Johann von Hasenburg, President of the Prague Court of Appeals, supposedly an educated man, wasted a lot of good gold in order to make phony gold. A rich man, Wenzel Wřesowetz von Vřesowitz, kept the famous alchemist Claudius Syrrus in his house. To have one's own house alchemist was an important status symbol. More important,

Wenzel also collected an important library which he left to the Malá Strana City Council. Three rich men—Korálek von Teschen, Johann Kaper von Kaperstein, and a famous doctor, Nikolaus Löw von Löwenstein—ruined themselves in their search for gold. In 1584, a *Magazine for Magicians* was published in Prague.

From all over Europe adepts of alchemy came to the Prague Castle to offer their services. Rudolph II, a superstitious man (once he asked for "moss which grows on the bones of convicts hanged on the gallows"), was no fool where alchemy was concerned. He named his personal physician—Thaddeus Hájek of Hájek, famous astronomer, doctor and mathematician—"examinator" of all would-be alchemists. Hájek set up an "Academy of Alchemists" in his house near Charles University, where he tested all applicants.

Still, strange characters managed to fool the good doctor. A Polish charlatan named Sendivoy, and an Englishman, John Dee, became intimates of the Emperor. Dee impressed everybody at the Castle when he declared that he could understand "the language of the birds" and pretended to know "exactly how Adam and Eve had spoken at the Garden of Eden." Present-day historians in Prague claim that he was really a spy sent by Elizabeth I to report on Rudolph II. He was succeeded by the formidable Kelley (both his ears had been cut off for forgeries committed in England), who passed Hájek's "tests" in Prague. A French medical man, Dr. Barraud, declared, that Kelley had transformed with one drop of blood-red oil "a pound of molten mercury into pure gold." After "producing" gold at the Emperor's court laboratory, Kelley was awarded the title "Knight of Imana." Kelley married a rich Prague girl and invested his wife's money in a brewery, a mill and a couple of houses, among them the "Faust House." Obviously, Kelley was a *smart* alchemist,

who considered real estate a better investment than unreal gold. Unfortunately, his luck ran out when Emperor Rudolph II was told by members of his court camarilla that Kelley "had discovered the recipe for the stone of wisdom," whatever *that* was, and had not given it to the Emperor, who needed it badly, since his empire was disintegrating under the impact of the Reformation. Kelley got into a fight with the Emperor's chamberlain Hunkler, was arrested, sent to the tower of Castle Křivoklat, and all his papers, recipes and mixtures were confiscated.

The royal alchemists tried to get the secrets out of Kelley's papers and failed. Sensing his advantage, Kelley asked for his release so he could continue his "experiments." In an effort to break out of Castle Křivoklat, he used rope for his escape down the Castle moat. The rope broke, and Kelley fell down and broke his leg. His rich wife left him, he couldn't pay his debts (apparently the making of gold was not as easy as he had pretended), and in the end he poisoned himself. This pleased the Jesuits, who considered the alchemists nothing but crooks and often exposed them.

(Contemporary writers also take a skeptical view of alchemists. Anna Tučková and Alois Svoboda wrote, "Everything we learned in school about the laws of chemistry and physics was against the possibility of anybody turning baser metals into gold by means of a powder; we might have been readier to believe if the amount of pure gold had not always been so many times the quantity of powder used, in the belief that the powder might have been a gold compound from which the gold could be disengaged by chemical reaction." They quote a smart Westphalian alchemist whom Rudolph tried to lure to Prague: "If I really knew how to make gold by artificial means, I should have no need of the Emperor. Since I do not know how to do this, the Emperor has no

need of me. There is no reason why I should enter his services.")

There were amusing alchemists like Dr. Dobranský, the Rector of the University of Prague, who admitted that it wasn't fitting for scholars to search for gold made of baser metals, and switched to more practical problems, trying to make a mixture to grow thick hair (out of boiled fir cones), to keep game fresh in summer by putting it in cooled aspic, and other useful things. (Modern physicists make beta active gold by sending streams of neutrons through mercury. The result is the active isotope of gold 198—ordinary gold is 197—that will disintegrate after two days.)

My favorite alchemist is Rodovský of Hustořany who looked for gold and instead came up with a recipe for "aqua vitae," the water of life that is popular as *eau-de-vie* with the French, as *Aquavit* with the Norwegians, and as *Akvavit* with the Danes. Rodovský's recipe makes good sense. "Take good wine" (I like the emphasis on *good*) "and distill it at least fourteen times. It will be stronger than at the beginning. Keep it safe as gold and use it against the ills listed below, that you may enjoy a long life." The long list contains many diseases, from "afflictions of liver, lungs and stomach" to "leprosy, vertigo, stink from the nostrils, and loss of memory." Rodovský wrote several volumes about what he called "the hermetical sciences." And his book, written in 1600, *Cooking, or a Book About Different Foods Which Are to Be Prepared in a Useful and Tasty Way*, is one of Europe's first cookbooks. Another valuable document from those days is Suetonius' *Cosmopolitae novum lumen chymicum*, published in Prague in 1604.

In 1902, Guillaume Apollinaire, the poet of haunting melancholy, after a visit to Prague wrote *The Wanderer of*

Prague, the beautiful story of his walk through the mystical city in the company of Isaak Laquedem, also called Buttadio, Boudedeo, Juan Espera-en-Dios or—Ahasver:

We went to hear the clock strike the hour from the tower of the Old City Hall. Death, pulling the bell cord, shook its head . . . We entered an inn where music was being played. Laquedem ate, without sitting down, and wandered through the place. The musicians played and collected some money. Meanwhile the room was filled with the guttural sounds of the guests, Czechs with ball-like heads, round faces and Ascension-noses . . . In the dome's chapel where the kings of Bohemia are crowned and where St. Wenceslas became a martyr, Laquedem showed me the walls covered with jewels, agates, and amethysts.

The Czech poet Jiří Mašek, who writes about "the half-sleep and the half-dream," describes his meeting with the eternal Jew in the Old Jewish Town. Vilém Závada has mystical visions about "the midnight city," life in Prague at night, with "the burned-out people and unhappy desperadoes." In the poem "The Siren" he feels caught in the labyrinth of the ghetto,

where at night the girls stand on the slippery threshold, where strangers discover Prague in the darkness, where they sense the romanticism of a damned world.

To the Czech poets Prague is often a city of tragedy. "O Prague, stone-heart of my country! How hard did you fall! Come back, come back! A gray cloud, formed by the tears of your sons, hangs over you!" exclaims Karel Hynek Mácha. They love Prague at dusk, when the evening bells ring from Hradčany. In "Stars over Prague," Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic sings:

In the dark houses people have lost themselves.
My soul, rest at least for a little while,

Now, in the loneliness,
Carry the burden of your sorrows.

In "Fights and Fates," the poet Antonín Sova writes about "Prague, Eternal Sentry":

O city down there: how many times
did I die in you, rise from the dead
.....
how many times, in ruin,
without a word, without a shout,
did I sail with you, dead, in
a quiet, dead stream . . .

"In the poems of our lyrical poets Prague is often a city of tears," writes Jan Šnobl. "They see Prague as an oasis of beauty, but also of melancholy unreality." Death, graves, cemeteries are always present. The great modern poet Vítězslav Nezval wrote a beautiful poem, "Epitaphs." There is more darkness than light in the poems of Jiří Wolker, Jaroslav Seifert, Jaroslav Bednář. Konstantin Biebl reveals the soul of Prague in his poem "The Condemned" about a murderer's last night and last thoughts before his execution. Some, like Ladislav Dyměš, cannot stand it any longer, feeling as oppressed as their German and Jewish fellow poets, longing for the "bright, peaceful countryside." And the great poet Josef Hora, in "The Working Day," asks:

I don't know, Praha,
Whether I love you more
Or hate you more.

The Czech writers of Prague received powerful impulses from their German and Jewish fellow writers, who were in turn influenced by them. Karel Čapek, in his play *R.U.R.*,

revives the old Golem legend—the robots rebelling against their master. Čapek was a mystic and symbolist-at-heart. (He was also the friend of Masaryk, the realistic philosopher, who spent nearly every Friday evening in Čapek's villa in the company of poets and writers—the *pátečníci*, or Friday men—where he felt more at home than in his splendid residence in Hradčany Castle.) In 1948, Karel Čapek shared the fate of his great friend and was condemned to official oblivion.

Nowadays Čapek is again reluctantly recognized. The critic Alexander Matuška compares him to Georges Duhamel. Čapek differentiated between "man alone" and "man in the crowd." He considered the individual to be "human" and the crowd "bestial." (No wonder he wasn't very popular during the dark age of Stalinism.) Duhamel said, "Perhaps mankind will once become worthy of man." Čapek wrote, "Man's whole misfortune is the fact that he was obliged to become mankind." In *Sloupkový Ambit* he writes:

Ora pro nobis, pray for us, it says in the litanies to the saints. But the saints and martyrs of this world don't pray for us in heaven but on earth; they pray in their hearts for mankind not to lose its faith. *Morere pro nobis*, die for us, when it will again be necessary to give a supreme example of love and courage in the midst of all the evil that torments mankind. *Revive pro nobis*, return for ever among us: for it is our fate to suffer much and often to lift our eyes to the shining face of man.

These words (which might have been written by Kafka) reveal a philosophy different from the optimism of Julius Fučík, the official poet laureate of the People's Republic of Czechoslovakia. In his *Reportage Written Under the Gallows*, the gifted young writer from Prague, who was tortured and killed by the Gestapo, writes, "Once more I repeat:

we've lived for the joy, for the joy we went into the fight, and for the joy we shall die. Thus there should never be mourning connected with our name."

Čapek went the opposite way. "We should start at man's last breath to understand what his life was like, to learn about the significance of what he experienced," he wrote in *Meteor*. He was a cosmopolite, *horribile dictu*, who was convinced that Czech art "always elaborated on European art." "Frankly speaking, we are not a country which abounds to any great extent in new ideas and trends," he wrote in 1936, two years before his death. He lived in seclusion but he listened to the world and its voices, and in his mysteries, moralities and utopias he showed—like Kafka—a remarkable gift of prophecy. He foresaw the apocalypse of the Second World War—a merciful fate made him die a few months before the Germans occupied his country—and he worried about "the white disease" long before the effects of radiation began to worry us. "We may not agree with him," concludes critic Matuška, "but the Second World War proved that he was not mistaken in his warnings."

In 1913, in a study on the American way of life published in the magazine *Přehled* (Survey), Čapek wrote:

The spirit of America, infinitely more human than we think, gives birth to a spiritual man, complete and well-balanced, a finished human being. His harmony is entirely different from the ancient symbiosis between beauty and goodness, but all the same harmonic in the equilibrium of his thought and action. The progress in which the typically non-conservative American believes is guided by the mind . . . This is the true example that America provides and that Europe disregards . . .

Kafka

FRANZ KAFKA was born on July 3, 1883, at the corner of No. 5, Maiselova, "U Radnice" (At the Town Hall). The house was badly damaged during the fighting in the spring of 1945, and later rebuilt. Only the old entrance was left. In the summer of 1965, a memorial sculpture, showing Kafka's head, made by Karel Hladik was put up on the corner of the house. Stepping out of the entrance, Kafka might have turned right, toward the Old Jewish Town and would reach the Old-New Synagogue or the Old Jewish Cemetery in a couple of minutes. Turning left, he was practically in Staroměstské Náměstí, the Old Town Square, which has more historical associations for the people of Prague than any other place.

Some sixteen feet below the level of the present-day pavement there was the ancient East-West trade road, going back to the pre-Christian era, that led from Byzantium to the later Frankish Empire. In 1419, the first Prague defenestration at the Old Town Hall marked the beginning of the Hussite wars. The Hussite movement later led toward the Reformation. In 1437, Jan Roháč z Dubé, the last great Hussite warrior, was executed in front of the Town Hall. In 1458, George of Poděbrady, the newly elected King of Bohemia, was led across the square toward Čeletná. Frederick of the Palatinate, the "Winter King," crossed Old Town Square, on his

flight, following his defeat at the White Mountain. The next year, in 1621, twenty-seven Czech nobles and burghers were executed in front of the Town Hall. (The spot is marked by crosses in the pavement at the foot of the tower.) "The Prague executioner beheaded twenty-four men, using four swords . . . then the remaining three, who had been condemned to death by hanging, had their arms bound behind their backs . . . within four or five half-hours the executioner put an end to twenty-seven lives," it says in an old chronicle, *Pragerische Execution*. During World War I, on the morning after the unveiling of the Jan Hus Memorial in the center of Old Town Square, a mysterious carpet of roses, which the people of Prague had silently woven during the night, was spread all over it. Shortly before the Revolution in October, 1918, demonstrators tore down the pillar of St. Mary's. (In Prague it was always claimed that the meridian of Prague followed the line of the shadow thrown by St. Mary's pillar at noon.)

Early in May, 1945, an S. S. unit, in a perverted, final act of hatred, brought up a tank and fired a shell from close range into the *Orloj* (horologe), the astrological clock of the Old Town Hall, a Czech national symbol. It had been finished around 1480 by Hanuš Růže, an Utraquist professor of Charles University, and its calendar plaque, showing the signs of the Zodiac, medallions of the months and country scenes, was painted by Josef Mánes. (The present plaque is a copy; the original is at the Municipal Museum.) Kafka, as so many other people, often stood there waiting for the clock to strike the hour. The little windows open, the small statues of the Apostles and of Christ file past the windows, Death tolls a tiny bell, the old man nervously shakes his head, he doesn't want to die yet. Death reverses the hour-glass. There follow the figures of a Turk, a miser with his

purse, who thinks you can take it with you, a dandy adjusting his costume. The windows are closed but up in the gable a tiny window opens and a cock appears and crows.

It is hard to believe that in 1787, when the Old Town Hall was rebuilt, the clock was almost sold as scrap metal, and was saved only by the intervention of Anton Strnad. Kafka loved the astronomical clock, and the *Orloj* returned his affection. After Kafka's coffin had been lowered into his parents' grave at the modern Jewish Cemetery at Strašnice, exactly at four o'clock, on May 11, 1924, family members and friends, among them Max Brod, returned to Kafka's home. In Old Town Square, Brod noticed that the Town Hall's *Orloj* had stopped—exactly at four o'clock . . .

Old Town Square remains the focus of Prague's history. It is closer to the hearts of the people than the magnificent but somewhat remote Hradčany Castle. "There are few squares on earth that can compete with Old Town Square in Prague, magnificent palaces surround it, strange houses whose builders must have enjoyed their own imagination, the Old Town Hall with its serious-cheerful loggia and astronomic clock, the grandiose Týn Church with its two towers stretching toward the sky . . . and the pavement that drank noble and ignoble human blood," wrote the poet Hugo Salus whom Kafka admired.

(After the Soviet troops occupied Prague, late in August, 1969, no one was able to go to Old Town Square. The Russians, probably instructed by some local "advisers," completely blocked off the square with tanks and anti-aircraft guns. In front of the Kinský Palace there was a large banner, "Russian Art of the 1920s," publicizing a show that had recently been opened. Now there were tanks in front of the banner. Some youthful Czech photographers made pictures of the "new" Russian art. "Perhaps it was

just as well we couldn't demonstrate at the Jan Hus monument," one said. "It's easy to get up on the monument, and lie there, and that might have created trouble.")

Kafka loved the Old Town Square and spent a considerable part of his short life in and around it. He went to the Old Town Gymnasium, on the second floor of the Kinský Palais. Among his classmates were Hugo Bergmann, who became a philosopher and Rector of the University of Jerusalem, and Emil Utitz, professor of philosophy in Halle and Prague. At various times Kafka lived in nearby Celetná, in a narrow, twisting building near Týn Church; in 36, and Pařížská from where he could see the Russian Church. Later, in Bílková, and in Dlouhá (Long Street), he was within a short distance of the Old Town Square.

The relationship between Kafka and Prague is still the subject of much research and the question is often asked whether Kafka's genius would have developed if he hadn't been born and lived in Prague. He often refers directly to Prague in his *Diaries* but never in his novels. He doesn't write about the people of Prague the way Thomas Mann, whom Kafka much admired, writes about the people of Luebeck. "But anyone able to recognize the reality in a surrealist picture will recognize the reality of Prague in the work of Kafka," writes Hugo Siebenschein. (When I first read *The Trial*, I was rather young and had not been in Prague; the book never made me think of Prague. Rereading it again after having lived in Prague for years, I realized that *The Trial* was the deeper truth about Kafka's city, seen with a poet's inner vision. Without trying to photograph Prague, Kafka relived the city's inner, secret life and created a permanent picture that cannot be seen with one's eyes, only felt with one's soul.)

The deepest truth of Kafka's work is as unfathomable as

the innermost mysteries of Mozart's music. Both Mozart and Kafka have been defenseless against their posthumous interpreters who often "interpret" by trying to blend their own thoughts into the work of a genius. Goethe, much interpreted and much abused, once wrote ironically in "Zahme Xenien,"

Im Auslegen seid frisch und munter!
Legt ihr's nicht aus, so legt was unter,

which, somewhat freely translated, means

Don't hesitate when you interpret,
Elucidate, or Mistranslate.

Max Brod, Kafka's closest friend and biographer, writes in *Streitbares Leben* (Polemical Life):

It is difficult and superfluous to comment on Kafka. Every reasonable reader feels that in Kafka's work an extremely precise realism is combined with another element that in each line borders upon the sphere of what cannot be said and can only be spiritually comprehended. Kafka's teachers were the Bible, Goethe, Kleist, Flaubert and Kierkegaard. He himself considered as the highest form of poetry a work that expresses in every syllable something real and, at the same time, something that cannot be put into words . . . He didn't retire into the ivory tower, he didn't evade life . . . yet on the other, the metaphysical side of his life there was his painful perception of divine matters, the pure, the perfect, the absolute.

Willy Haas (at this writing one of the last surviving contemporaries of Kafka in Prague) writes in 1960 in his *Erinnerungen* (Memoirs),

When I read the works of Kafka I read them as one reads the completely familiar panorama of one's own youth. I recognized every corner, every dusty corridor, every lascivity. Kafka cer-

tainly said everything that we never said, were never able to say. I believe I can read his books as in a dream. I don't understand that one word is needed to explain them . . . That's why I don't understand all the essays that were written about Kafka's work, since every word that is added is superfluous and only camouflages what is on the surface . . . *I cannot understand how anyone can understand him who wasn't born in Prague, around 1880 or 1890.* His strangely mute, allegorically realistic deeper meaning [Tiefsinn] is the reason that those who don't really know the enormously suggestive foreground world won't understand the milieu of "The Trial" and "The Castle" that exists only in this local microcosmos; and thus the most abstruse misunderstandings were born . . .

and he continues,

The special situation of the Old Town of Prague, the traces of the former ghetto, the narrow, crooked streets, the dim churches and synagogues, the dusty office buildings, the banks of the Moldau and the Baroque gardens . . . all this helped to form the atmosphere in the tortured visions of Kafka.

Gustav Janouch writes in his *Conversations with Kafka* that they once talked about Meyrink's *The Golem* and that Kafka said:

In all of us there are dark corners, mysterious corridors, blind windows, dirty courtyards, loud dives and closed taverns. We walk through the broad streets in the newly built quarters of the city but our steps and glances are unsure. In our inside we are still trembling as in the old streets of the misery [Elend]. *The unhealthy Old Jewish Town is much more real for us than the hygienic new town around us.* Wide-awake we walk through a dream: ghosts of long-gone days.

This is the answer to the enigmatic question of Franz Kafka and Prague. Or when Kafka writes about the build-

ing of the Tower of Babylon in "Das Stadtwappen" (The Coat of Arms):

Every national group wanted to have the nicest living quarters which created arguments that ended in murderous fights. These fights never stopped. They offered new grounds to the leaders that the tower should be built very slowly or rather only after conclusion of a peace treaty. But one didn't spend all the time fighting, in the intervals one made the town more beautiful, which however caused new envy and new fights. Thus passed the time of the first generation but none of the succeeding ones was different, only the workmanship got better, and with it the eagerness to fight. The second or third generation already realized the senselessness of the sky-tower-building, but by that time one was too much attached to each other to be able to leave the town. All sagas and legends of the town express the longing for the day (as was predicted) on which the town will be smashed to pieces by a giant fist—with five blows quickly succeeding each other. Therefore the town has the fist in its coat-of-arms.

Kafka's *Diaries* are running footnotes to his daily, humdrum life in Prague. After graduating from the Old Town Gymnasium, a very strict school, Kafka studied law at the German University, just two minutes away from Old Town Square. (A quarter of a century later, when I studied law in the same lecture halls and seminary rooms, I came to dislike the vaulted corridors, dark courtyards and old stone stairs very much. It was cold and damp in winter. In springtime the smell from the toilets hovered over the venerable Alma Mater that Charles IV had founded right here in 1348, the first in Central Europe. Since then, no repairs whatsoever seemed to have been carried out inside. We students wished it would have more comfort and less history.)

In 1906, Kafka became a doctor of jurisprudence, was addressed as "Herr Doktor," which pleased his parents more than it pleased him, and did his "unpaid" year as a court clerk, to gain a short breathing spell. (The cross-examinations in his novels *America* and *The Trial* show how much practical experience he gained in court.) He didn't want to be a "Herr Doktor." He wanted to write. "Writing is a form of prayer," he confides to his *Diary*. He was looking for a single-shift job that would be over by two in the afternoon, so he could spend the rest of the day thinking, reading, writing. His friends envied him when he found such a job at the nearby "Workers' Accident Insurance Institute," in Poříč Street. He was assigned to the department that studied the prevention of accidents, and in 1909 wrote an article for the *Annual Report of the Accident Institute*, which his boss painstakingly corrected. (Brod later spoke to Kafka's former boss, who had no idea that his erstwhile hireling had become a world-famous writer. Kafka would have appreciated this bit of irony.) The atmosphere of the Insurance Institute later appears in several chapters of *The Trial* and *The Castle*. Brod remembers how one day in 1909, "Herr Doktor" Kafka read to him the beginning of a short novel called "Preparations for a Wedding in the Country." On a rainy afternoon a man named Raban (Kafka?) walks to a small railroad station. Very little happens—and also very much. "It was extraordinary," Brod writes. "I got the impression that there was no ordinary talent speaking, but a genius."

Much of his life Kafka had to do things which he didn't like to do. Once he writes in his *Diary*, "After studying since six o'clock in the morning, I noticed how my left hand clasped the fingers of my right hand for a few moments, as though it had pity for them." Later, he was very unhappy in his job. ("Here in the office, for the sake of such a

miserable, official document I must rob a body that is capable of such happiness of a piece of its flesh." Or, "The tremendous world I have in my head! But how can I release it and release myself without tearing apart?" And finally, "I lead a double life from which perhaps the only way out is madness.")

One is reminded of the letter that Mozart wrote to his father, Leopold, when he refused to take on pupils. "You must not think it is laziness—no!—but because it is utterly against my genius, against my way of life. You know that I am so-to-speak soaked in music, that I am busy with it all day, that I love to meditate, to study." Mozart had more determination than Kafka, who went on wasting his precious little strength doing things he hated; later he had to work in his father's factory, which he hated even more.

But there were also happy days: excursions into Prague's vicinity to Senohraby, walking in the woods with Brod, Werfel and Felix Weltsch, one of his closest friends who later became an eminent philosopher, or reading to each other poems at the banks of the Sazava river. ("The train leaves at 6:05," Kafka once wrote to Brod. "At 7:45 we'll start toward Davle where we'll eat a goulash at Lederer's. At twelve we'll have lunch at Štěhovice. From two to a quarter to four we shall walk through the woods to the rapids where we shall row a bit. At seven, we'll take the boat back to Prague . . .") Kafka loved the swimming schools at the banks of the Moldau. On August 12, 1911, he writes in his *Diary*, "The time that passed during which I wrote not a single word was very important for me because I stopped being ashamed of my body in the swimming schools of Prague, Königsaal and Černošice."

On October 1 of the same year he writes about his visit to the Old-New Synagogue on the eve of the Day of Atone-

Muted murmurs. Churchlike interior. Three pious, apparently Eastern Jews. In socks. Bent over their prayer books, wrapped in their prayer scarves, looking very small. Two are crying, moved by the High Holiday . . . In the Pinkas Synagogue I was much more impressed by the Jewishness . . .

Edison told in an interview in America about his journey through Bohemia that he believed there is a higher development there (wide streets in the suburbs, small gardens in front of the houses, new factories) because emigrés return from the United States bringing back new aspirations . . .

According to the Cabala, the pious ones are given on each Friday a new, heavenly, more tender soul that stays with them until Saturday night . . .

Werfel's poems yesterday filled my head with steam. For a moment I was afraid my exultation would drive me into madness.

Kafka often describes his walks through Prague in his *Diaries*. "With Ottla [his sister], fetched her from the English lesson. Across Quai, stonebridge, Malá Strana, new bridge, back home. Exciting statues of saints on Charles Bridge. The strange summer evening light while the bridge is as empty as at night." There is a definite rhythm in his walks. On May 4, 1913, he notes, "By accident, walked in the opposite direction up to Hradčany and Charles Bridge." He often went to read and relax in the Chotek Gardens and writes about "the pleasure of sitting yesterday in Chotek Park and today in Charles Square reading Strindberg's 'Am offenen Meer.'"

After looking at Oskar Kokoschka's expressionist painting of Prague, Kafka said to Janouch, "On the picture the roofs fly away. The church coupolas are umbrellas in the wind. The whole city is about to fly off. But Prague remains

—despite all inner discord. That is the wonderful thing about Prague.” And at a very difficult time of his life, when Fräulein F. B. from Berlin whom he loved refused to marry him, he asks himself, “What will you do? Leave Prague? React to the worst human damage with the strongest means of reaction?” He loved Prague but not Vienna (“which I hate and where I would be very unhappy”). Demetz writes, “Kafka’s love for his city burns like a permanent, faithful fire that dies out only with the return of the dead poet into the walls of the Jewish Cemetery.” And Dagmar Eisnerova says, “Prague, unnamed, is the city of Kafka’s ‘The Trial.’ . . . In the chapter ‘At the Dome’ there are important details, especially the silver statue of the Saint—the tomb of St. John Nepomuk. . . . Franz Kafka lived, suffered and fought in Prague.”

Kafka wrote only in German but spoke good Czech. “His language had an inner tension . . . each word was a stone; his language resembled his hands; he had strong hands with long fingers,” remembers Janouch. Once he and Janouch were laughing at his office, when Janouch’s father, who also worked at the Insurance Institute, came in and asked whether his son was bothering “*Doktor Kafka*.” “No,” Kafka said and laughed, “we’re talking about devils and demons.” But the next moment he might say something like, “People—like our parents and those we love and fear—must die to be really understood.” Or, “We Jews are already born old . . . I am as old as the Eternal Jew.”

They were talking about Karl Brand, a young German-Jewish poet, who had spent much of his time at the Café Arco, and died at the age of twenty-seven of tuberculosis. Kafka said, “Among the century-old Jews at the coffeehouses, Brand lost his way and died. And what else could he have done? The coffeehouses are the catacombs of the

Jews of our time, without light and love. Not everybody could stand them.” Kafka couldn’t, and when his friends asked him to come there, he often found an excuse.

Kafka’s friends and biographers point out the specific isolation, the “border situation” of a Jewish poet, born in Prague as a citizen of the Habsburg Monarchy, who was educated in German and surrounded by Czechs and died as a citizen of the Czechoslovak Republic. Emil Utitz, the philosopher, Kafka’s onetime classmate, writes:

All of us sensed the invisible border around us and our artificial situation . . . We talked about everything, naturalism, secession, symbolism, socialism, Zionism, nationalism, about the individual and the collective, about religion and atheism . . . I understood only much later that Kafka in his soul lived through the border situation with more strength than the rest of us. His whole life was a process that he carried on within himself. On the outside, he was the quietest and the most indomitable of us. There was nothing conspicuous about him. He dressed neither as a poet nor as a bohemian. He was always clean and orderly, never shabby and never elegant. When I think back, I see the picture of a tall, slim, boyish young man, who was so quiet and polite, who happily recognized other people’s merits, and always remained a little remote . . .

Rudolf Fuchs, the poet and translator, once told me how he met Kafka in the street the day after Fuchs’s poem “House of Gentle Peace” had been published by the *Prager Tagblatt* (where Brod, Fuchs and I, among others, were working in the 1930s). Kafka had praised the poem, but Fuchs himself no longer liked it; it was an old piece. “I expressed some doubt about the sincerity of Kafka’s praise,” Fuchs said. “I was ashamed and delighted, when Kafka quoted the whole poem by heart.”

Once Kafka compared the Jews and the Germans. “The

Jews had their Temple," he said to Janouch. "The Germans had their God that grows iron. *Their* Temple is the Prussian General Staff." Both laughed and then Kafka said that he meant it quite seriously. Another time he called Heine "an unhappy man. The Germans accuse him of being a Jew and he is a German, even a German who is in conflict with his own Jewishness. That is the typical Jewish in him." On September 14, 1915, he writes how he went to see a famous wonder rabbi in Žižkov, a workers' district of Prague, accompanied by Max (Brod) and Georg (Langer):

... an inn. Upstairs completely dark, one walks like a blind man with outstretched hands. A room with pale twilight, white-gray walls, filled with women and girls. White handkerchiefs, bloodless faces. Next room. Everything black. Filled with men and younger people. Loud praying. We creep into a corner. "All rabbis look wild," says Langer. The rabbi in his silk caftan. Unreal. One sees his white underdrawers. . . .

Kafka loved especially Malá Strana and the quiet streets below the Castle. In the winter of 1916-17 he lived in a tiny house, No. 22, in Golden Lane, "the alchemists' street." The house had a small room and a very small kitchen. Brod writes, "Franz didn't choose this place at all from any mystic or romantic inclination, or at least any such inclination was not the deciding factor, except perhaps subconsciously, in the form of his love for Old Prague. The main reason was his need for a quiet place where he could work." Kafka was extremely sensitive to noise.

He wrote to Fräulein F. B. when he was looking for an apartment, "We saw a few places in Malá Strana, and all the time I was thinking, if only there were some spot in a quiet attic corner in one of the old palaces where one could at least stretch out in peace." Later a rental agent showed

him "a flat in one of the most beautiful palaces . . . Two rooms and a hall, half of which has been turned into a bathroom. Six hundred crowns a year. It was a dream come true. I went to see it. The rooms were beautiful, red and gold, as in Versailles. Four windows looking out on a quiet, hidden courtyard, one window facing the garden. The garden! You can hardly believe your eyes. Through a semi-circle flanked by caryatids you see stone-stairs, leading in zig-zag to the great garden . . . a broad balustrade rising gradually, in sweeping curves to a gloriollette." Unfortunately the place had "one small fault." The owner, a young man, had put in expensive improvements and wanted the new tenant to share the expenses. Instead Kafka rented a flat in the Schönborn Palais (today the United States Embassy, property of the U.S. Government) that was nice but couldn't be heated.

In May, 1946, in a secret, national election, 38 per cent of the population of Czechoslovakia gave their votes to the Communist Party, making it the strongest in the country. The country was not "taken over" by the Communists; there was no revolution; it was an orderly, democratic procedure; the people voted for the Communists, and Klement Gottwald, the protégé of Stalin, became Prime Minister. In May, 1948, not less than 89.3 per cent of the electorate voted for the (Communist-dominated) National Front candidates. President Dr. Beneš relinquished his office in June, and Gottwald became his successor. "In this month, also, the National Assembly ratified the new Constitution which affirmed that Czechoslovakia was a People's Democracy on the road to socialism," writes Miloš Kratochvíl.

Somewhat later—no one will ever know exactly when and

how—Franz Kafka joined the distinguished company of unpersons led by former President Masaryk. His books were put on the index, his works disappeared from the bookstores, and his name from the mouths of cautious citizens who didn't want to get in trouble.

During the dark days of Stalinism it wasn't advisable to mention Kafka—famous all over the Western world—in his hometown. From one of Kafka's former residences in 36, Pařížská Street, not far from the Old-New Synagogue, one had a splendid view of Prague's monumental Stalin statue, largest on earth, built of the same expensive sandstone of which, centuries earlier, the "exciting statues of saints on Charles Bridge" (I'm quoting Kafka) had been made. In 1946, the French magazine *Action* asked, "Faut-il brûler Kafka?" (Must one burn Kafka?), after Kafka's books had already been burned by the Nazis.

The rediscovery of Franz Kafka in Communist Czechoslovakia was as sudden and bewildering as his earlier disappearance. In 1963, Professor Eduard Goldstücker of the University in Prague, a leading Kafka expert, said:

It is a fact that Marxist research dealt with Kafka's work only in the past few years. The impulse was given by the results of the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which realized that the antagonistic systems of today's world must co-exist. . . . Franz Kafka whom the world considers one of us, became in Czechoslovakia, and not only here, a victim of what is known as the consequences of the personal cult . . . We must not condemn under the undefined conception of "decadence" summarily all artistic currents creating works that run counter to our methods and our spirit.

Goldstücker made these astonishing revelations at a scientific conference taking place in Liblice, near Prague, in May, 1963, shortly before Kafka's eightieth birthday. It

was "the first meeting of Marxists dedicated to a writer whose work is characterized by deep contradictions," and proceeded to find "the ideological clarification of the literary-scientific problems connected with Kafka's work." Translated into plain English this meant that the Czechoslovak Government, no matter how its members may have felt about Franz Kafka (President Antonín Novotný was not exactly known as a friend of writers, poets and philosophers), could no longer prevent the official rehabilitation of Kafka.

(Goldstücker was sentenced to death during the Stalinist regime, was saved by the intervention of Khrushchev, and stayed in jail for years. In 1968, he was elected president of the courageous Czechoslovak Writers' Union that spearheaded the spiritual liberation preceding the "Prague Spring." In 1969, after the downfall of Dubček, he was expelled from the Communist Party. He now lives as an exile in England. Kafka wouldn't have been surprised.)

In her opening speech, the Czech writer, Marie Majerová, claimed Kafka as "a *Pražan* [a citizen of Prague] and a Prague poet . . . without the sets of Old Prague and her thousand-year-old stones there wouldn't be the atmosphere of 'The Trial' and 'The Castle.' He is a unique and inimitable poet . . ." Paul Reiman noted that Kafka's father had been a "capitalistic exploiter" and that Kafka hated his father "not so much as a person but in a social function." Reiman asked for a "kind, sympathetic [*liebevoll*] review of Kafka, in the sense of Karl Marx's slogan, *nihil humani a me alienum puto*." Goldstücker said, "In the literature prior to the First World War we could hardly find a non-proletarian author who states the proletarian cause with such partiality," and compared Kafka's relationship to socialism and the working class with the characteristics that Marx and Engels in their

Communist Manifesto give to the representatives of critical-utopian socialism and communism, for whom the proletariat exists only as the "most suffering social class."

František Kautman analyzed Kafka's relationship to the Czech nation, Czech literature, Czech language. Kafka was bilingual, spoke Czech with the servants at home and with the employees in his father's factory. At a time when no German would go to the Czech National Theater, Kafka often went there. He was familiar with German translations, of Machar, Bezruč, Březina, Šrámek and other Czech poets, and had friendly connections with some contributors to the *Modern Revue*. "Kafka," wrote Pavel Eisner, the bilingual Prague critic, "had to live in the three-fold ghetto of the Prague Jews—the self-centered attitude of the tribal ghetto, the ghetto of society, and the ghetto of the poet's soul . . . He didn't find it easy to break out of his isolation, remained concentrated within himself and his work."

By this time the rehabilitation of Kafka had been "scientifically" established. It was reported that Kafka had often visited the meetings of the Czech "anarchists" and enjoyed their stormy debates. And he would attend political meetings and listened to the speeches of Kramář, Klofáč, Soukup and, above all, Masaryk. The experts agreed on many parallels between Kafka and Jaroslav Hašek, the author of *The Good Soldier Švejk*. Kautman said:

Both comprehend the absurdity of external, visible reality. Hašek's and Kafka's worlds are absurd, though each in its own way. In "Švejk" the absurdity of orders and commands is the basic motive. But many of Kafka's officials, judges, characters observe the laws ad absurdum by fulfilling their duties . . . Tragic situations suddenly turn into comical ones and vice versa . . .

The Czech literary critic Jiří Hájek said, "In our society Kafka becomes the passionate appeal for all that is human within us." He characterized the difference between Kafka and the Marxists "not, as some Marxist critics claim, that Kafka didn't realize the historical revolutionary role of the working class and that we know it. The difference is that we have the power, while he and his protagonists were powerless, that we are able to change the relations between things, while he could only point at their untenability with all his despair." And the Austrian Communist critic and writer, Ernst Fischer, ended his paper with an appeal to the conference, "to save Kafka from the region of the cold war, not to reserve his work for the commentators but to give it to the readers," and he exclaimed, "I appeal to the socialist world: Get Kafka's work back from involuntary exile! Let's give him a permanent visa!" (Because of his sympathies for the Dubček regime, Fischer was expelled by the Communist Party of Austria late in 1969.)

One year later, on June 23, 1964, Max Brod said in an address at the Kafka Exposition in Prague:

Franz Kafka's entire life was a search. What was he searching for? I believe that all his life he was searching for one thing—the purity of the soul, the absolute, uncompromising, unegotistical purity—justice. As a true son of Prague, Kafka had his roots in the soil of Prague. His poetic soul was charmed by the mystical magic of the Old Prague and the mixture of her people. As a true son of Prague, he had his roots in Czech and German culture, and also in the very ancient Jewish culture. In the Jewish ethics and traditions he found a way to his search . . . Irony, humor and paradox—these were the essentials of his art. He was, in spite of his skepticism, cheerful, he loved life. A modern interpretation makes him a decadent, a desperate romanticist

somewhat in the style of Edgar Allan Poe, a weakling who evaded life. But Franz, for more than twenty years my best friend, whom I saw often twice a day, was full of life, active, a positive human being. He was interested in everything: sports, theatre, cinema, animals, the circus. He was simple in his feelings though his mind often walked labyrinthic, enigmatic paths. He loved the life of the artists and the life of the simple people. And he loved Prague.

Probably the most beautiful poem about Prague was written neither by a great Czech poet nor by the two great German-Prague lyrical poets, Rilke and Werfel. Kafka wrote it in a letter to a friend. It is simple and true as a folk song and fulfills Kafka's ideal (I'm quoting Brod) of "the highest form of poetry that expresses in every syllable something real and at the same time something that cannot be put into words":

Menschen, die über dunkle Brücken gehen,
vorüber an Heiligen
mit matten Lichtlein.
Wolken, die über graue Himmel ziehen,
vorüber an Kirchen
mit verdämmernden Türmen.
Einer, der an der Quaderbrüstung lehnt
und in das Abendwasser schaut,
die Hände auf alten Steinen.

(People who walk across dark bridges,
past saints
with dim, small lights.
Clouds which move across gray skies
past churches
with towers darkened in the dusk.

One who leans against the granite railing
gazing into the evening waters,
his hands resting on old stones.)

Charles Bridge Revisited

I FELL UNDER the spell of the mystical city long before I went there. I read Gustav Meyrink's *Der Golem* when I was fourteen or fifteen and was going to school in my hometown in Moravia. During the following nights I didn't want to go to bed because I was afraid to dream of the Golem and the dark streets of the Prague ghetto. (I didn't know that Kafka had said, "The atmosphere of the Prague Jewish town is wonderfully described in *Der Golem*.") I was fascinated by Meyrink's descriptive passages:

Showers beat over the roofs and run down the faces of the houses like streams of tears . . . Sometimes a soft trembling shakes the walls that cannot be explained. In my dreams I often listen to these houses with their spooky doings, and I discovered with fearful astonishment that they were the real, secret rulers of the street. Sometimes they give up life during the day but take it back at night. In daytime they may lend life to the people living there but in the evening they demand it again, with usurious interest.

(Many years later I read in Max Brod's autobiography, published in 1960: "Once in a while I can still hear the soft

beating of subterranean drums underneath the hills of Prague, when we approached the black city district at dusk. I never found an explanation for this strange phenomenon.")

There is an unforgettable mood accompanying Pernath as he walks up to Hradčany:

I walked through the arches of the square-stone arcades in the Old Town Square, past the brass fountain, with its Baroque railing full of icicles, and across the stone bridge, with its statues of saints, and of John Nepomuk. The river underneath was foaming wrathfully against the piers. Doorways received and again released me, palaces with carved, arrogant portals passed by, there were lion's heads with heavy bronze rings. Snow—soft as a polar bear's white fur. High, proud windows, its cornices glistening with ice, looked up indifferently toward the clouds. And as I walked up the countless granite steps toward Hradčany, each as wide as four human bodies, the city with its roofs and gables receded in a haze. . . .

Much earlier, when I was a little boy, our old, pious cook, Marie, had told me the story of St. John Nepomuk who "refused to betray the confessional secrets of the Queen, the King's wife, to cruel King Wenceslas," and had been thrown off Charles Bridge, one night in 1393, into the dark waters of the Moldau, while the King's halberdiers pushed back the people with their spears. "And when the holy man disappeared in the waves, five small blue flames appeared on top of the water," Marie said, crossing herself.

I wondered what the confessional secret might be, but I was afraid to ask. Little did I know that Johannes de Pomuk, was drowned probably because he'd infuriated the irascible King by installing a new abbot at Kladraby Monastery. Many historians now agree that the legend of the "confessional secret" was later created; confession was the Jesuits' most effective weapon during the Counter-Reformation. Also,

Johannes de Pomuk was no "holy man" when he was drowned, for he was not canonized until 1729. But I could almost see the flames dancing on top of the dark waves, and I was as deeply impressed by what seemed a miracle as Marie, or millions of other people in Czechoslovakia. I concluded that anything might happen in Prague where flames were dancing on the water of the Moldau and where Rabbi Loew held court among the tombstones in the Old Jewish Cemetery—just a stone's throw away from the river.

After graduating from the local Gymnasium it was decided at home that I would study law at Prague University. There was a strange, unwritten law in our town that the oldest son of "a good family" had "to become a doctor," and the easiest way of becoming one was to study law in Prague. I reluctantly agreed, provided I could also study music in Vienna, and "something" (I didn't know myself what it would be) at the Sorbonne in Paris. My earlier interest in Prague and her miracles was gone. I spoke German with my family at home and Czech with Marie, the cook, and I thought it was about time to go to Paris and speak an "elegant" language. (I was not narrow-minded, though, in the choice of my early girl friends. Some were German, Sudeten German to be exact, and some were Jewish, and some of the prettiest, sexiest ones were Czech.)

Fortunately one didn't have to remain in Prague in order "to become a doctor." Medical students had to be there all the time, but students of jurisprudence needed only the professors' signatures to prove that they had attended the prescribed lectures and seminars. One could buy the signatures, at five crowns a piece, from the *Pedell* (the proctor's man). Naturally, one had to pass the examinations, which meant a sustained effort every two or three semesters. But aside from that no one asked where you lived and what you

were doing, and I spent only a few weeks in Prague, and left for Vienna, and then for Paris.

I believe it was on my second or third visit to Prague, some time in 1928, when it happened. The German University was located in Železná, a short walk from the Old Town Square. I got used to walking around Old Town Square. (If Kafka hadn't died in 1924, I might have met him there; of course, I wouldn't have known him. He was hardly known outside the small circle of his devoted friends.) Like so many people, before and after, I became mesmerized by the atmosphere, history and architecture of the Old Town Square. Jacques Guenne, the French art critic, writes:

Does not Old Town Square where fell the heroes, offer a summary of the history of the styles, with the Gothic Town Hall where Renaissance motives are not wanting, with the ogival jewel, the Church of Týn, henceforth liberated from the Chalice of John Hus, with the elegant Kinský Palace, with the Church of Saint Nicholas, whose façade is of the most lithe Baroque, with the modern dwellings which can be seen at the corner of Pařížská?

King John of Luxemburg had given permission to the burghers of the Old Town to build a Town Hall from the proceeds of the wine tax, which made wine-drinking a patriotic, popular activity. I saw the old Romanesque cellars below the Town Hall. I loved the arcades in the square, with their meter-thick walls and irregular stone floors which must have been already there when the Bohemian nobles were executed in 1621. Now there were beerhouses and sausage shops under the arcades; in one shop the *vuršty*—thick, juicy, hot sausages—would fairly explode in your mouth when you bit into them. I would walk toward Pařížská, which leads past the Old-New Synagogue, toward the Moldau; in Prague,

everything is concentrated in a small space—history, architecture, mysticism. I walked into the old synagogue down below street level, but didn't stay there long. I was instinctively apprehensive of the eerie dimness, the soft murmur of pious men, the small slits in the walls through which, it was said, women were only permitted to look in; they were excluded from the synagogue itself.

In 1930, I was "promoted" as doctor *juris utriusque* at the Gothic Chapel of the Carolinum, after solemnly swearing "*spondeo ac polliceor*" (I vow and I promise). For a few months, I worked as a court apprentice. (It so happens that I graduated at the Chapel and worked at the court building where Kafka did his "unpaid year." And when I had a much-hated job at the law offices of Adler & Pick, I happened to be just around the corner from Poříč, where "Dr. Kafka" had been so unhappy as an employee of the Workers' Accident Insurance Institute.) I much admired Max Brod, the music critic of the *Prager Tagblatt* for which I began to write, but we always talked about music, rarely about writing. Brod would come up to our penthouse apartment, with its fine view of the Moldau and Hradčany. We played violin sonatas together. Brod was an excellent pianist, playing the difficult piano parts of the sonatas by Brahms, Debussy and César Franck with rhapsodic sweep. He told me about Leoš Janáček, whose music I didn't know. Brod was surprised. "But he died in your hometown, Ostrava, at the Sanatorium Klein, in 1928," he said with slight reproach. Today I wish I had gone to see Janáček. Some day he may be recognized as the greatest composer of my homeland, and one of the greatest on earth.

About that time I once walked on a dark, foggy November afternoon across Charles Bridge. I had been at one of the Ministries in Malá Strana, doing an errand for a client of

our law office, and I was frustrated because once again I had failed to extricate the client's file that was hidden under a pile of other files in the dusty office of a dusty bureaucrat. The poor man worked in a tiny room with bars in front of the window, as in a prison cell; no wonder he was lonely and didn't want to miss the company of his beloved files.

I crossed Malá Strana Square and Mostecká and walked toward the bridge. In the middle of it, candles were burning at the foot of the dark statue of St. John Nepomuk. The fog had formed tears on his face, and the holy man seemed to be crying. I expect no one to believe it, but it was true; such things do happen in Prague. I had often walked across the bridge, paying no attention to the saints. In Prague one was always in the company of saints; after a while one didn't notice them any more.

That afternoon an old woman was kneeling and praying in front of St. John Nepomuk. She made me think of Marie, our pious old cook, and I stopped. A wet mist came up from the river, and from Kampa Island, underneath the bridge. People called Kampa "Pražské Benátky," "the Prague Venice," with its silent palaces facing the canal, and the boats on the dark water. I looked down, and I thought this might indeed be a little-known corner of Venice. I had been in Venice several times but I'd never walked down to Kampa Island, which today is the choicest residential district in town, a mark of real status; famous artists and national prize-winners live there. Nearly every house has its legends. Kampa was once the domain of the washerwomen and their gossip. At least one of them, Marta Sporer, who did the washing for Emperor Rudolph II and was known for the excellence of her work, was visited by the Emperor in her lovely house called "The White Swan." She was said to be a very attractive woman.

Turning around I looked back at the Malá Strana bridge-

head. Behind, its outlines blurred in the fog, was the cupola of St. Nicholas Church, and farther up the Castle. The bridge was almost empty. Once in a while a pedestrian hurried by, his coat collar turned up, looking neither right nor left at the black statues on both sides. The old woman kept praying. She got up, crossing herself, exactly as Marie had done, when she'd told me the story of John Nepomuk, and then she walked away. I looked across the railing into the dark river—perhaps to see the blue flames dancing on the waters that Marie had told me about. (Somewhere I'd read that in the early years of this century somebody had seriously suggested removing the stone statues and replacing the stone railing of the bridge with an iron railing in order to extend the width of Charles Bridge by a few inches. Fortunately, the foolish notions were ignored. The stone railing is now being repaired—even stones get old—and the statues of the saints have been cleaned and restored. The bridge has been closed to all traffic, thank God. Only pedestrians may cross it, as at the time when it was built, and there are always local people and strangers who love to walk there slowly and happily, feeling comfortable being surrounded by all the saints, with the magnificent view of Hradčany in the rear. At certain moments, when the light is right, this is the most beautiful bridge on earth.

"The head of the legendary saint with its stars truly touches the transcendental," wrote Erich Bachmann. The five stars around the head of St. John Nepomuk (*Tacui—I Was Silent*) were there. Sometimes a couple of them would be missing. Students were said to steal them as good-luck charms prior to examinations. Near the Old Town Bridge Tower was the Cross with gilded Hebrew letters. In 1696, a Jew had scoffed at the Cross, was sentenced to pay a fine, and now the letters say, "Holy, Holy, Holy God!"

I walked through under Peter Parler's beautiful Bridge

Tower. I turned left at the monument of Charles IV and walked along Křižovnická toward the Old-New Synagogue. I stepped down the stairs through the vestibule with the two tax collectors' niches. (On Easter Sunday, 1389, "neither fathers nor mothers nor their children" were spared in a pogrom, reported by the poet Abigdor Karo, whose tombstone is the oldest in the Old Jewish Cemetery. "My soul laments the men that fell, the women and the old men, and all the congregation. They that had fled into the synagogues; even they were destroyed in the house of God by the bloody sword of the enemy . . .") No dark statue has been set up to remind posterity of the event, and the martyrs have not been canonized; but they remain forever remembered in the words of a poet.

I stayed there for a while, and then I walked up and out again, past the Jewish Town Hall and the clock with the Hebrew dial. I was suddenly very conscious of walking through the former ghetto. It was dark. I went on, through Maisel Street, toward the Old Town Square. I walked slowly, at peace with myself. It was like coming back to a place I'd wanted to revisit for a long time. It was strange because I had never been in Maisel Street before.

Scenes from History

THE EARLIEST DESCRIPTION OF Prague was written exactly one thousand years ago by Ibrahim Ibn Jacub, an educated Jew of Spanish-Arab origin, long believed to have been a

merchant who came to Bohemia to buy slaves for the Caliph of Cordoba. Recent research, however, proved that Ibrahim's report was not a mere traveler's account, as had been assumed, but a diplomatic memorandum written in the second half of the tenth century for the Caliph, ruler of the Pyrenean peninsula. It was published in the *Book of Voyages and Countries*, edited by the renowned Cordoba geographer-philosopher, Abu Obaid al Bakri. (The book was discovered toward the end of last century in the imperial library in Constantinople.) Ibrahim reports that Fraga (*sic*) is "made of stone and lime and is the biggest merchant center, where Russians and Slavs come from Cracow with goods. From Turkey come Muslims, Jews and Turks also carrying merchandise and coins, and export slaves, tin and various furs."

In 965, Ibrahim, accredited ambassador of Caliph Al Hakam II to the German Emperor, Otto I, visited Utrecht, Paderborn, Mainz and Prague. Historians remained doubtful about his report because they couldn't imagine so many buildings being "made of stone and lime" in Prague at that early time. The only known stone buildings were inside the Castle. Modern research takes a less skeptical viewpoint of Ibrahim's report. The proximity of the Great Moravian Empire, a powerful state extending in the eighth century from the Baltic all the way to Moravia, Bohemia and Austria, with many stone dwellings that have now been found by the archeologists, makes it highly probable that they existed in Prague too. Prague was an important market center. Ibrahim called Bohemia "the best country of the north, and the best supplied with food stuffs," and he wrote that

you can buy for one *kinshar* [a silver coin used at the tenth-century exchanges of Christian Europe] as much wheat as a man will need for one month, and for the same price as much barley as an animal transport will need for forty days, and further, for one *kinshar* ten hens. In the city of Fraga one makes saddles,

bridles and thick shields. In the country of Bujima [Bohemia] scarves are sold of thin linen, made to no practical purpose. The price is always ten scarves for one *kinshar*. These are used for exchange amongst themselves as well as for business. They have chests full of them; they buy wheat, slaves, horses, gold, silver, and everything else with it. It is strange that most inhabitants have brown or dark hair; the blond type is rare.

Ibrahim ends with a statement that is now much quoted by Czech historians, "The Slavs are courageous and brave, and were they not split up into several tribes and groups, no nation could overcome them by force."

Prague's early history reaches back into the early stone age, when the first settlers, members of an unknown tribe, lived on the hills overlooking the Moldau where they felt secure against attacks. During the later stone age they had settlements all over the heights, in the form of a large P, which Prague's mystics have interpreted as a symbolical monogram of the future capital of Bohemia. Traces of stone-age civilization have been found on the heights of Hradčany, Vyšehrad, Libeň, Bubeneč and Střešovice, where people lived long before "Praha," down by the river, became settled. Gradually people dared descend toward the Moldau. There was a ford near today's Rudolphinum and another between today's Charles Bridge and Mánes Bridge. Merchants from abroad stayed at the settlement before fording the river, to barter goods and catch their breath. Prior to the Christian era, Celtic and Teutonic tribes lived here. There was the short-lived empire of the Marcomanni and Quadi, and at the end of the first century A.D. the Roman Empire advanced its northern frontier toward the Danube. An inscription on a rock below Trenčín Castle in Western Slovakia reports of the victorious battle fought by the Second Roman Legion in

172 under Emperor Marcus Aurelius who completed his *Meditations* on the bank of the river Hron. He died eight years later in Vindobona.

Dramatic events occurred around Prague but, as an anonymous chronicler complains, "there was none in these days to set down in writing the deeds of their time." The first Slav tribes probably came from the region beyond the Carpathians. The tribe of the Czechs became installed on territory formerly occupied by the Boiens; other Slavs settled in Slovakia and Moravia. Then came the rise of the Great Moravian Empire, so powerful that both the Franks in the West and the Byzantines in the East tried to conquer it. The Byzantine Emperor Michael III sent two educated Greek monks, Constantine (Cyril) and Method, to spread the gospel to the Slavs. They were brothers from Salonika and prepared themselves for their task by creating, from the Greek alphabet, special characters for the Slav sounds and translating from the Bible some passages into Old Slavonic. They also introduced native language into the prayer books. (The Popes later forbade the use of Slav prayer books.) The Great Moravian Empire broke up around 907 after an invasion of the Magyars, but the Cyrillic alphabet has remained to this day, in Russia and Yugoslavia. Cyril and Method are venerated as the patron saints of Moravia.

During the past fifteen years, new archeological discoveries have shed more light on the foundation of Prague. The "stone book" of Hradčany, the Prague Castle—its history and architecture that can be read in the various strata of stone—proves that a fortified castle had been built there in the second half of the ninth century. "Prague is a sarcophagus of past centuries, petrified history, the heart of the Czech nation turned to stone," wrote Ferdinand Gustav Kühne. Hradčany is younger than the settlement down by the river. Centuries

earlier, in the vicinity of today's Old Town Square, the two great European trade routes crossed each other—the north-south “amber” route and the West-East route between the Frankish Empire and Byzantium. The two routes crossed exactly where today's Rudolfinum (which was built in the 1880s as a concert hall, later served as the Parliament during Masaryk's Republic and now is again a concert hall, known as “House of the Artists”) stands. There the caravans of Frankish, Byzantine, Arab and Jewish merchants forded their goods across the river. The nearby Jewish ghetto became a bartering place for agricultural products, textiles, leather goods and slaves.

Only later were the two castles of Prague built, overlooking the river: Hradčany and Vyšehrad (“The High Castle”), which lost much importance after the tenth century, and is now mainly a national symbol, the Czech pantheon where the nation buries its great dead. (The graves of Smetana and Dvořák are there; of the poets Karel Hynek Mácha, Julius Zeyer, Josef Hora and Vítězslav Nezval; of the writers Božena Němcová, Jan Neruda and Karel Čapek; of the painter Mikoláš Aleš; of the sculptor Jan Mlýnský; of the violinist Jan Kubelík; and of many others.) The castles were built to protect the growing trade center of Prague which, in turn, owes its importance to the river. The Czechs say that it was the Moldau that founded Prague. They have a deep mystical love for their river, which flows through the entire length of Bohemia, from north to south. The people of Prague never get tired of watching the wild ducks and sea gulls on the Moldau embankment, sitting or flying there, always in pairs.

The first rulers of the Slav tribe of the Czechs were the ambitious Přemyslids who subjugated other tribes and gave the whole country the name “Čechy” (the Latin name was

“Bohemia.”) Modern Czech historians assume that the Přemyslids were “inspired” to create their own state by the example of the Great Moravian Empire. Prince Bořivoj began the bloody struggle for unification, “with much internecine conflict.” His son Spytihněv permanently transferred the residence of the Czech princes from Levý Hradec, about six miles north of Prague, to the Castle of Prague. The Czech princes soon attained a strong position in the German Empire and became members of the curia of seven electors who chose the Emperor.

The Czechs had been a heathen tribe until Prince Bořivoj and his wife Ludmila in 875 were baptized by Method in Velehrad, Moravia. The first church was built in Levý Hradec; the next up on Castle Hill in Prague, near the old heathen place of sacrifice, was consecrated to the Virgin Mary. (Remains were discovered in 1950, in the lowest stratum of masonry of the little Romanesque church below the Castle's western tract.)

Prince Wenceslas, who reigned from 892 to 929 and is now revered as Bohemia's patron saint, was not a warrior but rather a skilled politician. Realizing that his country was unable to contend with the German Empire he concluded a peace treaty with Henry I and received a precious relic, the arm of St. Vitus (who later became the patron saint of neighboring Saxony). To enshrine the relic, Wenceslas built a Roman rotunda; its foundations were later discovered under the present Chapel of St. Wenceslas. Wenceslas was murdered by his brother Boleslav I who disapproved of the Good King's friendly politics toward the German Empire.

During the next two centuries, the Přemyslids were involved in numerous fights against the Poles and the Magyars; one of them, Vladislav II, helped Frederick Barbarossa in the conquest of Milan. In 1212, Přemysl I was recognized

as King of Bohemia by both the Pope and the German Emperor; the double-tailed lion in the Czechoslovak coat of arms dates from that time. The Czech kingdom prospered but today Marxist historians take a dim view of that era. ("The leading positions in the administration, trade and economic life of the royal towns were occupied by the wealthy burghers and patricians of German origin, and a tiny minority dominated the Czech people," writes Miloš Kratochvíl. "The Czech inhabitants were craftsmen, less wealthy burghers, laborers and the poor. This created . . . a future discord capable of producing an explosion.")

King Přemysl Otakar II who ascended the throne in 1253 made his empire as big as later Austria-Hungary was. He extended his rule all the way to the Adriatic, conquered Austria, Styria, Carinthia. (He also founded Malá Strana, Prague's most aristocratic district, whose Baroque beauty has survived all of Přemysl Otakar's former acquisitions.) His prestige was great in Europe. Dante saluted him in the seventh canto of his "Purgatorio" as the future liberator of Italy, and the Austrian poet, Franz Grillparzer, made him the hero of his play, *König Ottokars Glück und Ende*. His luck ran out when he refused to recognize Rudolph von Habsburg whom the German princes had elected emperor. Přemysl Otakar was defeated on the Marchfeld, near Vienna, in 1278, and lost his life. (The Poles helped him; the Magyars had deserted him.) It was one of the decisive battles in European history, and made Vienna, not Prague, for the next seven hundred years the capital of a Central-European empire. The tragedy of Bohemia began on the Marchfeld: ever since, the Habsburgs wanted to dominate a Prague that might threaten the position of Vienna. The whole history of the Czech nation is an endless struggle

against the Habsburgs, and often also against the Church that was allied with the Habsburgs.

Přemysl Otakar's successor, his son Wenceslas II, built himself a huge Slav empire—Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Hungary and Poland—but when *his* son, Wenceslas III, succeeded him in 1305 at the age of seventeen and was assassinated a year later, the dynasty died out. After much rivalry and fighting, John of Luxemburg (whose wife was a Přemyslid princess) became King of Bohemia in 1310. A busy warrior, he spent little time in Bohemia. But he succeeded in getting his son Charles elected as Holy Roman Emperor. Charles IV did more for Prague than any other man, before or after him, and made Prague, "his jewel," one of the world's fascinating cities. The people of Prague revere him as the real founder of their city. During his rule, Prague became the cultural center of Europe, and Hradčany the continent's largest, most powerful fortress.

Hradčany Castle, an immense conglomerate of historical epochs and architectural styles, has remained the seat of power in Bohemia from its foundation to this day. The President of the Socialist People's Republic of Czechoslovakia now resides there. Kings, emperors, architects, sculptors and painters had a hand in forming it but History remains its chief builder. The country's entire past is reflected in Hradčany. ("At certain times the dark shadow of a harsh and soulless imperial bureaucracy fell over the Castle," I read in a new history of the Castle.) The dark shadow is there again, though the bureaucracy is no longer "imperial."

The ground plan of Hradčany preserves the characteristics of the old Slavonic tribal strongholds. The inner ward was reached through a larger outer ward. Where tourists now

step through the main gate, there was a deep ditch with a bridge that can be seen in older pictures. A baker had his bakery oven there and the smoke from the chimney was said to irritate the feudal inhabitants of the Castle. The ditch was not filled until toward the end of the eighteenth century.

The oldest buildings on the Castle grounds were built in Romanesque style. Around 1200, Prague was already a large town with over fifty stone churches and houses, two castles, a stone bridge and many works of art; the Romanesque style lived longer here than in Western Europe and was followed, after 1230, by the early Gothic. The center of the Castle was then the Romanesque basilica that Spytihněv had built on the site of Wenceslas' modest rotunda. (The Wenceslas cult had already become so strong that the rotunda became too small for the crowds that came to pray here.) Nearby was the grave of St. Adalbert, a former bishop of Prague who died "as a martyr" on a missionary expedition to the Baltic and was canonized. There were other churches inside the Castle—the Chapel of St. Maurice, the Church of St. George, the small Church of the Virgin. Hradčany was becoming a small town of sacred buildings. And then Charles IV made his entrance at the Castle.

He had grown up in Paris where he changed his Czech first name "Václav" (Wenceslas), which was hard to pronounce for the French, to "Charles." His teacher was Pierre Roger, later Pope Clemens VI. He was educated according to the French *studium generale*, had studied the centralism of the French kings, and learned a lot about practical politics during a long stay in Italy. He was only eighteen when he came to Prague but he must have been an unusual young man, and he decided to bring the French-Gothic culture to his court in Prague and make it a sort of Central-European Paris. He didn't get along with his father, who still lived in

the Medieval Age while Charles sensed the ideas of a new era. He forbade searching for "hidden treasures" in churches or in the Old-New Synagogue, as his father had done when he needed money. (Usually, all males in the ghetto were arrested and released only after paying ransom, a popular method of collecting money.)

Charles understood the national complexity of Bohemia; he made it quite clear that he needed them all—Czechs, Germans, Jews. His coronation procession moved from Vyšehrad to Hradčany, the two great castles of the Czechs, but later he had his wedding meal in Old Town Square where the German burghers had their houses. In his decrees he talks of "the sweet, tender sound of the Czech language, the noble Slav idiom," and at the same time negotiates with the German Hanse, and he also tries to establish a new trade route from Venice to Bruges, by way of Prague. Charles IV sensed that Prague was the heart of Europe—centuries before modern statesmen and military strategists knew it.

Charles IV is not popular with modern (Communist) Czech historians. An official publication, *The Prague Castle*, calls him "an ardent propagator of the St. Wenceslas state cult . . . His religious fervor was deeply tinged with mysticism and a strong sense of dynastic tradition." Charles was a mystic among mystics and "the embodiment of medieval feudalism," as they now say. He also remains the great national king to the Czech nation. He was, and still is very popular. Some admire him for his robust constitution; he survived four wives, including Elizabeth of Pommern, a strong woman who was said to be able to bend a sword in her hands. The people of Prague remember Charles IV as they walk through the squares and streets of the New Town he founded, past the churches and convents he built, and across the magnificent stone bridge named after him.

He was a passionate builder and a visionary: a perfect combination. "It was in the happy time of the Middle Ages, only just free from barbarism, but still lacking the hustle of Modern Times," writes Jacques Guenne. Charles IV called his builders and ordered a Gothic town the way other mortals order a new suit. When he first saw Hradčany, which had been devastated in 1303 by a terrible fire, he immediately planned its reconstruction *ad instar domus regis Franciae*, "after the example of the King of France." He ordered a new royal palace built, with a beautiful chapel patterned after Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. And he vowed to build a dome "that would equal the largest in the Occident" on the site of the old Romanesque basilica. In France and Germany, the great cathedrals were built with the help of powerful guilds and religious fraternities; in Prague, the great Gothic Cathedral of St. Vitus is the personal conception of Charles IV. He summoned the French architect and master-builder, Matthias of Arras, from Avignon, who began the work in 1344 and directed it for eight years. (Remains of the old rotunda are still beneath the floor of the Cathedral.) After Matthias' death, the Emperor showed again his amazing flair for gifted artists when he assigned an unknown, twenty-three-year-old German sculptor and builder, Peter Parler of Gmünd, to become Matthias' successor. Peter Parler did for the Gothic Prague what Johann Bernard Fischer von Erlach later did for the Baroque Vienna: he brought a foreign style to Prague which under the powerful influence of the *genius loci* became an indigenous style. The dreams of Charles IV, the great mystic, often touched the sky, and Peter Parler sensed it: the Gothic style made the city the "Prague of the Hundred Towers." ("They built edifices for the sake of spires, towers, belfreys and watch-towers," writes Guenne.)

The immense Gothic tower at the southern end of the

Cathedral, the visible symbol of the silhouette of Hradčany—and of Prague—remains the subject of much speculation among the experts. Why did Parler sacrifice the symmetry of the ground plan when he placed the tower in a position contrary to the philosophy and the tradition of Gothic church architecture? Parler's sketches no longer exist. One doesn't know whether the position of the tower was his idea or the Emperor's. There are experts in today's Prague who believe that Charles IV wanted to create a "symbolic" tower in Hradčany which had no donjon, as other medieval fortresses—replacing, so to speak, the tower's defensive function by a mystical power. Thus the foundations of the tower are close to the sacred spot where the remains of St. Wenceslas, Bohemia's patron saint, were buried—the spiritual heart of the great Cathedral. ("For us who belong to the scientifically-minded twentieth century . . . a symbolic tower, on an ideal, mystical plane may seem altogether fantastic yet it fully corresponded to the mentality of medieval people in the thrall of religious notions," writes Václav Formánek.)

Another question remains unanswered: what would the St. Vitus Cathedral's appearance be if it had been finished according to the original designs of Peter Parler? It took over six hundred years to build St. Vitus Cathedral and it still isn't completed. The western part was built by architects of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many people sense that the western part doesn't have the daring and originality that distinguishes Peter Parler's best work.

During his last eight years, Matthias of Arras built eight apsidal chapels and an arcade resting on nine pillars, raising the building to the height of the lower cornice of the triforium. Peter Parler completed the remaining part below the triforium, and did all the work from the triforium upward. There is an unmistakable difference in the style of the two

masters. The pillars of Matthias are distinguished works of art but betray an academic sense of exactness. He was very much concerned with detail and sometimes there is a certain sharpness in his work. Parler's pillars show boldness of imagination and vitality of spirit. They seem to have a secret life of their own, as so many great sculptures. Parler was more concerned with power and sweep than with detail and execution. His shafts climb up beside the pillars to the top of the vault, cutting through the horizontal cornices. His windows have chamfered corners and beautifully designed tracery. The sexpartite vault conveys a sense of the dynamic. He was a very great builder, and his portrait sculptures—Charles IV, his four wives, other members of the Luxemburg dynasty, Matthias of Arras and Peter Parler himself, looking quite pleased with his work—are among the great works of European sculptural portraiture. And St. Wenceslas Chapel, which Parler built from 1362 to 1364, is one of the finest achievements of Czech Gothic.

In 1354, Charles IV had written to Archbishop Arnošt of Pardubice, "I think you will not find a town or a city in Europe, with the exception of Rome, where the pilgrim will see more relics than in the metropolitan Cathedral of St. Vitus." He was a passionate collector who often demanded relics and liturgical vessels as gifts; and who dared refuse the Emperor's request? Perhaps he had more enthusiasm than taste; he occasionally became the victim of forgers. But he assembled the largest part of the St. Vitus Treasure, which is the richest collection of relics in Central Europe. (In 1961, the present regime deposited the "artistically most valuable items" at the Castle Chapel of the Holy Rood that was built in 1753 by Anselmo Lurago, leaving "relics of saints and objects of no artistic value" at the Cathedral, which may not have been the intention of Charles IV.)

The St. Vitus Treasure contains, among hundreds of items, relics of the Bohemian patron saints—the skulls of St. Wenceslas and St. Adalbert, the helm of St. Wenceslas, the sword of St. Stephen, the mitre of St. Adalbert, a Gothic silver statue of St. Ludmilla, a Gothic gold coronation cross, a French ivory statuette of Our Lady, the golden Zavis Cross, with fine thirteenth-century, Byzantine enamel work, "the veil of St. Mary" (No. 80,b), "part of Christ's Cross" (No. 83), "the sponge that was given to Christ on the Cross to quench His Thirst," "the staff of Moses," and numerous monstrances and chalices, as well as "curiosities from the domain of zoology." One of the greatest Czech relics, preserved at the tomb of St. John Nepomuk, is the Saint's tongue encased in a monstrance-like reliquary.

Perhaps the most valuable parts of the Treasure are the Bohemian coronation jewels: the royal crown in its original leather case, orb and scepter, and the coronation robe of red brocade. Charles IV founded the cult of the sacred Bohemian crown which was made to order in 1346 from the old coronation jewels. He was the first man to wear it, and he made a reliquary of it. In the top of the sapphire cross a thorn is inserted that is said to come from Christ's Crown of Thorns. Charles dedicated the crown to St. Wenceslas on whose skull it now lies. The crown weighs five pounds, is adorned with ninety-one precious stones and, according to the guides who take you around St. Vitus, is "as valuable as the whole Cathedral." Charles designed the ritual for use of the crown which may be removed only for the coronation of a new king, never longer than for one day. A fee of 200 talers must be paid for the benefit of the Cathedral Chapter. The last coronation took place on September 7, 1836, when Ferdinand V, the Emperor of Austria, known as *der Gütige* (the Good One), had himself crowned as King of Bohemia. Ilsa Barea



MASARYK
&
AMERICA
TESTIMONY OF A RELATIONSHIP



Cover:

Masaryk in the early 1930s, photographed by the writer Karel Čapek. From the collections of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

MASARYK & AMERICA

TESTIMONY OF A RELATIONSHIP

By George J. Kovtun
EUROPEAN DIVISION

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
Washington 1988

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kovtun, George J.
Masaryk & America.

Bibliography: p.
Supt. of Docs. no.: LC 43.2:M37
1. Masaryk, T. G. (Tomáš Garrigue), 1850-1937—
Knowledge—United States—Sources. 2. United States—
Relations—Czechoslovakia—Sources. 3. Czechoslovakia—
Relations—United States—Sources. I. Title. II. Title:
Masaryk and America.
DB2191.M38K67 1987 303.4'82437'073 87-600498
ISBN 0-8444-0585-X

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents,
U. S. Government Printing Office,
Washington, D.C. 20402

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P R E F A C E

Thomas G. Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia, died fifty years ago, on September 14, 1937. Commemorating Masaryk means acknowledging the zenith of the ties between the peoples of Czechoslovakia and America. Masaryk stands in history as the best embodiment of these ties. He knew America from firsthand experience, and left many traces of his activities in the United States. An important part of this evidence is recorded in the present volume.

In this selective documentation Masaryk's relationship with America is illustrated by his writings and speeches, by magazine articles, newspaper editorials and interviews, by letters written by, or addressed to, Masaryk, and by personal notes and reminiscences. The materials quoted here were found in American archives, most of them in the Library of Congress, and in printed sources published both in Czechoslovakia and in the United States. The items are quoted in the original English or in English translation made by the compiler.

The documents of this publication speak for themselves. The introduction supplies the necessary historical background but does not attempt to evaluate the documents. The main criterion for selection was the intent to show Masaryk's *personal* relations with America and the Americans. For the most part, memoranda written by Masaryk as the head of the Czechoslovak liberation movement have been omitted. The borderline between personal and official matters is, admittedly, sometimes difficult to discern. The compiler tried in any case to focus on those documents where Masaryk's personal thinking can be felt behind the written word.

As all these limitations suggest, the publication does not intend to be a full account of Masaryk's contacts with America. Neither does it attempt an analysis of the facts that are here presented. The work is meant to be a sourcebook for further thinking and study. It is hoped that it can serve both as a reference work and as a contribution to Masaryk's political portrayal.

During the preparation of this volume invaluable assistance was given by David H. Kraus, whose help covered many aspects of the project, from the basic arrangement to historical and linguistic details. Ruth Freitag gave, not for the first time, expert advice in matters of bibliography. Janie Ricks worked patiently and efficiently with the text, starting with the early stages of gathering and storing the documents and ending with the final preparation for publication.

George J. Kovtun
September 1987

INTRODUCTION

Thomas G. Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia, had a lifelong intellectual relationship with America which must be called unique even today, fifty years after his death. His practical contacts with the American people spread over four decades and consisted of four visits paid to the United States in the years 1878, 1902, 1907, and 1918. The crowning achievement of this relationship was American recognition of Czechoslovak independence on September 3, 1918, formally granted to Masaryk while he was in Washington.

Several prominent Czechs came to America before Masaryk, such as Vojta Náprstek, the activist liberal and propagator of American efficiency, Josef V. Sládek, the poet and translator of Longfellow, and Antonín Dvořák, the composer of the *New World Symphony*. They enhanced the mutual understanding of the cultural values between America and the Czech lands; but it was left to Masaryk, who became a representative of *political* aspirations, to work towards the first real alliance between the Czech and the American people in a decisive moment of history.

Masaryk's most personal link with America was, of course, his wife, Charlotte Garrigue, whose last name he later adopted as his own middle name. Born in Brooklyn in 1850 she was, on her father's side, a descendant of Huguenots who left France in the first part of the seventeenth century and settled in Germany and Denmark. Her mother traced her ancestry back to the Pilgrim Fathers. Masaryk met Charlotte in Leipzig in 1877 and after a brief courtship proposed to her. He came to New York to marry her in March 1878. His first visit to the United States was thus mainly a

private affair. It lasted only about two weeks, and most of his time was spent with the Garrigue family. Charlotte returned to Europe with Masaryk and stayed at his side until the outbreak of the First World War.

In 1902 Masaryk traveled to America at the invitation of the philanthropic industrialist Charles R. Crane, who had established a foundation for Slavic lectures at the University of Chicago. By a happy coincidence Crane turned out to be a friend of Woodrow Wilson's, a fact that was to serve Masaryk well in 1918. Twenty-four years elapsed between Masaryk's first and second journeys to America. In this period Masaryk became a well-known figure in Czech public life. He was assigned to the new Czech university in Prague as a philosophy professor and founded a periodical, *Athenaeum*, in which he practiced what he called "scientific criticism." He organized campaigns against bigotry, chauvinism, literary forgeries, and racial prejudice, epitomized by the case of the Jew Leopold Hilsner, unjustly accused of a ritual murder. He published several books on the problems of Czech history and politics, and on social and philosophical questions. And he entered the arena of politics. In the years 1891-93 he represented the Young Czech Party in the Austrian parliament in Vienna.

Masaryk's lectures in Chicago in 1902 were delivered from notes and for several decades the subject of this unpublished university course had been a matter of speculation. In the 1970s the Czech-American author Draga B. Shillinglaw undertook the reconstruction of the lectures from rediscovered stenographic notes published in the old issues of the Czech-language newspaper *Slavie*. It became evident that Masaryk spoke mainly on Czech history (the lecture series was entitled "The Philosophy of the History of a Small Nation") but he also discussed general Slavic questions in several lectures. His course at the University of Chicago was the first systematic exposition of the Czech question in America.

During his second visit, which lasted three months, Masaryk made an extended tour of the Czech immigrant centers, visiting New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Baltimore, Cleveland, Cedar Rapids, and other cities. He had not yet presented a political program of

independence but, speaking on a variety of subjects (religion, socialism, Czech literature and history) he clearly contributed to the dissemination of knowledge of basic Czech national aspirations.

On his third visit, in 1907, Masaryk came to America as a Czech intellectual whose political role had received fresh impetus. He started on his journey shortly after having been elected a member of the Vienna parliament for a second term, representing the small Progressive Party which he helped create in 1900. On July 17, 1907, he was present at the opening of the Parliament session, on July 20 he delivered a speech in the budget debate, and a week later he sailed from Bremerhaven. He arrived in New York on August 7 and stayed in America for two months. He participated in the Congress of the Religious Liberals in Boston and again visited the Czech immigrants who had overwhelmed him with invitations from eleven states in all. His appearances before the Czech-Americans culminated in a series of speeches delivered at the Association of Czech Freethinkers in Chicago. His last prewar visit to the United States strengthened his conviction that Czech-Americans were an important part of the Czech nation and that America could be a source of inspiration for Czech political life.

It was Masaryk's fourth and last visit to America that made history. He came at the beginning of May 1918, as the leader of the Czechoslovak liberation movement, and left in November, already the first elected President of Czechoslovakia. For the American and world public his six-and-a-half month stay in the United States appeared as a meteoric rise from near-obscurity to the leadership of one of the new states in Central Europe.

Masaryk, the organizer of a political action and finally of volunteer armies fighting for the independence of the Czechs and Slovaks, was a reluctant revolutionary. By temperament and political philosophy he was a reformist who abhorred violence and bloodshed. At the same time his advocacy of progress by *democratic* means made him a natural adherent of the democratic Western powers in their conflict with monarchic Germany and Austria-Hungary. He feared that victory by the Central Powers would

strengthen the supremacy of the German element and worsen the unequal status of the Czechs, Slovaks, and other small Slav nations in the Habsburg Empire. The inescapable logic of this conviction led him to the camp of the Allies.

Masaryk had left Austria-Hungary in December 1914, traveling to the then neutral Italy. From there he moved to Switzerland and to France, and in October 1915 settled down in Great Britain. With inexhaustible energy he worked for the cause of a free Czechoslovakia in the West European Allied capitals. When the Tsarist autocracy was replaced by a provisional republican government in Petrograd in March 1917, Masaryk went from England to Russia where he hoped to witness a development toward democracy and to recruit thousands of volunteers from the ranks of the Czech and Slovak prisoners of war for his army. In Russia he did, indeed, succeed in organizing the largest Czechoslovak volunteer army (other Czechoslovak armies were built in France and Italy) but his expectations of a Russian democratization were thwarted by the Bolshevik revolution in November 1917. Masaryk and his representatives concluded several agreements concerning the neutrality of the Czechoslovak army in the Russian domestic conflicts, and its transfer to France, where reinforcements were sorely needed against the last German onslaught.

Recognizing the growing importance of the United States, which finally declared war on Austria-Hungary in December 1917, Masaryk traveled to America. He crossed European Russia and Siberia in a train whose passengers sometimes left their cars to chop wood for the locomotive. After a brief stay in Japan, he sailed from Yokohama to Vancouver, and arrived in Chicago on May 5, 1918. His itinerary as a revolutionary was actually a trip around the world, lasting four years and covering three continents.

His task in America was far from easy. Not only did the war have to be won (and victory seemed quite distant in the spring of 1918) but also a diplomatic breakthrough had to be achieved for the program of T.G. Masaryk and other Central European leaders. This program called for dismembering the Habsburg Empire and establishing independent states, free to opt either for com-

plete independence or for some form of voluntary association or federation. Although important pioneering work had been done by the American Czechs and Slovaks, who constituted an agile pressure group with influential connections in the press and in government circles, much remained to be accomplished when Masaryk came to America.

The West European allies, France and England, preceded the United States in recognizing Masaryk's organization, the Czechoslovak National Council, as the de facto government of the future state of Czechoslovakia. Masaryk's able representatives, Edvard Beneš and Milan R. Štefánik, secured recognition of the Czechoslovak state in the summer of 1918 in Paris and London, where the pressures of desperate German offensives and the need to weaken the Central Powers both militarily and *politically* were felt much more strongly than in Washington. American recognition, although coming last, was more than a formal seal at the end of an inevitable process. From Masaryk's statements in 1918 in America it can be clearly understood that he accorded American recognition a special importance in view of the moral prestige of American ideals, represented by Wilson, in both the Allied camp and among the adversaries.

Masaryk's success in America, viewed in retrospect, may seem a part of a historical trend rather than the result of exceptional personal efforts. The developments at the battlefields gathered momentum and, after the failure of the behind-the-scenes peace discussions, the idea of defeating Germany by destroying her ally, Austria-Hungary, provided further support for the aspirations of the small oppressed nations. Added to the circumstances that favored Masaryk may be the popularity of the Czechoslovak soldiers who, on their way from Russia to France, occupied the Siberian railway, considered strategically important by the Allies. But with all these advantages the cause of the Czechs and Slovaks still had to be explained in America in 1918, and here Masaryk showed his undeniable qualities as a spokesman of his people. He gained the quick attention and respect of the journalists and, gradually, convinced the diplomats and statesmen that there was a basic com-

patibility between the American political tradition and the goals of the Czechs and Slovaks.

The reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe after the First World War has been both praised and criticized, and Masaryk's role in this reconstruction has been judged in different ways by historians and politicians. Just twenty years after the end of the First World War came the shock of the destruction of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and other states by the Nazi Germany. After a new world war, Czechoslovakia was restored in a divided Europe, but in a form quite different from Masaryk's expectations. Fifty years after Masaryk's death and almost seven decades after his greatest successes, achieved on American soil, many of the past events have become blurred and superseded by new momentous developments. But the fact that, at the end of the First World War, a new emerging country in Central Europe found its inspiration and strength in *American* ideals remains one of the remarkable phenomena of recent European history. For an examination of this phenomenon, Masaryk affords the best example.

The testimonies of Masaryk's relationship with America, selected for this volume, are arranged in five sections. In the first section (*"Before 1914"*) Masaryk's visits in the United States prior to the First World War are illustrated by documents with seemingly little political relevance. Masaryk is shown as a freshly arrived European bridegroom, and as a lecturer with overriding interest in religious, cultural, and social questions. His political aims become visible in the second section (*"Lobbying for an Independent State"*), consisting mainly of documents which show the American Czechs and Slovaks campaigning for a program of self-determination and independence, and Masaryk's own explanation of his goals. In the third section (*"Masaryk in the Spotlight"*) Masaryk, now on his fourth and most important visit in America, is clearly in focus. Newspaper reports and diplomatic memoranda remind us how he was viewed by contemporary witnesses and how he acted on the political scene. In the next two sections (*"Masaryk and American Ideals"* and *"Masaryk and Wilson"*) we see from Masaryk's declarations, statements, and letters how he valued the

American democratic tradition, and Woodrow Wilson as the interpreter of this tradition. The sixth and last section is a brief documentary narrative. It tells the story of the longest document written in Masaryk's hand and preserved outside Czechoslovakia, the manuscript of his book *The New Europe*. This story, too, has an American aspect: the manuscript was finished in Washington.

Clearly, the first president of Czechoslovakia had a special relationship with the United States. Was the role which America played in Masaryk's life only a concatenation of incidental causes, or was it an expression of a deeper, meaningful affinity? The following testimony should help answer this question.

CHAPTER ONE

BEFORE 1914

Masaryk's first appearance in America may be illustrated by a true anecdote:

The bridegroom had a foreign accent and his formal European manners entertained the Garrigue sisters greatly. He seemed to be either impatient or an early riser, or both. On the morning of the wedding day he appeared very early at the bride's home, clad in a formal dress suit, carrying a high silk hat. His explanation was that he did not want to "lose time." He was promptly sent back to the hotel.

This little story, told by Masaryk's wife Chartlotte Garrigue to her daughter Alice¹, catches at least a glimpse of the mixture of delight and amazement that Masaryk, the son of peasants and a young doctor of philosophy, had caused in the well-to-do American family.

A good description of the house in the Morrisania section of the Bronx, where the Garrigue family welcomed Masaryk, is contained in a letter written by one of Charlotte's sisters on August 10, 1938, and preserved in the Thomas Čapek Collection in the Library of Congress.

Eleanor Garrigue Ferguson to Anna V. Čapek, who had inquired about the life of the Garrigue family in Morrisania:

The Garrigue home on Boston Road was between 166th and 167th Streets. It was the second house from the corner of 167th Street on the west side of the Road. The home was *not* red brick, it was a frame house, three stories and basement with cellar, containing a specially made refrigerator, (almost as large as the "Empire State Building," to hold food enough for eleven children). Charlotte was married in the same room as her three sisters: Emily, Augusta, Isabella; which was *adjoining* the music room—*not* in the music room.

The home, a simple rather small structure, was *bought by* our father, when we moved from Brooklyn to *Morrisania*, as the town was then called. Our father added considerably to the size, by building other sleeping rooms, a large laundry, extra kitchen space, and eventually *the very large* music room, over which was the billiard room and one single bedroom. The billiard room was of great importance, as it afforded very pleasurable relaxations for my father evenings and Sundays when he was fatigued from his very concentrated work in the Germania Fire Insurance business.

The two original “living-rooms” where the marriage ceremonies took place, we used to call: “Front- and back-parlors” and they continued ever to be *the home* and “cozy rooms” where Thomas Masaryk and Charlotte sat and chatted together, and put each other to the test, as to who could repeat the names of the states of our “United States” most accurately and most quickly. Their “courting” always had an intellectual side connected with it. The “music room” was more formal—used for our study 8 or 9 hours a day—we had our regular periods of study—one came in, the other went out, almost with military precision. *An important feature of the homestead was a grand old oak-tree, which stood between our grounds and our neighbors.* As children we all adored that tree — its dignity, strength and beauty of form — that has gone to make room for buildings — but it remained long after we left Morrisania. . . .

Masaryk owed his invitation to lecture at Chicago University in 1902 to the recommendation of the French Slavist Louis Leger and to his knowledge of English. Before his second trip to the United States he was visited by one of the founders of Slavic studies in America, Leo Wiener, who wrote the first report about Masaryk for the American press.

From Leo Wiener's article "The New Bohemia", published in the Nation of August 15, 1901:

There are streets whose names are as old as their murky jumble of buildings, and others broad and airy, graced by the names of beloved poets, like Neruda, philologists like Dobrovsky, historians like Palacky. Protestant churches, especially of the Hussite persuasion, may be found among the many Catholic, while the Greek Catholic faith, the earliest established here (namely, in the ninth century), finds its expression through the propaganda of various societies of Cyril and Methodius, its oldest missionaries among the Slavs. Nor has the quaint Jewish Ghetto disappeared, while one of the most pretentious religious monuments on the large bridge that connects the two parts of the city, bears the legend that it was built some two hundred years ago from the fine a Jew paid for railing at Christ.

This bridge leads into the "Small Town," where, at the turn of the road, a sign in five languages tells that the steep street leads to a castle on top of the hill that overlooks the whole city. Only a short distance below the outer parapet of the eerie palace is the house in which Professor Masaryk lives. It was not yet past breakfast-time when I knocked at his door, and was admitted. The rooms bore evidence of the approaching vacation, when the Professor and his family pass the sultry months in the Slovak parts of northern Hungary, of which he is a native. Professor Masaryk has the appearance of an American, and this impression is heightened by his reserved manner and composure. His wife (*née* Garrigue) is an American lady, and he has adopted her name, writing his own as Thomas Garrigue Masaryk. He is a political economist trained in the most critical school of his profession. He has looked without prejudice into the history of his country, and has found that the vicissitudes of Bohemia have been due more to the indolence of his own race than the avarice of the Germans, that self-restraint is productive of better results than indiscriminate abuse of everything foreign. He loves Bohemia fervently, and would like to see it occupy an honorable position in Europe, but he thinks that this can be acquired only by a close study of matters political, social, and intellectual; that far from blindly hating the Germans, the Bohemians ought to compete with them fairly for political supremacy; that all the heterogeneous elements of the country, the Jews included, are to be won over by love and not by hatred. In a momentary fit of righteous enthusiasm, his people elected him to the Austrian Parliament, where he represented Bohemia with honor and moderation. No one would have done more for his country than Masaryk, but he soon got weary of the platitudes and vile accusations of the Young Bohemians, and returned to his university position to carry on his studies in academic peace. It was a good idea of Mr. Crane of Chicago to invite him to deliver a series of lectures at the University of Chicago. The date has not yet been set, but within two or three years America will have an opportunity to hear about Bohemia from the mouth of one of its most prominent sons. Professor Masaryk speaks English fluently. . . .

It has long been assumed that, with the exception of limited academic and religious circles, Masaryk was virtually unknown to the American public before the First World War had brought the Czech and Slovak aspiration into focus. However, a recent search in American newspapers revealed that Masaryk had gained some publicity in American dailies during his visit in 1902, attracting the attention of American journalists not by his political opinion, but by his comments on a social problem, the plight of immigrant children in the American cities.

From the article "Sees Danger Ahead," published in the Baltimore Sun on May 19, 1902:

Prof. Thomas Garigue [sic] Masaryk, a member of the Austrian Reichsrath and doctor of philosophy at the University of Prague, was the guest yesterday of the Bohemian Gymnastic Society. He arrived in this city late Saturday afternoon in response to an invitation from the society and delivered a lecture at Bohemia Hall on the life of Karl [sic] Havlíček, the Bohemian patriot who was exiled from that country on account of his opposition to the Austrian Government. He will go to Washington today.

Professor Masaryk appears to be a man of great refinement and culture. Beneath a high, classical forehead is a pair of piercing dark-grey eyes, which peer through large, steel-rimmed eyeglasses. Aquiline nose and firm mouth are probably the most impressive facial features. The visitor wears a Vandyke beard and mustache slightly tinted with grey.

When questioned with reference to his impression of the American people, their habits and customs, Professor Masaryk said he had not had sufficient opportunity to study Americans to form a fixed opinion. Almost equally evasive was he when asked for his opinion concerning the great American industrial combinations which have recently sprung into existence.

"The theories of most learned men are divided as to the benefits of these immense syndicates," said Professor Masaryk. "Of the system I have nothing to say except that if the ends are good the means are justified by the ends. Trusts mean the centralization of wealth and power, and centralization is always bad unless checked by individual and autonomic power."

Without solicitation the Professor then entered upon the discussion of another problem of great interest.

"During my short time in this country," he said, "I have observed one very important and vital question that concerns you Americans — a question beside which the race problem, in my opinion, falls into insignificance — namely, the immigration problem. From my observations in the immigration quarters of New York I have been led to believe the situation is really alarming. Here you have on an average of a half million immigrants coming to your shores annually, for the most part uneducated, among them great numbers of Italians, Syrians, Turks and Greeks. You cannot imagine what it means to have these people suddenly liberated from the political, religious and social bonds under which they have lived for centuries. Comparatively few seem to see the danger that lurks behind this condition. Look at the children! A half million immigrants means about 5,000,000 children in five years. Who takes care of them?"

"Go to New York and you find them fairly swarming about the streets of the East Side from early morn until late in the evening. Then go to the other section of the city and you notice the contrast. In the one place thousands of ignorant children playing in the filth of the smaller streets

and alleys and in the other neatly clad children with schoolbooks in their arms."

"It is quite safe to say that the condition of the former case, under the present circumstances, when no care is manifested for the welfare of the offspring of the foreigners, will not naturally become alleviated in less than the third to the fifth generation."

"There is only one remedy that I can think of, and that is to organize a movement to take care of these children, educate them and by so doing elevate their moral condition."

Professor Masaryk stated that he expected in the near future to return to this country and attempt to treat the question practically, and especially to labor for the intellectual elevation and advancement of his own people. This plan, he asserted, if carried out, would undoubtedly be of inestimable benefit to the United States. . . .

From the editorial "Is It a Peril?" published in the Washington Post on May 21, 1902:

Occasionally a foreign visitor does this country good service by calling attention to ugly facts. Mr. Thomas Garigne [sic] Masaryk, president of the University of Prague [sic], and member of the Austrian Reichsrath, has favored us in that way in an interview printed in Baltimore on the 18th instant. Mr. Masaryk discusses the immigration question, which, he thinks, should concern Americans more than any or all other problems. He thinks it "a peril to the American republic," and we have no doubt it will prove so if we continue to neglect the children of the immigrants.

. . .

It is vain to point with pride to the billions that we expend on our free schools and to the other billions devoted to the intellectual, moral, and physical improvement of children. All that is well so far as it goes, but the fact remains that it does not go far enough. Instead of a reduction, we have an increase year by year of the number of children who get their education in the streets. Great as is our outlay for new school buildings, teachers, and other features of the public school system, we are continually falling farther and farther behind the demand. We plume ourselves on what we are doing when, in fact, we should blush for what we are leaving undone.

From the editorial "Immigration That Menaces", published in the Philadelphia Public Ledger on May 21, 1902:

Professor Masaryk, of the University of Prague and member of the Austrian Reichsrath, who is traveling in this country, records his conviction that foreign immigration, or rather a considerable part of it, is a menace to the American Republic. His attention has been particularly attracted to the situation in New York, which annually receives and attempts to assimilate within its own borders thousands of foreigners alien

in every sense. They come from the South and East of Europe, from the Mediterranean, from Asia and Africa. They labor for a pittance, inhabit the squalid tenements, disregard personal cleanliness, neglect their children's schooling and reproduce here in degree the deplorable conditions that exist in the countries of their nativity. The Austrian critic is particularly concerned about the morals and schooling of the children of these immigrants, and the only remedy that suggests itself to him is a movement to take their education in hand. . . .

Professor Masaryk's comments upon the social conditions of our chief seaport afford food for thought for all Americans who cherish their native land. They should be an incentive to Congress to supply a remedy for the perils arising from imperfectly regulated immigration.

In the observations published after his return from his second visit, Masaryk stressed the religious problems of the immigrants, and showed a distinctive appreciation of the risks and potentialities of free spiritual life.

From Masaryk's article in the Prague monthly Naše doba of October, 1902:

I devoted this year's visit of mine to the United States (in fact only a part of the United States, from New York to Cedar Rapids in the West, and to Washington, D.C. and St. Louis in the South) mainly to observing the situation of religion and churches. That was the intent of my journey and, of course, I had the general American situation in mind. Soon I had to turn my attention also to the religious life of the Czechs; and I have to confess being surprised by their situation, which unexpectedly forced me to think more about the subject. How little we know at home about the life of our colonies abroad!

Already in New York, and likewise in other cities, I came to realize that no other question is as important to the American Czechs as the religious question. In any serious discussion among the Czechs whom I saw the question of religion and churches became the main topic. Even among the Socialists. Everywhere I was asked questions about religion and requested to give my opinion on the attitudes of [American] Czechs with respect to religion and churches.

From the conversations and from the press (some of the [Czech-American] newspapers are not allowed in Bohemia, which makes it difficult for us to follow Czech life in America) one can easily see that our American colony is sharply divided into two hostile and steadily warring camps: the freethinkers and the believers or, better, church people. As there are many more Catholics than Protestants, we can say that we have a camp of freethinkers and a Catholic camp. . . .

The nature of the Czech freethinking can be understood without difficulty. It is the Free Thought that had been transferred from Bohemia

to the soil of American liberty. It is, however, the more radical Free Thought of the 1850s and 1860s. It is the freethinking of men who had experienced the Revolution of 1848, freethinking not only of Havlíček, but also of Dr. Rieger of that period and of the younger men such as Sabina, Sladkovský and Barák. It is, to a large extent, the consistent early Young-Czech thinking. In America the Czech freethinkers had the chance to be more consistent without fear, and they were. They saw that in America any religious conviction could be consistently pursued, and this is how they acted in pursuing their conviction. Whereas in Bohemia Free Thought was soon being replaced by liberal phraseology, the freethinkers in America were more consistent in practicing their conviction, and gave up Catholicism.

I need not emphasize that the difference between the American and Czech freethinking is only a difference in degree. Our freethinkers do not dare to be more consistent. In all respects the whole life of the American Czechs is our Czech life; if America puzzles [a visitor from Bohemia] with its Czech-American life, it is, in fact, only showing him a copy of his own life under the magnifying glass. . . .

I do not know if the American Czechs are strong enough to replace the old religions by a new, genuinely new religion. Most freethinkers know only Catholicism. They threw away Catholicism (I could not say they *overcame* it) and now they think they have overcome religion in general. But religion is not overcome and, consequently, there is a crisis among the freethinkers. Many are returning to Catholicism, others accept Protestantism, some cling to the new American sects. . . . All these difficulties are augmented by their own appreciation that freethinking is outmoded today, that its negativism is no longer sufficient. The lively religious interest that animates America could not fail to stimulate the open-minded freethinkers to revise their liberalistic philosophy.

It is certain that the American Czechs have to be awakened spiritually and that they have to participate in American cultural life. It is understandable that the immigrants, seeking bread in their new country, were looking for employment in the first place and were guided by their material interest. But man does not live by bread alone as is evident once again in the development of the life of the American Czechs. Obviously, even in the material sphere our Czech people have contented themselves with purely physical work of low order. In this respect, too, they are increasingly aware of how useful education and interest in spiritual life are for the Czech worker and laborer.

During his last visit in the United States before the First World War, in 1907, Masaryk earned the special attention of a group of American citizens who recognized his merits as a fighter against racial discrimination. The Association of Galician and Bukovinian Jews held a public gathering in his honor.

The editorial "Distinguished Visitor," published in the Jewish Exponent on August 30, 1907:

At the coming International Congress of Liberals Professor Thomas Mazark [sic], who did such valiant service in combating the anti-Semites of his country, will be one of the delegates. The distinguished visitor is properly described by one of the foremost American papers as "a Slavic hero." He is certainly entitled to the honor thus bestowed upon him, for at the risk of his own position as a university professor he defended the Jews of his native land when the charge of ritual murder was fabricated against them in the closing years of the nineteenth century. He was threatened with ostracism and other penalties of a more exacting nature, but nonetheless he persisted in doing his duty. The anti-Semites of the Austrian Empire have good cause to fear him, for he has been one of the ablest and most determined of their opponents. There are few Christians of his eminence in the country of which he is a subject who have had the manhood, the courage and the ability to work effectively to defend their Jewish neighbors as he has shown on many an occasion. We are glad to note that his Jewish fellow countrymen now living in New York propose to honor him by a public reception. He certainly deserves it.

In his speech in the General Session of the Congress of the Religious Liberals in Boston Masaryk discussed the religious situation in Austria. He also addressed one of the committees of the congress in a brief speech about the Slavic immigrants. This brief address, almost forgotten and never translated or published in Czechoslovakia, documents his concern for religious and social questions as the two inseparable parts of one basic human problem.

Masaryk's speech in a meeting of the Department of New Americans at the Congress of the Religious Liberals in Boston on September 24, 1907:

I am to speak of the Slavonians, of whom there are about 4,000,000 living in your country. I am to speak more especially of the Bohemians. I have no right to speak in their name. I will communicate some observations I made in this country recently, and twice before when I was here. I would not dare to discuss the whole problem of immigration. I will give you just a few of my own observations.

I remember that, when I first came to America, on the boat I saw a little girl. She had her address checked on her breast. She could not speak with anybody — not English, of course. I had the impression of a living box or trunk being checked and sent to America. That is the first impression I had of the immigration problem. And afterwards, when I came

here, for instance, to Pittsburg or Allegheny, and observed the life of the miners, I saw again living trunks and boxes which are used for the industry of your great country. A man cannot speak with his fellow-citizens; he cannot speak with his own children. It is touching to see how among our Slavonians and Bohemians very often the family is broken up simply because nobody is left to take care of the children. The father and mother are in the mines: the children live on the street, pick up the English language, forget their own. The father and mother cannot speak English, and so they cannot converse, father and child. I saw this very often, not only in Pittsburg, but in New York, Chicago, everywhere. And so I see that the problem is, of course, that the people coming here should as soon as possible learn English. But that is not enough, to know English, even if they speak it very well. It is not a question of language only, but of citizenship communion, of spiritual communion. For these people learn English as they can — they learn it in the public schools, they pick it up on the streets, and so on; but they are not citizens, they are not Americans, and they cannot be, because they are out of spiritual and civic communion with you. They do not communicate, and they cannot. I often am told by Americans, "There is a kind of clan instinct among these Slavonians: they gather where they will not be assimilated with us." Of course, if you would say assimilation only by language, that is not difficult. What I mean is the assimilation of culture and of spiritual life, and that is wanting. I often hear from clergymen and men who care for religion, "Your Bohemians are free thinkers; they are hostile to religion; they are atheists." It is true that very many of them are free thinkers, and perhaps atheists — I cannot tell — but I know these free thinkers and atheists long for spiritual life. They have nobody to give it to them excepting the Roman Church. Catholicism is spreading, of course, here the United States; and it soon will be, and I suppose it is already, a great problem of this country. The Roman Church meets these people. A Bohemian and a Slavonian will be more carefully cared for than he is in his own country. But there is a minority of the people, perhaps half of them, who dislike every sort of ecclesiastical and religious life, simply because in Austria, where they come from, they know only the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of the State, and they hate the State Church. If you would meet them on their own ground and of course in their own language, you will see that these "atheists" will be very good — I won't say Christians, but religious men; and I am sure, if Jesus were to come again, he would go to these atheists, to these people who do not care anything for religion because they are cast out of spiritual communion, and because they have no opportunity of hearing and seeing what true religion is.

And so I wish that they could meet you, and that you would meet them. I think they are ripe for this meeting. I came here Sunday, and was engaged for the meetings here, but was invited by my countrymen to speak. Before I came, they wrote me to speak on the political and social situation of Bohemia and of Austria. When I came to speak to them, I saw

CHAPTER TWO

LOBBYING FOR AN INDEPENDENT STATE

A postcard, preserved in the Woodrow Wilson Papers in the Library of Congress, marks the beginning of a new phase in Masaryk's life. The postcard was mailed from Rome to New York shortly before the end of 1914.

Masaryk to Emanuel V. Voska, December 27, 1914:

Again I am beyond frontiers in a neutral country. A harder regime is commencing at home: In Moravia two men were executed for keeping and distributing the Russian manifesto. In Prague our editor Dušek from Čas was arrested; it is not permitted to publish it and hence it is not known in public. The first case where an editor was imprisoned by *military* authorities who now have the upper hand over the civilian. I do not know how it all will come out, most probably badly. I also do not know if I shall be able to go back. I shall stay here till Jan. 6th (Hotel Flora) then shall go to Geneva; Hotel d'Angleterre. Greetings from Masaryk.

Although it is not known how and when this postcard came to be deposited in the President's archives, it is certain that it is one of the first documents related to the establishment of contacts between Masaryk and the Czech-Americans in the early stages of the First World War. Emanuel V. Voska, a Czech immigrant who came to America at the age of 19 in 1894, was active in various Czech-American organizations. As an American citizen he traveled in Europe in the summer of 1914 when the war broke out. Before returning to the United States in September 1914, Voska offered himself to Masaryk as a courier for his contacts with the Western countries.

The strongest group in America to support Masaryk's program were the Czech immigrants who entered into close cooperation

with the Slovak-Americans. More than a million people of Czech and Slovak origin lived in America in the period of the First World War. After the outbreak of the hostilities the advantages of Masaryk's reputation among his compatriots in the United States became evident. The American Czechs and Slovaks provided him with an initial base for his revolutionary activity and were unswerving in their support of his aims. Their lobbying for the independence of their country was, however, a gradually evolving process. In the first years of the war they had to organize their forces and cope with the fact of American neutrality.

In March 1915 most of the scattered Czech groups were united in the Bohemian National Alliance (BNA); in October of that same year, the BNA formally entered into an agreement with the Slovak organization, the Slovak League of America, to pursue jointly the aim of political independence. The Czech Catholic immigrants formed the National Alliance of Bohemian Catholics in February 1917, and allied themselves with the BNA. Finally, in February 1918, the three groups, the BNA, the Czech Catholics, and the Slovak League agreed that together they would consider themselves to be the American branch of Masaryk's movement, the Czechoslovak National Council.

Before the Czech and Slovak immigrants could develop their anti-Habsburg propaganda effectively, Masaryk sought assistance from individual American sympathizers, among whom Charles R. Crane was the key person. Masaryk informed Crane in a letter written on February 3, 1915, from Geneva that the Czechoslovak revolutionaries "prepare the extreme steps a nation can and must do to get her independence," and asked for financial help.³ Crane furnished material assistance and arranged for the first interview by an American correspondent with Masaryk during the war. Masaryk was visited in London by a *Christian Science Monitor* reporter who then wrote a lengthy article based on his conversation with the Czech leader.



Masaryk's portrait, drawn and signed for the *Christian Science Monitor* from a photograph, published on December 1, 1915. Newspaper and Current Periodical Reading Room, Library of Congress.

From the article "Slav Issue As Basis for the Great Conflict," published by the Christian Science Monitor on December 1, 1915:

"An exile from Bohemia with a price set upon his head by the Austrian government", were the words in which Prof. T. G. Masaryk was described quite recently by one who knows him well. The professor is at present in London, and accorded a representative of the Christian Science Monitor a more than cordial reception in his study at Hampstead, looking out over the hills away beyond the Heath. Professor Masaryk has been described as one of the greatest figures in the Slavonic world, and it is not necessary to have more than a few moments conversation with him to recognize that the cause he has so much at heart occupies his entire time and all his thoughts.

The London University has now founded a new school of Slavonic studies, and Professor Masaryk has been appointed lecturer in Slavonic literature and sociology. Interesting as is this work he has undertaken, the Professor recognized that it is far less important than the other work he has in hand. Professor Masaryk is a Bohemian, and was professor of philosophy in the Czech University of Prague. He has also taken an active part during many years, not only in the internal politics of Bohemia, but in the larger field of Austro-Hungarian affairs, as a member of the Austrian Parliament.

In December last, he explained, I was compelled to leave Prague, owing to the persecution of Bohemian politicians by the Austrian government. My friends, he continued, are in prison, but I departed before being arrested being convinced that I could better accomplish the great objective I have in view, if I were free, than if confined in a prison cell. I would have been arrested had I stayed, he explained, because I was, and always have been, in opposition to the Austrian government.

It is, then, your desire to enlighten the public as to the real facts regarding Austria's recent political doings?

Yes, replied the Professor, it is exactly for that purpose that I am here in London. I realize full well that Austria is guilty, and that she is determined to keep my country, Bohemia, in subjection. I am consequently working here in London, as I have in Rome, Paris, and Geneva, to rouse politicians to recognize what Austria is doing, and so to strengthen their sympathy with Bohemia. . . .

The Professor then turned to the great Slav question. We have, as you know, he said, practically seven Slav nations, that is we have the Bohemians and Slovaks, the Poles, the Serbo-Croats, the Slovenes, the Bulgarians, and Russians, whilst in Germany also there is what may best be described as a splinter of a Slav nation who are called Serbs, but they are very different to the Serbians themselves. Of these nations I have mentioned, only the Russians, Bulgarians, and a part of the Serbians are really independent, that is, have their own states. The great point is that at one

time or another, almost all of these Slav nations have been free. This means, therefore, that at some time they were subjugated, and are consequently striving to regain the liberty they formerly possessed. You may sum up the Slav question by saying that it is the struggle of those Slav nations which were formerly free to regain their freedom. Russia, of course, being the greatest Slav nation, can help the smaller Slav nations, and these nations expect this help from Russia. Even the Poles, the Professor continued, are now obviously opposed to Germany and her policy, as has been so clearly shown during the present war. They expect far more from Russia than they ever expected to obtain from Germany or Austria.

Pausing for a moment, and then pointing to a map of Europe, the Professor said: You will see from a glance at this map that the present war is based mainly, if not entirely, on the Slav question; the Slav question is the so-called eastern question. When Austria attacked Serbia, Russia was compelled to come to her rescue. Russia could not stand by and see the Slavs in Serbia annihilated. And it is for the same reason that the Slavs in Austria, and especially the Bohemians, are in sympathy with Serbia and Russia. Still pointing to the map, the Professor explained how the Slav peoples stretched really from the Gulf of Danzig on the Baltic down as far as the Aegean Sea and the Adriatic, constituting in Central Europe a peculiar Slav zone, but remember, he added, they are not free Slavs, and the fact that they are not in possession of the freedom which would be theirs is what gives rise to the perpetual unrest in Europe. Do not forget that the Slavs are ever striving for liberty and will continue to strive.

You asked me just now what would be the effect of the event of the Slav question being solved. Of course, the Professor went on, no one who is at all familiar with the question will ever think that the Slavs will immediately endeavor to form themselves into one nation. The first step to be accomplished is for them to obtain their independence. Imagine, if you can, the Slavs free in Bohemia, in Poland, with the South-Slavs. There is no question that this would develop into a mutual understanding which would end in definite treaties, military and otherwise. . . .

When the solution of the Slav question is reached, the Professor said in conclusion, the different Slav nationalities will certainly maintain their individuality. The Polish Slavs, he said, with real enthusiasm, will be free, as will the Slavs in other countries. Thus they would constitute a number of small states, but they would unite when a question of common interest was involved and in that way prove and exert their strength.

Not all the people who were willing to recommend Masaryk to Wilson's attention believed in the feasibility and success of Masaryk's aim. The American journalist Norman Hapgood, a friend of Wilson's, sent a copy of one of Masaryk's memoranda from London to the White House on January 29, 1917, but said in his

accompanying letter: "I myself am not for an independent Bohemia, but I think Professor Masaryk deserves a hearing."⁴

Most of the American Czechs did not doubt that Masaryk's goal was attainable, or at least desirable. It would have been premature to propagate the novel idea of an independent Czechoslovak state before the United States had entered the war. But the Bohemian National Alliance, bound by the rules of American neutrality, looked for an opportunity to declare their sympathies with the Allies in their fight against the Central Powers. The opportunity was found in May 1916. Responding to what he regarded as pro-German propaganda, the leader of the BNA, Ludvík Fisher, explained the position of the Czech-Americans in sharp criticism of the so called American Embargo Conference. The anti-German and anti-Austrian statement was written in the form of a letter addressed to all members of Congress. A copy of the letter, dated May 5, 1916, from Chicago, was sent to President Wilson.

Letter of the Bohemian National Alliance criticizing the pro-German tendencies of the American Embargo conference, dated May 5, 1916, from Chicago:

Within the last few days members of the Congress of the United States of America have been deluged with appeals and letters prepared by the American Embargo Conference and designed to create an impression that the American people are not in sympathy with the President in the stand he has taken with regard to the relations of this country with the so-called Central Powers, and more particularly with Germany.

There is little doubt in the minds of all well informed people that the concentrated action resulting from the deliberations of the American Embargo Conference represents a minority of the American people, and indeed does represent only American citizens and residents of German origin; it cannot even be said that this action is undertaken in behalf of any citizens of Austrian origin, because it is a well known fact that most former Austrian subjects are bitterly opposed to the Austrian government in the present world crisis.

American citizens in sympathy with Germany, and whose sympathies apparently lead them so far as to induce them to give preference to the welfare of Germany, rather than that of America, certainly have the right to express their opinions no matter what these may be, and it is not our intention to deny them such rights, but we cannot help remarking that if they were anxious to help maintain peace they should have addressed their appeals to Berlin and Vienna in the fateful days of July and August,

1914. It is the height of irony to address appeals for maintenance of peace to the American Government, the government of the one country that has always gone so far as was consistent with national honor to uphold the peace of the world.

There is certainly little doubt that those opposed to the action of the American Embargo Conference form an overwhelming majority of the citizenship of this country. Were American citizens of Slavonic, English, French, Italian and Belgian extraction less loyal to the country of the adoption they certainly could organize a demonstration in comparison with which the action of this conference would appear puny indeed. But such demonstration has not been organized, nor do we believe [sic] it will or should be prepared.

Nevertheless, we deem it our duty to call your attention to the fact that we are unalterably opposed to the aims of the American Embargo Conference, and the appeals it has engineered.

The foreign policies of this country certainly should not and cannot be dictated by the interests of any of the belligerent powers; but our aim must be the protection of the rights of American citizens under international law, and the maintenance of national honor. Properly understood, we are of the opinion that national honor and the maintenance of the rights of American citizens are perfectly consistent with the interests of humanity as a whole, and when the President of the United States takes this position, we believe he should be upheld by all loyal American citizens.

If the Central Powers have come into collision with all our accepted notions of liberty and freedom; of the rights of men; with all our conceptions of the interest of this nation, as well as humanity, they have only themselves to blame and the brutal methods of warfare beginning with the violation of Belgium and ending with the sinking of the Sussex.

In closing we may say that the Bohemian National Alliance is entitled to speak in behalf of five hundred forty thousand American citizens of Czech extraction, and we have little doubt that in calling your attention to the matters hereinbefore referred to we are speaking in behalf of a vast majority of American citizens of non-German origin.

Our aim has simply been to call attention to the fact that the recent appeals to members of Congress are biased, to say the least, and that at best they represent a small portion of American citizenship.⁵

Buoyed by the declaration of the Allies, in January 1917, that "the liberation of the Czechoslovaks from foreign domination" was one of their war aims, the Czech and Slovak immigrants convened a big meeting in New York and sent a message to President Wilson.

Telegram of a Czech-American committee to Woodrow Wilson, January 15, 1917:

Undersigned appointed as a committee on behalf of United States citizens gathered tonight in a mass meeting at Bohemian National Hall, New York, earnestly beseech the President and Congress to support the liberation of Czechs, Slovaks and other Slavs proposed by Allied Governments.

L. C. Frank, B. G. Gregr, A. B. Kuokol [sic], M. Getting⁶

When this message was being sent, the American entry into the war was still several months away. And Woodrow Wilson was still the President of a non-belligerent nation when he received a letter from the Slovak League of America congratulating him on his second inauguration. This letter, preserved in the Woodrow Wilson Papers in the Library of Congress, indicates clearly that even before the American declaration of war (on Germany in April 1917, and on Austria-Hungary in December 1917) Wilson was regarded by the representatives of small Central European nations as the advocate of their rights.

Slovak League of America to Woodrow Wilson, March 6, 1917:

The American citizens of Slovak descent cannot on this memorable occasion refrain from joining their voices in congratulating and thanking you not only for the very efficient work which you have performed as their Chief Executive and leader, during the trying four years that have elapsed since your first inauguration, but also for becoming a champion of the cause of their oppressed brethren in their distant home-land.

Prophets are men endowed with the power of reading human hearts rather than musty tomes; you have shown yourself to be a true prophet when to the Senate you declared that the small nations of Europe have an equal right with the powerful ones to governments established on the American basis, their consent. You then voiced the yearnings of the millions now forcibly gathered under governments to which they not only never did consent but from which they always have, for vital reasons, dissented.

As every individual has the inalienable, natural right to shape his own destiny, so have nations; as it is a high crime against nature's God to trample under foot this right of the individual, so it is an immeasurably greater crime to crush the collective right of individuals bound together with sacred ties into a nation.

Your welcome words are to the oppressed nations of the world as a shining star of hope breaking through the lowering clouds that have darkened their skies for centuries, and the American citizens of Slovak

origin would consider themselves lacking in patriotism and in loyalty to their adopted country, if they did not, on this occasion, express their heartfelt thanks to you for the stand you took on behalf of their brethren, and if they would not, in these days of crisis, solemnly reaffirm their oath of allegiance to the United States of America and pledge their undivided support of their Chief Executive.

God grant that four years hence, when you will lay down the burdens of your exalted office, your ideals will be materialized and that you will be followed into your private life not only by the esteem of your fellow citizens, but also by the blessings of those millions across the seas who will have survived the present struggle and who will be forever grateful to you for materially aiding them in realizing their just and centuries-old desires.

In the summer of 1917 the military situation of the Allies was far from excellent and Russia went through a period of political turmoil, but the Czechoslovak soldiers fought well on the Eastern front. The good fighting spirit of Masaryk's army in Russia was brought to the attention of Woodrow Wilson.

Letter of Ludvík Fisher, president of the Bohemian National Alliance, to Woodrow Wilson, July 5, 1917:

May I be permitted to call your attention to the fact that in the recent successful Russian offensive the most signal services were rendered by the Czecho-Slovak soldiers fighting alongside of the Russians?

The Russian official war bulletin of July 3 states that the Czecho-Slovak brigade captured 62 officers and 3,150 soldiers, fifteen guns and many machine guns, and that many of the captured guns were turned against the enemy.

The brigade referred to is the first brigade of the Czecho-Slovak army formed in Russia principally out of Bohemian and Slovak prisoners of war. During the old regime these volunteers formed merely Bohemian units of the Russian army, but Minister of War Gutchkoff sanctioned the formation of them into a separate Bohemian army which swore fidelity to the provisional Bohemian government in Paris, and Minister Kerensky apparently had full confidence in them, because he placed them in the very forefront of the offensive which meant so much to the future of Russia and to the entire cause of the Allies.

I beg to assure that soldiers of our race in the United States army will render as good an account of themselves as their brothers in Russia.⁷

In the spring of 1918, Masaryk's compatriots in America received good news from Prague. At a manifestation in the Czech capital, the citizens openly expressed their aspirations for freedom and even cheered Wilson as their champion. Ludvík Fisher, Ma-

saryk's indefatigable lobbyist, speaking for Czech-American organizations, again reminded Wilson of the existence of the Czechoslovak independence movement.

Telegram of Czech-American organizations to Woodrow Wilson, April 19, 1918:

A deep feeling of devotion to you who have given the world so much moral strength to fight against the barbarous violence of the Austro-German autocracy has always swayed the Bohemian people of the United States and led them to stand by you and their new country and in the present moment when the forces of light are in a death struggle with the enemy of democracy on the Western battlefields of Europe, when the democratic world is sacrificing everything to stem the flood of oppression that threatens to engulf all free nations there comes the joyous news that our brothers in Bohemia, our mother land, raised their voices at a manifestation in Prague and in the name of the ten millions of Czecho-Slovaks cheered Woodrow Wilson, the great President of this Republic, in the firm hope that the ideals of freedom and self-determination of nations as he expressed them will surely be the outcome of this terrible struggle. Stirred to the very depths of our souls we too, the Bohemians of the United States organized into the Bohemian National Alliance raise our voices which we join to the voices of the Bohemian nation of the old country to cheer for you and to say to you again we love and respect you, your ideals which are also our ideals, even as to our brothers in Bohemia, President Wilson is to us a bright star of hope of better days, a hope that independence and freedom shall be the lot of our people united into the Czecho-Slovak state.⁸

Attached to this telegram was a list of 13 Czech-American organizations whose representatives signed the enthusiastic message to the President. Wilson instructed his Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, to convey his thanks to Ludvík Fisher and his associates.

Telegram of Robert Lansing to Ludvík Fisher, April 12, 1918:

The President directs me to say that he is deeply touched by your message of the nineteenth in which you voice the appreciation of your fellow Czecho-Slovaks in the United States for the stand the President has taken in advocacy of the rights of the human race to undominated control of their own destinies. The presence among us of many thousands of your fellow countrymen, who have made their home with us and become assimilated with our national life, is proof not only of the welcome which our commonwealth extends to such worthy elements, but of the sympathy

of the newcomers with the broad principles of democratic union upon which this country builds up its national faith and of their desire to become a helpful part of the enduring civic organization we have framed. To all such the people of the United States hold out the hand of earnest sympathy and gladly share in the aspirations which animate them and their kindred in their old country.⁹

When Masaryk came to America he discussed his program in a meeting with Czechs and Slovaks in Chicago on May 28, 1918. In an unprepared, spirited speech he described his personal experiences during the last years and presented an overview of his revolutionary activities.

Masaryk's speech to Czechs and Slovaks in Chicago, reported by the Czech-language newspaper Slavie on May 31, 1918:

I was in Germany when the war broke out. I wanted to go to Paris and London to reconcile the Serbs and the Bulgarians and to win the agreement of the English and French government for this reconciliation. Suddenly the war started. I had not believed that the war was really approaching; I expected a conflict, but much later. The war, in my realization, would be terrible and therefore I was reluctant to believe that it was coming. As the trains in Germany were reserved for the army, I could not return promptly. I saw the German preparedness which made me anticipate a terrible war.

Finally I returned. There was no political life in Bohemia. The parliament had been adjourned a long time ago, the government suppressed all political activity after the outbreak of the war. Political parties existed only nominally, not even their executive committees were allowed to meet. Police spying was so pervasive that it sowed distrust among brothers and created an atmosphere of general suspicion. The journals had to publish whatever the police had forced upon them. Opposing journals were persecuted.

I saw our soldiers when they were sent to the front. The population of Prague accompanied them [to the trains] and in the countryside the civilians rioted at the railway stations together with the soldiers. The soldiers carried Czech emblems and flags, and soon we were to learn that they were punished for that.

Then followed cruel persecution of the press, of people and associations, especially the Sokols. The first victim fell in Moravia. The young Sokol Kratochvíl was condemned to death by shooting for carrying on him the manifesto of the Russian commander Nicolai. He was followed by a second and third victim, then by others. Our soldiers were punished by death. They refused to fight and surrendered. The Czech regiments were ordered decimated, the persecution of the people was intensified. Many journals were banned, people were imprisoned, and we came into

possession of a list of persons earmarked for jail at any greater political stirring.

We, the Representatives, could not meet and arrange a plan, to say nothing of conducting resistance activity. All weapons were confiscated. Resistance was unthinkable, revolution was out of the question because the military machine was working relentlessly and made an organized resistance movement impossible. Having no arms whatsoever, who could make a revolution?

And yet we started a revolution and our soldiers did it in the first place. They realized that the hour of final decision had come. In this I see the great discipline and strength of our people and an assurance for the future. For years in the past we had sung the praises of the Slav program as the basis of our politics. In 1912 we sent medical doctors and money to Serbia, and now we were supposed all of a sudden to go and shoot the Serbians. The Czech soldier said No and his resistance was felt all over Bohemia. That was the revolution, and it continued. We do not know how many of our soldiers have been executed, only after the war will we know. . . .

Seeing all this I said to myself: you yourself must decide, you cannot do less than those soldiers. I almost felt reproach for not having made an earlier start. All this led me abroad. At the beginning of December 1914 I left for Italy, but I still wanted to return to put my affairs in order. In Switzerland I learned that my return was no longer possible.

After due consideration I decided to try to organize all our colonies. In Switzerland the Czechs, mostly workers, promptly declared themselves against Austria and for a Czech Republic, and wished to enlist in the Allied armies as a Czech Legion. Czechs in France, England, and Russia had the same plans. And the Legions *were* being formed.

Now it was a question of a unifying program that could be approved by our people at home. Our actions abroad will be politically significant only if our people at home act in the same way. Unity at home and abroad impresses others and gives us strength and courage. I have tried to unify all the separate efforts. That has required hard work if only for mechanical reasons. It has been difficult to maintain contact with the distant colonies during the war, but the contact with the homeland has been still more difficult. Anyone can imagine how it has been done. But all has gone well, every colony has been assigned its special task.

America has been entrusted with financing the movement. My first contacts with America concerned finances, after all any sacrifice can be expressed in dollars and I have always believed that a dollar given is the symbol of the purest sacrifice and should be [regarded as such]. War and revolution cost money, therefore it is necessary to make sacrifices without which the independence of the Czechoslovak nation would not be possible.

That was in 1915. The organizing effort succeeded and then I presented the declaration against the Austrian government. A terrible blow

against the Slav cause was Bulgaria's decision to join Germany but I overcame that blow. The next step was the need to organize an army, at first in Russia. The beginnings were bad, but the results were encouraging. At my departure from Moscow on March 7th, 50,000 beautiful, strong Czech boys were prepared, waiting for their chance to go to France which was the yearned-for aim of us all after the conclusion of the [separate] peace by Russia.

[The move to France] was considered before and we agreed with the French government that the [Czechoslovak] army should be transported across America. I led the way and I hope that before long our soldiers will be in France. After the first 50,000 another 50,000, already registered, will follow. There are 20,000 [Czech and Slovak] prisoners of war in Italy and a good half of them are already fighting alongside the Italian army.

In the present circumstances all this is a very definite anti-Austrian program. An armed revolution cannot be undertaken at home but [our compatriots] are informed of the events [abroad] and approve our actions. Our unity has been until now, and will be in the future, the guarantee of our successes.

The first recognition was given to us, as always, by generous France in the time of the premiership of Briand who promised assistance to the Czech people. When President Wilson sent his inquiry to the Allies concerning their program, their response included, among other things, the independence of the Czechoslovak nation. That was solemnly promised by the Allies and we have the right to ask them to keep their promise. And they *will* keep it.

Later Wilson stated the American program several times; not in a definite fashion but in main outline. He expressed the idea of American democracy according to Lincoln: government of the people, by the people, and for the people that shall not perish from the earth. Wilson expressed what we desire: that no people should be forced to live under a government which it neither wants nor recognizes. On this democratic basis we all will be Americans. The last hour of all monarchs has struck. A government of the people shall not perish from the earth! . . .

I am certain that without a free Bohemia there will be no free America. This is not talking big. Bismarck said: A master of Bohemia is the master of Europe. There is deep truth in this statement. Our significance is that of a bastion against Germany. If we will be free, the Poles, Yugoslavs, and [the Austrian] Italians and Romanians will be free, too. The Habsburg state must disappear. What is Austria? Nine nations and one dynasty which, assisted by army, bureaucracy and nobility, exploits all, even the Germans and Hungarians. America has a choice; it can opt for nine free nations or for one degenerated dynasty. Today it is commonly known what Austria is. The Habsburg idea implies lack of reverence for everything, including religion that has been twisted to nefarious purpose. We Czechs are the real opposite of Austrianism and we must be free. That

will mean freedom also for the big nations, as even England and America are endangered by Germany.

I decidedly refuse to share the fear of those timid people who see a bad omen in the present German [military] successes. Even if we fail and Austria survives, the advance of our nation is better assured than before. Austria has learnt what Czech resistance means and because of this resistance the Czech nation has much improved its reputation. . . .

Not to be afraid, that is the main issue. We Czechs seem not to know how strong we are. We are nine to ten million. Let us clench our teeth and let us say: We won't yield! — and that will be the end of pessimism.

The attachment of the Czech and Slovak immigrants to Masaryk in 1918 was matched by their devotion to President Wilson. It was a genuine reverence, clad, as was the fashion of the time, in a somewhat ornamental style and in an emotional, but sincere, rhetoric. On July 4, 1918, the American Czechs and Slovaks organized what probably were their most joyful and extensive celebrations of American independence and sent a "solemn declaration" to the White House.

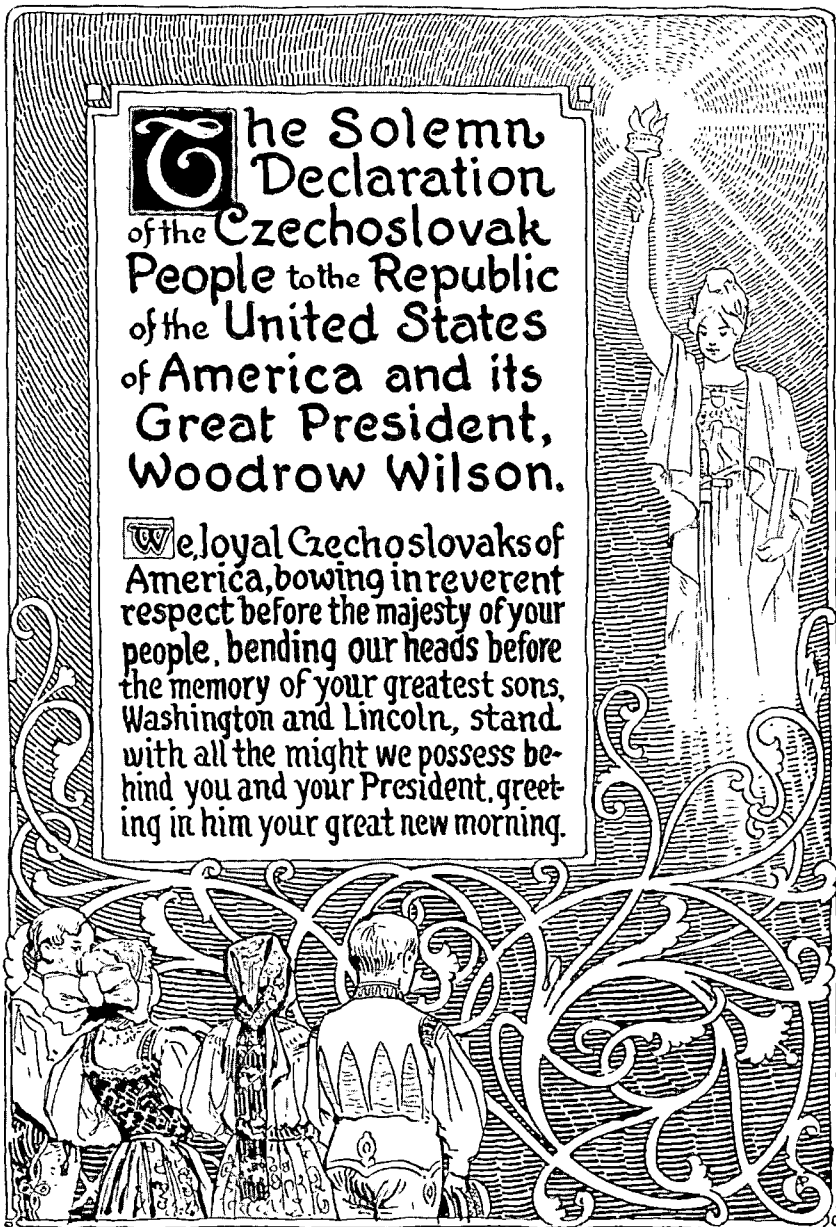
Declaration of Czech and Slovak immigrants, addressed to the American people and President Wilson, July 4, 1918:

We, loyal Czechoslovaks of America, bowing in reverent respect before the majesty of your people, bending our heads before the memory of your greatest sons, Washington and Lincoln, stand with all the might we possess behind you and your President, greeting in him your great new morning.

We came here from the land of suffering and oppression. It is on this account that we hailed America like a rising sun after the dark night of humiliation. And she received us — poor, unknown, insignificant. She received us, and her sun warmed us from the first moment we set our foot on her soil — the big sun of a freer, happier life than that we had lived in our oppressed native land.

We learned to love America, for we are the sons of the land which in the twilight of history was the first in the world to arise and fight the battle of democracy and self-determination of her people. We are the sons of the land which shone like a great beacon light of truth and faith in the life of the XVth Century. When the whole world slept we were awake. And the democratic legions under our great leader of peasant soldiery, Jan Žižka of Trocnov and Jiří of Poděbrad, fought a desperate battle for freedom against the German and Magyar violence and brutal law of might.

We love this land — for the ideals of July 4, 1776, incorporated by her great leaders into the law of life and written indelibly into the hearts



A declaration of the American Czechs and Slovaks addressed to Woodrow Wilson, dated July 4, 1918. Woodrow Wilson Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

of the nation by the blood and sacrifice of her sons; the ideals of democracy which Lincoln set before his united country cleansed of the stain of slavery; those are the heritage of the glorious past and present of the Czechoslovak people as well.

In our blood and in the beating of our hearts, we bore the sacred law of freedom, democracy and brotherhood. It was on this account that our hearts understood the soul of this Great Republic, and that our brothers on the Labe, Vltava and Váh lifted to her their hands and tearful eyes in the awful hour in which the bitter, tormenting fate wrote its threats in their souls. And their appeals were not in vain, for over the vastness of the oceans, over mountains and dark valleys of death there came to the Czechoslovak land a voice like a bugle announcing victory, singing a great Marseillaise of Life and Hope into their bitterness of disappointment and despair.

It was the voice of a man speaking the message of God's brightest angel:

"The world must be made safe for Democracy! The nations shall determine their own destinies. They shall rise from the graves of centuries to do the work of God, which is the work of man, in the language of their mothers and in the traditions of their race."

Thus spoke the man — Woodrow Wilson. Thus, through him, spoke the whole American Nation. Thus spoke God, who has His beginning in the hearts of men and His end in the eternity of worlds and days.

Strengthened by the might of his glorious courage, our brothers in the old country gave their death pledge, April 13, 1918, within the walls of their ancient capital:

"And in firm, unshakable faith in the final victory of our most sacred rights, in faith in the victory of justice, victory of right over might, freedom over slavery, democracy over privilege, and truth over falsehood, we raise our hands today, on the threshold of New Era of world's history, and, by the dear memory of our fathers, before the eyes of the resurrected nation, and at the graves of our fallen, in great harmony of our souls, we promise for today and for all the future: we shall remain where we have taken our stand. We will keep on till we win!"

Repeating this solemn pledge given by our brothers, having on our lips the name of this country and her President, we too lift our hands today, July 4, 1918, as we are gathered under the folds of the flag of this Great Republic, and solemnly pledge ourselves to be loyal and true to the government of the United States and its President.

This is our country. We are and will remain to be true to her in laboring for her, true to her in her struggle, in her sufferings, true to the grave.

Even as the forefathers of America followed Washington, we follow you, our President. Let the millions of eyes of the children of America, looking to you from all corners of this land with immeasurable love and confidence, strengthen your soul and steel you to great deeds.

Millions of eyes of the suffering nations look to you over the oceans — ten millions of our people in Europe, one million of sons and daughters of this land. And in their hearts rings the solemn pledge of faithful allegiance to the country of our adoption, which, like a mother, took us under her protecting roof. The farmers of green Texas, fertile Nebraska, the miners of Pennsylvania and Colorado, the workers of Illinois and the builders of great cities, people of Czechoslovak origin, Bohemian people from forty eight states of the Starry Union, greet their new country in the old glorious song of the Hussite Warriors for Democracy:

Ye Soldiers of our God and of His Law
Him ye shall pray to, Him adore
And He shall crown the fight with victory.
Tis He commands us, recking naught of death,
For love of neighbors to resign our breath
If need be, Courage, therefore, and be men!

Thus we stand here now. Simple, unblest with riches but strong in the faith in our President, in the great American Nation, devoted to both the very depths of our souls, today, on this eventful 4th of July, we let our voices ring in thunder notes far east to the city over which rises the cupola of the capitol, to Washington and its White House, sending our hearts greetings:

Long live the American People!

Czechoslovaks in America

CHAPTER THREE

MASARYK IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The perception of Masaryk as one of the most significant leaders of the Central European nations grew steadily stronger among the American public in 1918. One important group of image makers, the journalists, sided with Masaryk from the beginning of his visit to the United States, and their respect for the Central European visitor helped popularize not only Masaryk personally, but also his political cause. The tone was set by an editorial on the eve of Masaryk's arrival in Chicago.

The editorial "Welcome to Prof. Masaryk," published in the Chicago Daily Tribune on May 4, 1918:

When the history of this war is written it will contain some inspiring chapters devoted to the part played by Bohemia in the conquest of Prussian imperialism. By Bohemia we mean the Bohemian people, a nation which for centuries has maintained its moral and cultural integrity though surrounded by perils and unfriendly pressures. Look at the map and realize that the geographical location of Bohemia with Germany on the north, Hungary on the east, Austria on the south, all neighbors ambitious for power, tells the story of this unconquerable people at a glance.

Few realize how much the spirit of the Bohemians in America has done to check enemy propaganda and stimulate loyalty to our cause among the foreign born of our population. Few realize the courage it has taken for Bohemians at home to oppose Austrian tyranny and keep up the fight for Bohemian self-realization. And today Bohemian troops are fighting with the Italians, while one of the most noteworthy conferences of the year, just held at Rome, offers promise of an Italian-Slav rapprochement which may do more to remove the Balkan threat to future peace than anything yet hoped for.

It is, therefore, at a significant moment that America receives the Bohemian patriot Masaryk. This learned and indomitable leader has escaped from Russia, whence the German influence has driven him. The United States is honored in the presence of this statesman. He brings not

only the latest authoritative observation of the Russian situation but also a knowledge of the Austro-Hungarian and Balkan complex which should be of great value to our government and public in forming correct judgment of events and right policies. Since the great war began he has been an exile but a tireless worker in the allied cause. Americans do not realize that the low blow struck from Russia at Germany, the Galician offensive under Brusiloff in June, 1917 gained a considerable part of its force from the Czechoslovak army organized from prisoners by Prof. Masaryk. Brusiloff said that these men, perfidiously abandoned by the Bolshevik-poisoned Russians, "fought in such a way that the world ought to fall on its knees before them."

Bohemians to the number of 120,000 are prepared to fight again and many already are fighting against Germany.

America welcomes this great leader of the staunch Bohemian people, Thomas Garigue [sic] Masaryk. We feel sure he will feel at home among Americans.

The sympathies of the academic world for Masaryk were expressed by the President of Chicago University, who welcomed Masaryk on May 5, 1918.

Greetings of the President of Chicago University Harry Pratt Judson, addressed to Masaryk, as recorded by the Chicago Daily Tribune, May 6, 1918, and by Slavie, May 7, 1918:

Professor Masaryk! On behalf of the universities of this country and of American public I welcome you as the leader of a people that we know and highly respect. I am happy to say, as I truthfully can, that there can be no better citizens in America today than the Czecho-Slovaks. They are loyal to the flag of these United States, and thousands of their sons and brothers are fighting in France today for the common cause of justice and humanity.

I believe that your work, Professor Masaryk, will be crowned with the success it deserves. The ideals for which your people and mine are contending are essentially the same. Those ideals are liberty and justice, which the Bohemian people love above all things in the world. We welcome you most heartily and assure you that we, the Americans, will do our utmost for the magnificent aim personified by you.

The scene of Masaryk's enthusiastic reception by an overjoyed crowd in Chicago, vividly described by the press, was good proof of Masaryk's popularity among his compatriots. The politicians in Washington were reminded of his political stature. And Masaryk, a man of action, but never a platform orator, was faced with the

need to speak at large public gatherings. He attempted to master this new role with simple eloquence.

Masaryk's arrival in Chicago, as reported by Slavie on May 7, 1918:

Then came the most beautiful moment as the manly figure of our heroic leader rose in the automobile. For a long while he was prevented from speaking by an indescribable hurricane of enthusiastic and stormy ovation which filled Michigan Avenue like the roar of the sea and was carried to the distant streets of the inner city. Obviously moved by this unexpected scene, Masaryk finally began speaking amidst complete silence while everyone present eagerly absorbed his every word.

Prof. Masaryk started in English, thanking Prof. Judson for his welcome. He recalled the past years when he had been invited by Chicago University to deliver lectures on a subject which today fascinates the whole educated world. "I should say," declared our leader, "that [your invitation] was a clear case of political foresight on your part. You are a constant reminder that real, sincere politics must be founded on science. I endeavor always to put my political views on a sound, scientific basis, on what science has taught me. Science is a truth, nothing more or less, and political truth is democracy. That is what the nations of the world are fighting for today — democracy.

Mr. President, you called us, the Czechoslovaks, good citizens of this country and I assure you that we really are. We did not come here just for a better existence, we came to seek freedom and democracy which are expressed by the United States and its great President Woodrow Wilson."

Prof. Masaryk then spoke in Czech to the tens of thousands of his enthusiastic compatriots, saying:

"Brothers, Czechs and Slovaks, I do not know what to tell you as I have already said much but I would like to mention one thing when we are here among ourselves. It was said here that I came from the people and went with the people, and I will tell you now how I got involved in [the present] politics. You have been informed about the events at home since the outbreak of the war. Parliament was suppressed to hinder us in expressing our views, political parties and journals were likewise suppressed, meetings were prohibited and we could not gather together to discuss how to cope with the situation. At that time I was in Germany and my intention was to travel to France and England. After the outbreak of the war I returned to Prague and the first thing I saw was the opposition of the Czech soldiers to military service. They resented going to war against the Slavs, they protested. They did that of their own will, without leaders, without any agitation, just by themselves. When I saw it I said to myself: You, as a Representative, cannot do less! Therefore I went abroad to do the same thing that the Czech soldiers had done: revolt

against Austria and the Habsburgs. That was the popular nature of my politics.

The mendacious Czernin has declared that the Czechs do not support the fight against Austria, that Czech mothers wish Austria's victory. I will prove that Czernin is lying and that the opposite is the truth. I have obtained letters of Czech mothers and I will quote from one of them which is typical of the opinion in Bohemia. A Czech mother writes to her son who became a prisoner of war in Russia: "Your father was buried and so was your brother, and you are not yet in the Czech Army?" This is how a Czech mother calls on her son to go and fight against the Habsburg Austria. This shows the strength of the Czech mothers, the significance of our movement and the thinking of our people at home.

When I was departing from Russia I took leave of 50,000 Czech soldiers who are to be dispatched to France as soon as possible. It is my task to speed up their transport. Before long we will have another 50,000 Czechoslovak soldiers who will be transported to France. That will be the best response to Czernin's lies!

Today we completely mistrust the Habsburgs, we do not want to have anything to do with them, we do not want to hear a word about them. We want our due: total freedom and an independent Czechoslovak state!"

Official Washington received Masaryk as an expert on Russia who, it was hoped, would throw some new light on the enigmatic developments in that huge, disorganized country. His idea of psychological warfare that made use of the antagonism between the Slavic peoples of Austria and the German-oriented government was, however, not always understood by the diplomats.

Memorandum written by Breckinridge Long, Third Assistant Secretary of State, on May 16, 1918:

I lunched to-day with Professor Masaryk, the Bohemian patriot, at Dick Crane's.

His idea of Russia, whence he has just arrived, is far from encouraging. He says that there is no possibility of the Russian people assuming any aggressive actions toward the Germans; that Germany is treating Russia in a very masterful way; that she is appropriating the Eukranian [sic] and southern districts to her own uses and will arrange to get all of the food and supplies now in those districts for herself. He does not know to what extent the supplies exist. He feels that the Germans will not enter either Petrograd or Moscow for two reasons: first, that being political centers they would incur political opposition for having broken flagrantly the Brest-Litovsk treaty, and, second, that if they were in possession of either or both places they would immediately become responsible for the feeding and supplying of the population there resident which they

would be unable to do. Their failure to do so, would be an immediate cause of antagonism as the Bolshevik now are blamed by the people there resident for the failure to provide food. Such provision is impossible alike for Germany and the Bolshevik and Germany can only profit by the antagonism to the Bolshevik on the part of the remainder of the population.

He feels that the spirits which are moving toward independence in various parts of the old Russian Empire, are hopeful signs but says that there is little hope that these independent separate movements will be co-ordinated.

He says that the Red Guard are a source of great embarrassment to the Bolshevik; that the people in other parts of Europe and in this country do not contribute to the Bolshevik any true, logical property and contends that in Bolshevism there is a real thought and a real idea; that the Red Guard are simply violent anarchists who masquerade under the cloak of Bolshevism and do the cause great harm. He says, further, that the only thing on which the Russian people are united is in establishing independent governments, but, that the objects and purposes of the establishment differ in each locality. He likened Russia to a great hospital in which there were a number of sick patients — the patients, for the purpose of the analogy being the independent movements for government — in which hospital the directing genius would order the same kind of medicine for all of the patients, prescribing quinine for each on Monday and some other medicine for all of them on Tuesday.

Butler Wright, Joe Grew, Julius Lay and Basil Miles were there. Grew recited the new Russian litany in the words: "Glory to God on high, on earth peace without annexation or indemnities!!"

Masaryk is particularly interested in spreading propaganda amongst the Checko-Slavs and fomenting them to revolt against Austria. The scheme seems to me impractical. There is little utility in propaganda particularly under a strongly centralized government, where most of the men are in the army, unless it is backed up by some strength and is given some force in the way of military help. Propaganda in itself can do no harm but it can lead to no tangible results.

Professor Masaryk feels that the situation is fraught with the greatest danger to the Allies and expects an early offensive in great force on the Italian front and fears the result of it. He says that Germany is conducting a very dangerous propaganda in Switzerland with the object of disconnecting Italy from the Allies and so estranging them that they will not co-operate properly and then administer a severe defeat upon Italy so that the central powers can turn their whole attention and their combined strength against France.¹⁰

In the press the main features of Masaryk's political portrait were drawn quite clearly. A good characterization of Masaryk was

published on the occasion of his visit to New York at the end of May.

From the article "Embers of Revolt in Austria-Hungary" published in the New York Times on May 26, 1918:

Dr. Thomas G. Masaryk, President of the Czecho-Slovak National Council, which is also a provisional republican Government for Bohemia, recently arrived in Washington to lead the movement. His career reads like that of some potent international figure in our own days of revolution. He has risked his life many times for his principles. He began life as a blacksmith's apprentice, but rose to be Professor of Philosophy at the University of Prague before the war. He is now recognized as the foremost living Slavonic scholar. He early became interested in the democratic movement in Bohemia and soon became its leader. He was elected a member of the Austrian Parliament, but gave it up to devote himself to the political education of his nation. Dr. Masaryk opposed Austria-Hungary, and at the outbreak of the war he was sentenced to death and all his property was seized. He escaped to Paris, where he founded the Czecho-Slovak National Council, which now has branches in all the allied countries.

After Dr. Masaryk's escape his daughter was imprisoned in revenge; she was formerly a settlement worker in this country, and her release was finally brought about through the protest of American women's societies.

In Russia Dr. Masaryk organized the Czecho-Slovak prisoners into an army of 50,000, which he expects to see transported to France. Some of the men are already at Vladivostok. The main problem is shipping. Dr. Masaryk has just come from Japan, where he entered into negotiations for the transportation of the Czecho-Slovaks to this country and is encouraged at the prospect. As a demonstration to the people of this country of the ardor of the men of Bohemia for the democratic cause, Dr. Masaryk is desirous of seeing the army cross this country on its way to France.

The editorial "Dr. Masaryk," published in the New York Times on May 27, 1918:

Eyewitness of the impressive parade of Czech, Slovak, Yugoslav, Polish, and Russian societies which passed in review on Saturday night before the balcony where stood Thomas G. Masaryk, head of the Provisional Government of the Czechoslovak revolution, might have perceived that the distinguished statesman and scholar who is now visiting the men and women of his race in this country was something more than the leader of a single nationality. Those who from the galleries of Carnegie Hall shouted "Long Live our first President!" expressed what is rather more than a probability, if the defeat of the Central Powers is as sweeping as is hoped; but in the demonstrations of half a dozen Slav races for the

leader of one it was possible to recognize Masaryk as the emblem of the new Slav spirit.

The old Pan Slavism, which, despite the collaboration of many honorable and sincere men of liberal tendencies, served in effect little but the interests of the Romanoff dynasty and imperialistic Russia, died with the passing of that dynasty and the collapse of that Russia. Yet these times which see Russia fallen from her high estate have seen also the coming together of the westernmost Slav nations, the Czechoslovaks, the Jugoslavs, and the Poles, who have found a basis for alliance not only in kindred blood and kindred culture, but in their identical demands for national unity and freedom from Hapsburg and Hohenzollern. The western Slav nations, those who have been most affected by Latin culture, who have had to maintain their national individuality by hard struggle against heavy odds, have based their democracy in education and in the cultivation of an intelligent patriotism. So while Russia, endowed suddenly with a complete liberty for which her people were unprepared, stumbles and falls in the clutch of the German, the western Slavs are only the more determined, the more bitterly opposed to alien domination, the more firmly resolved to end German rule by complete victory in this war. And Russia, trying hard to be democratic, is looking to the westward to get new inspiration from the spirit of the Slav races who are fighting for freedom and who know what to do with it.

It is this sort of Slavic consciousness, a Pan Slavism, if it be that, which has no imperialistic ambitions, no desire to interfere with other nations, that is represented by Masaryk; for Bohemia has led the other nations in the fight against the Germans, and Masaryk is the leader of Bohemia. Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler compared him, not without reason, to Mazzini and Venizelos, and the message which he gave to New York might have been spoken by either of them. "Democracy is political truth" — this is the utterance of a man whose faith is democracy and who is seeing it work out in practice among his people. His demand for liberty was not for the Czechoslovaks alone, but for all the multitude of peoples in Eastern Europe who have been given over to the Germans by Russia's downfall.

In the face of this position of the westernmost and most cultured Slav nations, now taking the lead of their race from fallen Russia, what becomes of the Slav peril which was such a terror to the Germans at the beginning of the war? The only peril left, from the German point of view, is this — that the Slavs may win the right to rule themselves instead of being ruled by Germans.

On May 27, 1918, Masaryk, certainly remembering his lectures of the summer of 1902, spoke at the University of Chicago. This time he presented himself as a revolutionary leader with human-

istic goals. The only preserved record of his lecture was made by a Czech-American reporter.

Masaryk's speech at Chicago University, reported by Slavie on May 31, 1918:

The program of the Allies is quite different from Germany's program. The Allies are fighting not only for democracy but also for the rights of all small nations. German imperialism aims at dominating all other nations. This German idea of imperialism is identical to the imperialism of the old Roman Empire. The Kaiser believes that his ancestors became emperors by God's grace and that God installed him as their successor.

This idea is the medieval idea that there must be only one Emperor and one nation in Europe and that this nation is Germany. This is the German imperialism. For this reason the Hohenzollerns and the Habsburgs consider themselves representatives of the European people. . . .

The Allies support the demands of small nations and this attitude is quite correct. The task of the Allies is to organize the small nations and Russia. One of these small nations is the Czechoslovak nation. The geographical situation of this nation in itself shows why it took the side of the Allies. It has been said that the master of Bohemia is the master of Europe. We have defended ourselves against Germany for many centuries and the Germans declare through their Mommsens that the only way of dealing with us is by eliminating us, Germanizing us. They say they have to crush the hard Czech skulls. Yes, we have hard skulls, we are not willing to succumb.

Before opening its way to Baghdad, Germany must first solve the Slav problem, and the Czechs are the first to be dealt with. If the Czechs can withstand the German pressure, the Yugoslavs, Poles, and Italians can withstand it too; we have united ourselves with these peoples to be able to resist more forcefully. No one should think that Austria disagrees with Germany and would be willing to turn against Germany in any way. In this war Austria cooperates with Germany in complete harmony, Austria is the German avantgarde.

America joined the Allies. The American idea is the democratic idea. America recognizes the rights of all nations. This is manifested in its constitution, in the speeches of President Wilson, and in the famous statement of Lincoln: "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people. . . ."

The Germans do not intend to rely on their own strength after the war, they want to rule and exploit other nations. We Slavs are peaceful, but at present we are for the war to the victorious end. I know the teaching of Tolstoy and many times I have argued with him about the impossibility of his principle of non-resistance against evil. And as I do not believe in this principle, I am for the war.

On our part the aim of this war is the fight for humanity. The principle

of humanity must be applied; the principle of unity, compassion, and love of neighbor must be realized. I came to the conclusion that the basic question is: Jesus or Caesar. Caesar, as described by Mommsen, is a rude, imperious, absolute dictator. I will always prefer Jesus and humanity. These are the ideals of the Slavs and I believe that they will become the ideals of the German people against whom we fight, after they have recognized the true value of humanity. We must bring the German people to this aim and we will do it.

How was Masaryk seen by his contemporaries in America in 1918? The impression he made in his personal appearances has been recorded by American journalists.

From the article "Lighting the Slav Bomb in Austria" by H.F. Sherwood, published in the New York Tribune on June 2, 1918:

What was there about the man which had made him such a popular hero? Was it his magnetic presence? The spare man who stood before them was sixty-eight years old. A thin gray mustache and beard scarcely hid the sensitive lips. The fine contour of his head was easily followed, for his hair was a thin fringe. There he stood, in somber evening dress, the color mounting to his cheeks occasionally as he glanced through his glasses out over the tumultuous throng, a quiet, scholarly looking man.

Perhaps he possessed oratorical powers which would sway men as an artist swings his brush.

He began slowly in a low tone of voice. It rose a little as he proceeded, but seldom did it take on the forceful tones of the trained and confident orator. He was never at a loss, however, for a word. Occasionally he stroked his face thoughtfully, passing his hand from his eyes downward over his mouth to his chin. That seemed strange for a speaker in Carnegie Hall, where it is difficult enough to be heard under any circumstances. Evidently he was not striving for oratorical effect. In fact, what he said smacked of the scholar in the study. He was not a great speechmaker such as we expect in a democracy to be. Only once did he exhibit his power over his audience. For a moment he addressed those before him in his and their native tongue. He spoke with the same slow, careful choosing of words. Suddenly raising his arm to a horizontal position, he pointed straight out with the index finger. A single sentence accompanied this gesture. It was as if a conductor had raised his baton and his chorus had risen to its feet in front of him. The great audience before him rose as one man and stood in serried ranks, obedient to his single word.

Was his message the key to his popularity? It seemed as if he delivered a simply told tale. It was his idea of why the war could not be won for the Allies unless Austria-Hungary was dismembered, and the different small nations comprising it each had an opportunity for freedom such as



Masaryk among the volunteers in the Czechoslovak Army Camp in Stamford, Conn., in September 1918. The dedication is to American journalist George Creel, who was chairman of the Committee on Public Information. Photograph from the collections of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Common folk



America possesses, founded upon the principles of the Declaration of Independence.

From the article "The New Masters of Siberia," published in the New York Sun on July 14, 1918:

The head of the council and idol of all the Bohemians and Slovaks is a slight, scholarly and rather frail appearing man of perhaps 60, with remarkably alert and perceptive eyes. He speaks literally perfect English, quietly and (from choice, not from difficulty) slowly. He has lectured in this country at the University of Chicago and elsewhere; and Mrs. Masaryk is American by birth.

It is said of him that in boyhood he was apprenticed to be a blacksmith, and that in 1877 he threw himself into a river at Leipsic to rescue a woman from drowning. Nothing about his physical aspect suggests such a history now. But he had an exciting and adventurous time of it in escaping, first from Austria-Hungary to Allied territory at the beginning of the war, and more recently from Russia to this country.

He had been proscribed by the Austrian Imperial Government, and would have been executed if he had been caught. As it was, his property was confiscated and his daughter, Miss Alice Masaryk, imprisoned. Her release was procured through energetic action by American women's societies, to which she was known for social service work she had done in Chicago.

When Breckinridge Long wrote his second memorandum dealing with Masaryk, the United States had already recognized Masaryk's movement as the *de facto* government of Czechoslovakia. The subjects of the conversation between Long and Masaryk were economic assistance and the situation of the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia. Masaryk used the opportunity to reemphasize his concept of the independence of small nations as a necessary and useful principle of international order.

Memorandum written by Breckinridge Long, Third Assistant Secretary of State, on September 17, 1918:

Tonight Dr. Masaryk came to my home at 9:30 at my request for a conference. My object was to direct his attention to McCormick instead of confining his attention to Baruch. My conception of the President's plan is that McCormick, Baruch and Hurley should co-operate. Baruch seems to have gotten started first and to have, either intentionally or accidentally, eliminated everyone else. I tried to steer Masaryk to McCormick and told him that when he received his money from this Government it would be necessary for him to co-operate with McCormick in

spending it; and that Baruch could buy but that he, with McCormick's approval, would have to pay for the purchases intended for the Czechs. I tried to get the President's plan working a little better than it appears to be working now.

After we had finished that he talked at length about his Czechs, their distress in the Volga and Ekaterinberg districts, the preponderance there of German and Austrian prisoners, the state of physical exhaustion of the Czechs and their need for moral and physical support. It is all borne out by our cables of to-day's and yesterday's receipts.

About the President's answer to the Peace Proposal of Austria, he was enthusiastic. He characterized it as "mise en scene".

He then took up Germany, her 80,000,000 of population of German stock and the 160,000,000 of other than German stock she ruled — Austrians, Bohemians, Hungarians, Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Roumanians and fragments of Italy and France. He likened the non-German population to the negro of America, in that they were the slaves and servants of the Germans. He argued that the dismemberment of Austria and the isolation of Germany by the establishment around her of small independent states — Poland, Bohemia, Roumania, etc., would remove all cause of war from Europe by releasing those 160,000,000 of peoples for independent and constructive work instead of keeping them repressed and under hostile influences.

He said that the solution of the future peace of the world was now possible and the scene of the real struggle lay between the Baltic and the Bosphorus because Germany would evacuate Belgium and give up Alsace-Lorraine (not to France but as an independent state), and that if the national inspirations and human rights of the peoples of the east and south of Germany were realized there could be no more trouble.

He denied that the history of the world proved that small nations could not exist and cited Europe with 27 nations (not including the German states) only seven of which, Russia, Germany, Austria, France, England, Italy and Spain, were large ones.¹¹

Masaryk's last speech in America, shortly before his return home as the elected president of the new state, was delivered at the Lawyers Club in New York. Masaryk spoke about his own feelings, about the reconstruction of Europe and about American assistance to the European nations. This little-known speech shows Masaryk at his best as the champion of cooperation among democracies.

Masaryk's speech at the Lawyers Club in New York on November 16, 1918:

My American friends, not only to-day but sometime since I have been

asked, "How do you feel, now that Germany and Austria are defeated; how do you feel being the head of a new government and state? You must feel very well. You must be happy."

I do not know whether I am happy, and I could not describe my feelings. I have the feeling of responsibility. I should say I have not the time to rejoice because I know I stand before a huge problem, and I am conscious of the responsibility, not only for my people but for all our nations with whom we will be in union and co-operation. Not one of us must fail. That is what I feel, and I am sure that all our nations in the East feel the same.

The task of this war, the aim of future peace, is to restore Eastern Europe for those who know history. I can say in one word what is to be done. The old Eastern question is to be solved. I mean by that, if we speak of reconstruction in France, in England, in Italy and Belgium, there is nothing to be reconstructed. There must be, of course, rebuilt what has been annihilated and wasted — buildings, churches, villages — but France has her own institutions, her own civilization, her government, her state, her policy. Not so in Poland or in Czecho-Slovakia or with the South Slavs. We have not only to rebuild but to create. We have to form a state. We have to settle the boundaries. We have to establish new governments; find the best form of government and administration, and we must lay the foundation for future civilization. That is only in the East of Europe where this reconstruction work is waiting for the workers of foreign nations and for workers of Europe and the new nations who are willing to help. The aim of this war is that these nations which have been oppressed by Prussia, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and by old Russia — all these nations must be liberated. You have a peculiar zone of smaller nations going from Finland down to Greece — eighteen in all — and all of these eighteen nations must be reconstructed, liberated and the foundation of future peace must be laid here. That is the great task.

We must have a free Poland. That means not only like the Germans wish to have it — the part of Russian Poland — but of course Austrian Poland and German Poland too. Not only a free Poland; we must have a free Czecho-Slovakia. We must have a free and united Rumania; we must have a free and united Jugo-Slovakia [sic]. The Italians of Austria-Hungary — excuse me if I speak of Austria-Hungary, that, is of the past — I say, the Italians must be redeemed. And then the nations in Western Russia, the Balkans — all these nations must be free. On what principle? The principle of democracy. That means on the principle of nationality also. The principle of nationality is not a kind of modern European Chauvinism. No. Nationality means something quite different. It is the endeavor of every nation — I say of every individual man — to unite with all mankind. We don't strive only for the uniting of smaller nations, but at the same time we are working for true internationalism. We do not like to have a Chinese wall around these liberated nations, but we say — and that is our first national platform — the nation is the natural order of mankind,

not the State of Europe — the European State. Take Prussia, Austria, the old Czaristic regime, wherever you look it is a state of dynasties, and that is the practical dynasty state — an autocracy. We wish to have a democratic state and such a state can only be founded on the nations. Not a dynasty any more; the nations are the real aim of administrative work. That is the new task in Europe. Mankind, as your President has declared, must be liberated and President Wilson says that is an American principle. Yes: but not only American, it is the principle of all nations and of all mankind. We accept it and we will live according to this noble general principle.

You speak, my dear friends, of helping us and, as my neighbor to the left expressed it, you must help by cash. That is true in some sense, I say to some extent. But it is not only money which governs and rules nations and governments, which shapes the true relations of all mankind, it is the heart which unites nations and all mankind. I am happy to say I found this heart here in the United States, and I am happy to use this occasion now to thank you American citizens for the sympathy you have shown not only to my nation but to all the nations who have been oppressed and who fought with you for liberty and freedom. Your government, your President, and the whole nation of the United States helped us and with cash. I can tell you that yesterday I signed a document giving us a loan. It is therefore not only sympathy but practical sympathy which your government and your people have shown to us. Of course, I know America well enough to know that you like to help if a man helps himself too. Be sure, American friends, we won't bother you in vain. What we can do ourselves, we will do, and if we come and ask for help you can be sure that we need it, and as I told you we will do our best to help ourselves quickly.

I suppose I dare say our nation showed that we know how to help ourselves. Under the most indescribable circumstances we have formed an army. We have revolted against Austria-Hungary, and though I am humble enough, I dare say, my American friends, that it was our nation and its revolution in Austria-Hungary which brought about this downfall of Austria-Hungary. Be sure of it, we won't ask your help — I repeat it — if we can help ourselves.

One of the speakers pointed to the fact that it is our duty — and I presume it is the duty of the National Government — to destroy anarchy, not to let anarchy grow. Yes, that is true. I know, and I am going home now thinking all the while what to do. I have a plan. I feel my responsibility that our country may show that freedom is not anarchy. I do not say that I will manage by repression; no, gentlemen. I suppose the best means to do away with some of the mistakes of freedom is to have more freedom. Yes, freedom in every country, in every nation must develop. No nation is free yet. We are growing. Democracy is in the very beginning. I imagine democracy is not older than 200 years, whereas autocracy has had thousands and thousands of years to develop and organize itself.

Democracies are in the beginning, and I know these nations in the East are now in the beginning of their democratic era. We will be careful, and I would say we will be sensible enough not to misuse liberty; and so I see before me the great task of working in that way with our government, that our republic be a member of the European peoples and of all mankind.

It is not any more a question of German Mittel-Europa as has been pointed out. No: we all have now the problem of liberating mankind. Mankind as a unit, as a whole, must be organized and the sense of this war is what those people who provoked the war had no idea it would be. We say too, unite the nations closer and unite all mankind. We in Bohemia and Slovakia — I may point to this geographical fact, a kind of a symbol if you like — we are the nearest to the United States. If you come from the West to Europe you will find after your friends in France and England and then Germany — the first nation which loves your nation is Bohemia. Go a step farther and you will find the Poles; you will find the Rumanians; you will find the South Slavs. All these nations look to you as their friend. I feel like that. I feel that I am at home though not a citizen of your noble nation. I may finish this my improvization — I did not know that I would have to speak — I may finish with the assurance that my nation as well as all other nations — the Poles, the Rumanians, the South Slavs, and the Italians, now redeemed, are thankful to you, to your Government and to your President.

You promised help. My American friends, I should say the aim we have, and you can help us, is a very interesting task. With a fair knowledge of Europe and of this European question you can make much. Your position is unique in this war. I take it from a practical, so to say, human standpoint. You are not in Europe. You have no territorial aims and you cannot have them. Every nation in Europe must know and does know that it is the principle of democracy you have been fighting for and you are standing for. It is a wonderful thing for a great nation to fight and work for a great principle. If it has been said "Noblesse oblige," I would say a democracy obliges, and democracy obliges you, my friends. You must help us. I do not ask you to help us — you must! It is your duty because you are and must be the best democrats and we will join you in democracy.¹²

Masaryk left New York on November 20, 1918, never to return. A newspaper report described his departure and recorded his farewell message.

The article "Dr. T.G. Masaryk Sails," published in the New York Times on November 21, 1918:

Among the passengers who sailed for Europe yesterday was Dr.

Thomas G. Masaryk, President of the Czechoslovak Republic, who was accompanied by his daughter, Miss Olga Masaryk, and Jaroslav Cisar.

The President of the new republic wore a gray overcoat, soft hat to match, and a pepper-and-salt suit. He said that, from the port at which he arrived in Europe, he would start almost immediately for Paris, and go from there to Switzerland. He expects to reach Prague, the Czechoslovak capital, in three weeks where he will go before the Assembly and take the oath of office. Before the ship, on which he sailed, left her pier at noon, Dr. Masaryk said:

"Before leaving this country I wish to say a word of special acknowledgment and gratitude to the press of America. It is the truly democratic spirit of the American press which I learned to understand and appreciate. I am greatly indebted to it for the help so generously given to me in my endeavor to bring before the American people the political problem of my own and the other small nations of mid-Europe."

"I do not feel entitled to address the whole American nation, but I trust to be permitted to say through the press that our nation will always be grateful to America for her warm and sincere sympathy with our cause. Our new republic will forever consider the great American commonwealth her elder sister."

"May the friendship and the community of interest of the two democracies, in co-operation with the other democracies of the world, furnish a firm basis for the establishment of a new order in a transformed world."

CHAPTER FOUR

MASARYK AND AMERICAN IDEALS

America meant more to Masaryk than the powerful, prosperous country whose entry into the war turned the scales in favor of the Allies. Masaryk regarded America as a *spiritual* force. The year 1918 was the culmination of his personal experiences with American political thinking. Working in close contact with American journalists, scholars, diplomats, and statesmen, he now saw more clearly than before the basic similarities between American traditions and the democratic aspirations of oppressed European nations. The relevance of American ideals for the reconstruction of Europe became one of the most frequent themes of his speeches, interviews, articles, and official memoranda.

From Masaryk's speech at the American Unitarian Association in Boston, reported by the Christian Science Monitor on May 21, 1918:

Now the democracy evolved by President Wilson, whereby the small nations are recognized as forming part of one international democracy, is the direct converse of the theory of the Central Empires. It embodies the ideas of religious freedom and humanity. It aims to organize all mankind, and relies upon an agreement of all nations great and small; and while Germany bases her whole policy upon force and militarism, the democratic nations will not allow it, except as a defensive measure. . . .

History tells us that while many small nations have arisen, only four or five big ones have developed. History is not for the suppression of the small nations. And under the newest theory of democracy that springs from the American people, you must recognize the small nation just as you recognize the individual. That is what President Wilson emphasizes when he speaks of the equality of all nations.

It is the American idea of a liberated mankind, that nations should not be forced to live under a sovereignty against their will. They should be allowed to seek refuge in the equality of nations which is preached

by President Wilson, which was preached by President Lincoln and which we regard as the real Kingdom of God.

Masaryk addressing the American public in an interview published by the New York Times on May 26, 1918:

Think of your time of struggle, when Washington was hard-pressed. Think what it meant to you when France came to your aid. That is what we ask of you today, to come to our help, and at the same time to take a step that will lead to the defeat of Germany. . . .

Now is the greatest opportunity in the history of the world to make a stroke for democracy and against imperialism by freeing the peoples of Austria-Hungary and of Eastern Europe from domination by foreign races. A peace aimed to give these peoples their long-sought rights is the only one that can endure, because it will rest on justice. It is an opportunity to duplicate your own great Revolution and its benefits many times over.

Masaryk was in Pittsburgh, meeting with his compatriots and other Slavic groups, when he received the news of an official declaration by the American government which was the first step toward the diplomatic recognition of his movement. In his response he spoke of "Americanization" as a welcome and beneficial process.

Masaryk's statement in Pittsburgh, reported by the Pittsburgh Daily Dispatch on May 31, 1918:

I am happy to note the recognition of the United States Government given by today's declaration of the Secretary of State telling that the Government of the United States has earnest sympathy with the national aspirations of the Czecho-Slovaks and the Jugo-Slavs. Yes, we accept with joy this declaration, the more so because, though being Czecho-Slovaks or Jugo-Slavs by birth, we all, even I for my part, can say we are Americans already. And if you speak of Americanization today, there is an Americanization going on all over the world, because all nations must accept the principle of liberty proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence, proclaimed by Washington, by Lincoln, by Wilson and by all Americans.

Yes, if we are here in the United States and rejoice in the principles of the Government of this country, we hope that soon there will be not only the United States of America, but a united mankind of all nations, great and small.

Masaryk's formal request for recognition was submitted to the State Department in a detailed memorandum at the end of August

1918. A whole section of this memorandum was devoted to the meaning of the American recognition which Masaryk, for specific reasons, regarded as more significant than the earlier recognition by France and England.

From Masaryk's memorandum "The Recognition of The Czechoslovak National Council and of the Czechoslovak Army," dated August 31, 1918:

We desire the recognition by the United States for reasons of principle: we consider the great American republic to be the mother of modern democracy, and therefore her recognition is of special value to us.

I would especially point to the fact that the development of American democracy out of the church organization (the well-known works of Borgeaud, Jellinek, etc.) to us Czechs must be sympathetic; the history of Bohemia since John Huss and the Hussite movement up to the present is permeated with a strong religious element, which brings us into a close spiritual relationship not only with England (the relation of Huss to Wycliff) but also with America. For a long time America has been to us the practical ideal of freedom — more so, that more than a million of our compatriots found their new homes in this country.

We invoked the principles of the Declaration of Independence for our revolution: on their basis the United States have given their recognition to different revolutionary movements — and we are convinced that there is not and cannot be a more just case before the political forum of the world than our case against the Hapsburgs. The United States simply cannot accept Austrianism, for that is a denial and a contradiction of the Declaration of Independence and of the American ideals as formulated by the best men of America. President Wilson in his second Inaugural Address (March 5th, 1917) declared that the American principles (the principles "in which we have been bred") are the "principles of liberated mankind" and that "the essential principle of peace is the actual equality of nations" — that "governments derive all their just power from the consent of the governed," and that "no other power should be supported by the common thought, purpose or power of the family of nations." And in his statement on Russia (June 9th, 1917) we read that "the people must be forced under no sovereignty under which it does not wish to live." America and Europe have to choose between the liberation of seven oppressed nations and the degraded, medieval Hapsburg dynasty, covering its crimes with the sacrilegious pretention of being a chosen instrument of God. . . .¹³

After the recognition by the U.S. government had been granted, Masaryk, speaking with a reporter, explained his situation and the importance of the American decision.

Masaryk's statement on the American recognition, published in the New York Times on September 8, 1918:

The recognition of the Czechoslovak nation by the United States we appreciate very much . . . because of the position of the United States as the oldest and greatest democracy. That is the emotional side. But the recognition has also its practical meaning.

This war has brought forth quite new international and diplomatic relations and situations. One of the peculiarities springing out of this happens to concern myself. As a private man I would be Commander in Chief of a big army, in fact of three big armies. I have to negotiate with the Governments at war with Germany and Austria-Hungary. The United States promises to send our boys help — the question arises to whom shall the United States send it, to a private enterprise, and to me as head of that enterprise or to a regular military force? . . .

None of us Czechoslovaks thought of self-aggrandizement. From the first our efforts were to fight the Germans and Austrians in their attempt to occupy Russia. We made our resistance felt, and this practical reason and the new international situation have been the inducements for the countries at war with Germany to recognize us. Besides, America was herself evolved out of revolution, so we could naturally expect America would appreciate our struggle for freedom and liberty.

And now with the recognition, the help which the United States promised us becomes direct — is legalized. Furthermore, as all the Allies depend to a great extent on America, the recognition of the United States is of the highest practical value. The great effect on our plans is not in any change in them, for I do not see any notable ones, but in the firmness that is given them, the promise that our national purpose is to be realized.

The American Declaration of Independence, mentioned in the memorandum of August 31, 1918, was considered by Masaryk to be increasingly meaningful toward the end of the war for its symbolic value and as a practical appeal to resist oppression. In October 1918, Masaryk prepared the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence, which was clearly inspired by the American declaration of 1776. The Czechoslovak declaration (whose official version is in English) was drafted by Masaryk, edited with the assistance of several American friends, and released by Masaryk on October 18, 1918, as the final solemn act of his revolutionary movement. The acceptance of American ideals, expressed by Masaryk in his draft, was slightly amended, but remained substantially unchanged, in the preliminary text and in the final version of the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence.

From Masaryk's Czech draft of the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence:

We accept the democratic principles of America and France; we accept the American principles as laid down by president Wilson: the principles of liberated mankind — of the actual equality of nations — and of governments deriving all their just powers from the consent of the governed. These are the principles of Lincoln, of the Declaration of Independence and of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. For these principles the Czech nation shed its blood in the memorable Hussite Wars at a time when America was still unknown; in this war our nation is again shedding its blood for these principles on the side of America, France, Belgium, Great Britain, Serbia, Russia, Italy and Japan.

From the preliminary text of the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence, sent to Secretary of State Lansing:

We accept the modern democratic principles of America and France; we accept the American principles as laid down by President Wilson: the principle of liberated mankind — of the actual equality of nations — and of governments deriving all their just power from the consent of the governed. We accept these principles of Lincoln, of the Declaration of Independence, and of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. For these principles the Czech nation shed its blood in the memorable Hussite wars, at a time when America was still undiscovered; in this war our nation, with the Allies, is again shedding its blood for these principles.

From the final version of the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence, sent to President Wilson:

We accept and shall adhere to the ideals of modern democracy, as they have been the ideals of our nation for centuries. We accept the American principles as laid down by President Wilson: the principles of liberated mankind — of the actual equality of nations — and of governments deriving all their just powers from the consent of the governed. We, the nation of Comenius, cannot but accept these principles expressed in the American Declaration of Independence, the principles of Lincoln, and of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. For these principles our nation shed its blood in the memorable Hussite Wars five hundred years ago, for these same principles, beside her Allies in Russia, Italy, and France, our nation is shedding its blood today.¹⁴

At a celebration of the Fourth of July in Prague in 1919, attended by a group of Czech-American soldiers, Masaryk described his leaning toward American democracy in a brief speech which had a strong personal note.

Masaryk's speech on July 4, 1919, in Prague:

Mr. Minister, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Ladies and Gentlemen. Permit me at this auspicious moment to address a few words to our Czech soldiers from America. Boys and friends, you have heard the American Declaration of Independence and you have heard Mr. Crane explain this declaration, what it means too for our future relations between Czechoslovakia and the United States. I could not say more and could not express it better, but I will take the liberty of recalling my first visit last year to the United States. It was in May that I came to Washington and I was invited to stay in the house of my friend Mr. Crane's father. With Mr. Crane and some friends I had the privilege of visiting the battlefield of Gettysburg and I think I can say I was never more deeply impressed, and what impressed me most was this, that the battlefield is one museum of memorials: every soldier, officer or man who fought and fell there is commemorated either by a separate monument or by name on a general monument. In this way was democracy honoured. Not only the high general, but all who had lost their life for the liberty of the United States are unforgotten. And then I came to the cemetery and read the eternal message of Lincoln, I read of that true "government of the people, by the people, for the people" that never shall perish from off the earth. This message touched me deeply and I realized what American democracy means — (I say American democracy, for there are as many democracies as there are nations and states) and I accepted the principles of American democracy. I can say that these principles have been and ever will be the policy of my government and my life. They appeal to our people, our people have adopted them as their own and through them we shall for ever be united with the American people, united with them in the spirit of liberty and democracy. You, boys, are returning to your homes. We shall never forget what you have done for us. We have been and are united in endeavor for liberty and I hope that one day I may once more meet with you out there in your adopted country. Do not forget that the same ideals, the same principles ever unite us. Do not forget us, as we shall never forget you.¹⁵

And this is Masaryk's summary account of his relationship with America, translated from his book of war reminiscences.

From Masaryk's book Světová revoluce (The Making of a State):

I have had close personal and family ties with America. Since 1878 I have visited the country repeatedly. From the very beginning of my scientific and political career American democracy and the development of American civilization have aroused lively interest in me.

There is democracy and democracy. It is clearly evident from the latest historical studies of the development of the American Republic that democracy in the United States was built on religious foundations. Toc-

queville pointed rightly to the significance of the moral influence of religion on the American Republic. The considerable fragmentation of America into the most diversified sects weakened neither the Republic nor the democracy. The sectarianism is, indeed, a proof of both religious energy and modern individualization. Even the Catholics in America, as in England, are more robust religiously than in the Catholic states of Europe, due to the influence of a Protestant environment.

This religious factor was of special importance at the beginning of the American Republic. Inadequate communication in a huge, sparsely populated territory impeded the creation of an effective administrative center. The various religious communities and Churches, as organized bodies, became, therefore, very significant as unifying elements.

The American Republic is the work of pioneers. These energetic men demonstrated their vigor by breaking away from familiar surroundings. In America they were able to survive by still greater effort and hard work. The pioneers sought freedom and prosperity. The American Republic, even today, serves mainly an economic purpose and ideal, all the more because it is not confronted with political and nationality problems like those in Europe. The quests for independence and Puritanism were the real religion of the pioneers. The Constitution, phrased in the spirit of the rationalist philosophy of law then prevalent in France and England, is the true code of pioneer economics. By emigration the American colonies were alienated from the English dynasty. Being without a dynasty they had no aristocracy, no army, no militarism. The Republic was founded on organized religious communities, and its founders were not conquering soldiers but pioneers, mainly farmers, then traders and the necessary lawyers.

Thus the American state is different from the European states, namely from Prussia, Austria, and Russia; even the French Republic inherited the institutions of the old regime (like aristocracy and the army) which never existed in America. The American state developed and acquired a land the size of a continent, yet in the process it strengthened its original characteristics. During the gradual conquest of the West and the South the pioneer spirit remained a constant moral and political factor.

On many occasions, and also in the cemetery on the Gettysburg battlefields, I devoted much thinking to the idea that our [Czechoslovak] state would resemble America in that we, too, have no dynasty of our own and dislike a foreign dynasty; we have no aristocracy, no army and no militaristic tradition. On the other hand, owing to the tradition of our Reformation we do not have an intimate relationship with the Church — a minus point unless we realize that a democracy and a republic must be based on morality. Our restored state, our democratic republic must be based on an idea, it must have its own reason for existence that will be universally recognized.

The American constitution has some noteworthy peculiarities. Mainly the presidency. The President is accorded great power by the constitution.

It is the President who selects the government, and from among the members of the legislature. After the English fashion, the American President is *de facto* an elective constitutional king. The American example could indicate the way of correcting the deficiencies of parliamentarism against which protests are now raised everywhere, mainly its disunity caused by the growth and the splitting up of parties. Another significant principle is the subjecting of the constitutional validity of laws to the judgment of the Supreme Court.

The federal character of the American Republic and its democracy also gives us a good political lesson. It is the very opposite of European centralism which has nowhere proved to be successful. Even the small Swiss Republic shows the advantages of autonomy and federalism. But American federalism and autonomy must defend themselves against the centralization that is developing strongly to the detriment of autonomy. The desired harmony between the state governments and federal government has not yet been attained, nor have the technical shortcomings of this lack of harmony, such as diversity in legislation, needless overlapping, etc., been overcome.

In Europe, especially in Germany and Austria, "Americanism" is often criticized as a one-sidedly mechanical and materialistic view of life. One speaks about the almighty dollar, the lack of political sense, and the inadequacy of science and education. This one-sided, exaggerated criticism is especially unjustified coming from German quarters. As if public life in Germany were not dominated by mechanistic views, by a militaristic state machine! In Germany, materialism has triumphed both in philosophy and in practical life, and German science and philosophy have subordinated themselves to Prussian and pan-German rule of force. . . .

I like American culture and I think my sympathy is shared by our immigrants who are a considerable part of our population. In America we can and should learn not only about machines, but also about love of freedom and the independence of a human being. Political freedom in a republic is the mother of that typically American sincerity and openness in human relations in the social, political, and economic spheres. The ideal of humanity is realized in practice in exemplary hospitals. A philanthropic and generous use of money has developed in America. In many respects America is creating fine examples of a future culture.¹⁶

CHAPTER FIVE

MASARYK AND WILSON

The relationship between Masaryk and Wilson was based on political and intellectual sympathy rather than personal warmth. There was nothing private or intimate in their meetings. Masaryk's visits to the White House were always official and formal, leaving no room for purely personal conversations. Yet it seems that if it were not for the extraordinary circumstances of war which surrounded the two men with a hectic atmosphere, a true personal friendship could have developed. In the deeper layers of their correspondence, elements of warm interest, even mutual admiration, can be detected. For the historical record, however, the contact between Masaryk and Wilson remains a working relationship. The two main tasks which both Wilson and Masaryk had on their minds in 1918 were winning the war and laying foundations for a lasting peace.

The first message, addressed by Masaryk directly to Wilson, arrived in Washington on December 13, 1917. Masaryk sent a telegram from Kiev after he had heard the United States declaration of war on Austria-Hungary. He was convinced that America's full participation in the war against the Central Powers was the logical conclusion of a necessary development.

Masaryk's telegram to Wilson, undated, sent from Kiev and received in Washington on December 13, 1917:

The declaration of war on Austria-Hungary will be welcomed by European democracy. Quasi neutral position of the United States toward Austria was missing link in logical chain of your exquisite explanation of war. Austria is the typical medieval state being exploiting company of dynasty, army and bureaucracy, aristocracy and clergy. Allies aim at regeneration of Europe, liberation of small nations and strengthening of

democracy. Austria is the very negation of nationality and democracy. Austria is organization of violence, minority of Germans and Magyars oppressing Slav and Latin majority. Europe has to choose between degenerated dynasty and freedom of nine nations, and ruling Germans and Magyars will be taught to reason if forced to abstain from exploiting other nations. Polish Deputy revealed in Reichsrat amazing fact that during the war 30,600,000 [sic], all civilians, have been ordered to save the ramshackled empire. Even Pope obedient servant of Prussia and Austria reprimanded late Francis Joseph as bloody sovereign. Austria is mean and false. The dismemberment of her is sincerest object of war. In note of the Allies to USA the liberation of Italians, Armenians [sic], Slavs and Tchechoslovacs is demanded and that means the dismemberment of the despotic empire. Application of principle of nationality which is essentially . . . democratic and social — for a nation enslaved politically is exploited economically — affects peculiar zone of small nations between the West and East on territory from North Cape to Cape Matapan beginning with Laps, Finns, etc. down to Greeks. There are 19 [nations] divided among Russia, Austria-Hungary, Persia, Turkey. National antagonism raging exactly in this zone, and it is the organic affinity of central anti-national and anti-democratic empires which united them to secure their Central Europe and way from Berlin to Bagdad and Cairo. Allies must prevent realization of pan-German Central Europe. Zone of small nations and Russia must be organized on democratic principle of nationality. . . . Germany must liberate [its] non-German nations. The Balkans must be reorganized. Russia is striving to become a federation of nations and states. If East Europe be controlled by Germany the Germans will be victorious and will rule world even if they temporary would yield in West demands of allies. Germany has absorbed Austria-Hungary as you rightly said, and by that Turkey. Germany is controlling Poland and adjoining countries till now under Russia. Russia is to become the tool of Berlin. In name of Tchechoslovak National Council — and I am entitled to speak in name of our whole nation — we express our satisfaction that people of United States has declared war on Austria-Hungary. There will be no liberation of Europe from German militarism and imperialism [if] our nation preserving her nationality against the German . . . push towards East [throughout] centuries will not be free as she has been. Without liberation of Bohemia and Slovakia Poland, South Slavs, Roumanians, Italians will not be united and liberated for there is close interdependence between these nations attacked by German aggressiveness. Austria-Hungary is strong and weak point of Germany, dismemberment of Austria is real and most effective weakening of Prussianized Germany. Dismemberment of Austria-Hungary removes . . . Prussian bridges to Balkans, to Asia and Africa. German nation must be forced renounce domination of non-German nations. Professor T.G. Masaryk, President of the Tchechoslovak National Council. Marsden.

NOTE: This cable is badly mutilated and obvious corrections made.¹⁷

The first meeting between Masaryk and Wilson is described in two documents. Shortly after his visit to the White House on June 19, 1918, Masaryk wrote a hasty note in Czech, summarizing the main points of the conversation. The note was published in a Czech collection of documents in Prague in 1953. For his own record and to inform his friends, Masaryk also wrote, or dictated, an English note on his meeting with Wilson. One copy of the note was handed to Richard Crane, the son of Charles R. Crane and private secretary to Robert Lansing.

English translation of Masaryk's Czech note on his meeting with Wilson on June 19, 1918:

Wednesday, 6-19-1918, 5,-5,45 p.m.

Mr. President I thank you for the honor and opportunity to recommend to your attention our nations.*

W. has a warm interest and is glad to be able to speak with me about a serious matter: about Russia, how to help.

a) To discuss (in detail and carefully) plan with Japanese — and what would that mean for Russia?

b) Could our soldiers be used for this purpose? I [told] him my view = vagueness of small intervention (50,000 or 100,000). I only hear about "nucleus" and nothing more.

Really — I never obtained more information.**

I would be for a war by Japan against Germ[any]. But difficulties:

a) mainly: How to pay Japanese? "Allies would finance" — but (I [said]) that is not enough, Japanese probably would wish territory.

b) whether they are prepared militarily.

Wilson knew that they had only 250,000 and the same in reserve — they could hardly gather one million.

He considers himself bound by Allies: Foch is milit. commander, therefore he is subordinate to him.¹⁸

* – ** These two sentences are written in English in the original Czech note.

Masaryk's English note on his meeting with Wilson on June 19, 1918:

I spoke with the President from five to five forty-five. The main subject of the discussion has been the question of intervention in Russia, whether the Japanese could intervene in Siberia and organize Siberia, and whether our Bohemian troops could be used to that end. I explained my view on the matter, that I am not in favor of a so-called intervention, because I do not see what it would bring about. But I would be in favor

of renewing the war upon Germany by the whole Japanese army. The President was very well informed about the number of Japanese troops available, and we agreed that there are many difficulties, above all the question of how to pay the Japanese. Then the President asked my opinion about a propaganda work which the United States could easily start, to send business men with goods, conducting a barter, because the Russians would not accept money for their grain and the goods they have to exchange. The question of this barter has been studied for the President by the Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Redfield, and perhaps tomorrow the President will hear his report. Then the Y.M.C.A. would be sent to Russia and the Red Cross. It seems the President has already chosen a man not a business man who would control this whole work. He did not give me the name of the man.

I asked the President to help our men from Russia to be brought to France. The political effect of our troops fighting in France is very great, it being the most effective anti-Austrian propaganda among all non-German and non-Magyar nations in Austria. On this occasion I emphasized the necessity of dismembering Austria if the war should be won. The President accepted this view and consented. I explained to him that there is a great propaganda conducted from Rome, and finally I urged him to help Italy: she deserves it for her loyalty and, militarily speaking, Italy, strengthened by American troops, could invade Austria and that would shorten the war. The President seemed to realize all this.

We parted. He was very friendly indeed, and asked me to come and give my opinion on points which he will submit to me.¹⁹

After it had become obvious that the Czechoslovak soldiers in Russia were entangled in a conflict with Bolshevik units, Masaryk asked the American government for assistance. Wilson, while maintaining his negative views of a military intervention, was finally impressed by the appeals of France and Britain and agreed to dispatch several thousand American troops to the area of Vladivostok, not to intervene in Russian affairs, but to safeguard "the country to the rear of the westward-moving Czecho-Slovaks." Masaryk was thankful for the decision.

Masaryk's letter to Wilson, August 5, 1918:

Mr. President: With the deepest satisfaction I thank you for your decision to help our Czechoslovak Army in Russia.

Mr. President, you have repeatedly announced the principles in which American citizens have been bred, the principles of liberated mankind, of the actual equality of nations, and the principles according to which governments derive all their just power from the consent of the

governed. The decision of the third of August to us constitutes a guarantee that these American principles will be realized. It is for these principles that our nation has been contending not only in this war, but already long ago; it is for these principles that our boys are shedding their blood on the endless plains of Russia and Siberia.

Your name, Mr. President, as you have no doubt read, is openly cheered in the streets of Prague — our nation will forever be grateful to you and to the people of the United States. And we know how to be grateful.

Believe me, Mr. President, Yours very sincerely,

Th.G. Masaryk²⁰

Wilson's response to Masaryk, August 7, 1918:

My dear Mr. Masaryk: Your letter of August 5th is greatly appreciated. I have felt no confidence in my personal judgment about the complicated situation in Russia, and am reassured that you should approve of what I have done.

Cordially and sincerely yours,

Woodrow Wilson²¹

Masaryk was, understandably, ebullient when the United States government recognized his revolutionary movement as the de facto belligerent government of Czechoslovakia. In his letter of thanks to Wilson, he stressed the value of American political principles.

Masaryk's letter to Wilson, September 7, 1918:

Mr. President: Allow me to express the feeling or profound gratitude for the recognition of our Army, the National Council, and the nation.

After arriving in the United States I paid my first visit to the Gettysburg Cemetery—after a year's sad experiences in Russia I wished to collect my mind at this solemn place of America's great struggle for democracy and unity; I read America's eternal message, cast in iron, that the government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall never perish from this Earth. At an historical moment of great significance Lincoln formulated these principles which were to rule the internal policies of the United States—at an historical moment of world-wide significance you, Mr. President, shaped these principles for the foreign policies of this great Republic as well as those of the other nations: that the whole mankind may be liberated — that between nations, great and small, actual equality exists — that all just power of governments is derived from the consent of the governed, these, you say, are the principles in which Americans have been bred, and which are to constitute the foundation of world-democracy.

In accordance with these principles of American democracy you, and the Government of the United States, have recognized the justice of our struggle for independence and national unity; I am entitled and greatly honored to thank you, in the name of our whole nation, for this act of political generosity, justice and political wisdom. America's recognition will strengthen our armies and our whole nation in their unshakeable decision to sacrifice everything for the liberation of Europe and of mankind.

My best wishes to you, Mr. President, in your difficult and responsible work for America and the world.

Believe me, Most sincerely and respectfully yours,

T. G. Masaryk²²

Wilson's response to Masaryk, September 10, 1918:

My dear Dr. Masaryk: Your letter of September 7th has given me a great deal of gratification. It reassures me to know that you think that I have followed the right course in my earnest endeavor to be of as much service as possible to the Czecho-Slovak peoples, and I want you to know how much the Secretary of State and I have valued the counsel and guidance which you have given us. It will always be a matter of profound gratitude to me if it should turn out that we have been able to render a service which will redound to the permanent advantage and happiness of the great group of peoples whom you represent.

Cordially and sincerely yours,

Woodrow Wilson²³

When Masaryk came to see Wilson on September 11, 1918, the questions under discussion included: assistance for the Czechoslovak Army in Russia, the recent agreement between the Czechoslovak National Council and the British government, and the possibility of a Japanese supreme command over foreign troops in Siberia. The fragmentary note, written by Masaryk in Czech and published in Prague in 1953, shows that the understanding between Wilson and Masaryk had developed to the extent of confidentiality in some questions.

English translation of Masaryk's Czech note on his meeting with Wilson on September 11, 1918:

With Wilson, Wednesday, 11 Sept 1918 (2-2,20 a.m.)

1. In addition to my [written] thanks also my personal thanks.
2. Apology that sending [of supplies] to Siberia is not fast enough but they do their best.

3. Today [he received] cable about our agreement with Engl. government. He noticed that [it stipulated] clearly [English] command.

He fears, as he says *between ourselves*, that British always try to use everything for themselves. There is a certain, not misunderstanding, but a certain. . . (I helped: *tension*) yes, tension, but that will be corrected. Also about French that they do not respect sufficiently sentiments of Russ. people.

About Jap. supreme command = he fears that Russians would not want it, neither would Americans like it, and possibly neither your soldiers?

I [said]: If Japanese give greatest number of soldiers it would be fair that they [have] supreme command. The [Russian] people would not grudge too much, not for long. There is Germ[an] intrigue exaggerating tension between Japanese and America.

To that he remarked that if Jap. will have greatest number of soldiers, they may have command. (He said "Greater than you.")

4. I [said to] him: French possibly somewhat nervous as they had invested much money; but they will acquiesce.

He noticed that English, Japanese were not acclaimed in Vladivostok after landing as Amer. (and Italians).

5. They will send me agreement with England so that I [could add] some comment for him.

6. Germ[an] ethnographic map with some notes will be sent to him.

7. I agree with Wilson that one should first try [to settle things] peacefully, shooting only last resort if absolutely necessary.

8. He said good-bye to me (I rose) thanking me for coming personally to express my appreciation for what they [the Americans] were doing for us [the Czechs and Slovaks] so willingly and with such pleasure.²⁴

In October 1918 Masaryk became the head of the Mid-European Union, a group of Central European representatives residing in the United States. On October 26, 1918, the Mid-European Union, convening in Philadelphia, issued a democratic manifesto called the "Declaration of Common Aims." Masaryk used the opportunity of sending the declaration to Wilson to explain his concept of European reconstruction.

Masaryk's letter to Wilson, November 1, 1918:

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Democratic Mid-European Union I have to thank you for your kind message which, unhappily, was not delivered in time, I take this opportunity to submit to you this copy of the Declaration signed in Philadelphia.

Our union tried to replace the German plan of Mittel-Europa by a

positive plan of reorganization of the many smaller nations which are located between the Germans (in Germany and Austria) and Russians; there are about eighteen such nations, beginning with the Finns and ending with the Greeks. The proverbial German push toward the East is directed against this peculiar zone of smaller nations, and it will be successful unless they are liberated and organized. The primary aim of the war and the coming peace is the reorganization of the East including now Russia, and the first condition of this reorganization of Eastern Europe and through it of Europe and mankind, is the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary, composed of eight non-German nations, oppressed and exploited by a degenerate dynasty and reckless feudal aristocracy supported by the Germans and Magyars.

The reconstruction and regeneration of Europe is a difficult task; but every creative policy, not acquiescing in given political and social formations, is difficult; it was difficult to defeat the German-Austrian autocracy, it will be difficult to put a new form of life into its inheritance.

Mr. President, we see in you one of the greatest leaders of modern democracy and constructive policy; it is in making a sincere attempt to apply such a policy to our particular nations and to the whole of Europe that we hope you will engage your interest in our Union's endeavors.

Most sincerely yours,
T. G. Masaryk²⁵

Wilson's response to Masaryk, November 5, 1918:

My dear Dr. Masaryk:

Allow me to acknowledge with sincere appreciation your letter of November 1st with its important enclosure, the formal Declaration of Common Aims of the Independent Mid-European Nations. The Declaration seems to me to be admirable alike in substance and in temper, and I need hardly assure you that the principles and ideals which it sets forth are my own. I shall esteem it a privilege to cooperate in any way that is possible in the realization of the aspirations which it embodies. I congratulate you on the sobriety of counsel which it indicates.

Cordially and sincerely yours,
Woodrow Wilson²⁶

The last meeting between Masaryk and Wilson took place on November 15, 1918. Masaryk, fearing a loss of prestige for the American president, advised Wilson against being personally involved in the detailed European questions at the peace conference. His apprehension is shown in a Czech note written in his hand and published in facsimile in Jan Herben's biography *T.G. Masaryk*.

English translation of Masaryk's Czech note on his meeting with Wilson on November 15, 1918:

Wilson, to say good-bye, Friday, 15 Nov. 1918, 2,15-2,45 p.m.

As always a very matter-of-fact discussion—he began at once.

1. *Poles*. Danzig is not Polish and Germans in Prussia would be cut off. Free access would be sufficient.

2. What about *Russia*? I [said] = perhaps without Finland (and Poland) unite all former [Russian territories] in feder. republic.

3. *Should he go to [peace] congress and participate?*

Yes, but not discuss special questions. From his declarations it can be seen that his strength [is] in questions [of principle], it can be seen that he does not know the details. (He accepted this criticism without resentment.) America (he) unique position = not having territor. wishes, and can defend principles. He [said]: can defend in details too; he is of Scotch origin, “stubborn.” I [said] that he did not know all the details, could become entangled and weaken his position.

4. Germans *were* beaten on the battlefield.

I [said] that it would have been better if they had been beaten completely; they will blame their defeat on Austr[ians'] treason, starvation, etc.²⁷

The last part of the correspondence between Masaryk and Wilson, letters and telegrams from the years 1918–23, form an epilog to the remarkable relationship. The epilog, although mostly encouraging and optimistic, has melancholy undertones. Masaryk's American wife died on May 13, 1923. Wilson, his health failing, was followed in office by a Republican president. Wilson's idea of a peaceful reconstruction of the world with American participation never materialized. He died on February 3, 1924.

Masaryk's first telegram from independent Czechoslovakia to Wilson was an enthusiastic New Year's message.

Masaryk's telegram to Wilson, January 2, 1919:

In the first New Year in which after a long time of the darkness of war light of freedom and peace is beginning to glimmer over Europe and world, I beg to greet you, Mr. President, on my own and our people's behalf from the free capital of the free Czechoslovak Republic. Our nation shall never forget that it was you, Mr. President, who by his kind sense of freedom and justice has brought about the disruption of the immoral state combination called Austria-Hungary and it was you [who] by his knowledge of our right in the most critical moment has made possible the revolution which brought us our national independence. We greet you [as] the spokesman of the political ideals of the great American Re-

public, of the ideals for which America in this war contested and conquered. These ideals are one with the ideals of our nation and will always find an enthusiastic defender in the free Czechoslovak Republic.

President Masaryk²⁸

Wilson's response to Masaryk, January 10, 1919:

My dear Mr. President: Your telegram of the second of January which was delayed in reaching me has given me the profoundest pleasure. It is deeply gratifying to me that the Czecho-Slovak peoples should recognize in me their friend and the champion of their rights and I beg you to believe that I shall be always happy to serve the Nation in any way that it is in my power to serve it. I hope that you will let me know from time to time what services of counsel or action you think I could render it. I rejoice in its establishment and hope for its permanent prosperity.

Woodrow Wilson²⁹

In the middle of March 1920 Masaryk cabled to Washington his thanks for Wilson's greetings on his 70th birthday (March 7, 1920):

Masaryk's telegram to Wilson, March 15, 1920:

Mr. President: Thank you heartily for your kind message. In return allow me to express my best wishes for your health. I can fully appreciate the exhausting strain you had to undergo during the war and in Paris and I know how sincerely and honestly you worked for the peace. I only wish you and your country's great authority may remain the powerful constructive action in the development of new Europe.

T.G. Masaryk³⁰

On the occasion of his 66th birthday (December 26, 1922) Wilson was greeted by a telegram from Masaryk:

Masaryk's telegram to Wilson, December 27, 1922:

Ready it will prove that Czechoslovakia is the land of Wilson. With warmest birthday greetings to you and to both you and Mrs. Wilson a joyous Christmas and happy New Year.

Masaryk³¹

Wilson's response to Masaryk, December 28, 1922:

Your message is deeply appreciated. I hope that the stout young republic over which you so worthily preside will itself have many propitious birthdays throughout a long period of peaceful prosperity and happiness. I shall expect with greatest pleasure the Christmas gift you so generously promised me.

Woodrow Wilson³²

Two compassionate letters were exchanged between Wilson and Masaryk on the occasion of the death of Charlotte Garrigue Masaryk.

Wilson's letter to Masaryk, May 19, 1923:

My dear Friend,

Will you not allow me to express to you the genuine grief and very deep sympathy with which I learned of the death of Mrs. Masaryk. My thoughts go out to you in profoundest sympathy, and I wish that there were some touch of friendship by which I could assist in cheering and steadying your spirit in the face of this tragedy.

I very often think of you and always, you may be sure, with the deepest and most genuine interest in your own personal welfare as well as in the welfare of your people.

Please accept assurances of my warm regard and always think of me as

Your sincere friend,
[Woodrow Wilson]³³

Masaryk's response to Wilson, dated June 15, 1923 in Marseille:

Dear Mr. Wilson,

My Dear Friend,

Thank you for your very kind letter; I am happy knowing that you feel so friendly towards me & our people. My wife was a real American, living up to the best & loftiest American ideals; I shared her views & accepted her americanism [sic] & that brought me to you in 1918. I believed [sic] in the American ideals as you expressed them.

With gratitude & in sincere friendship,

T.G. Masaryk³⁴

In November 1923, on behalf of Masaryk, officials of the Czechoslovak Embassy in Washington presented Wilson two albums with pictures of streets, squares, parks, bridges, and other public objects named or renamed in honor of the American president. Wilson sent a letter of thanks to Prague.

Wilson's letter to Masaryk, November 23, 1923:

My dear President Masaryk,

I yesterday received at the hands of the Charge of the Czechoslovak legation here the really magnificent volumes in which you have so thoughtfully had bound photographs of places and objects which citizens of Czechoslovakia have been so gracious as to name for me. I feel highly

honoured at such evidences of their confidence and friendship, and shall treasure the albums as among my most valuable possessions.

I hope that everything goes happily with yourself and the admirable little republic over which you preside. It is a matter of intense pride with me to have had some part in bringing it into the family of nations.

With very warm regards,

Cordially and Gratefully Yours,
[Woodrow Wilson]³⁵

On December 28, 1923, in a brief telegram, Masaryk sent his last New Year's greetings to Wilson. And a day later Wilson cabled what turned out to be his last communication to Masaryk

Wilson's telegram to Masaryk, December 29, 1923:

My dear Mr. President,

Your radio message pleased me greatly. It is delightful to be reminded of your friendship, and I hope that the New Year may bring to you and to the gallant republic over which you preside the highest and happiest fortunes. Pray accept my warm salutations and think of me always as

Your sincere Friend, [Woodrow Wilson]³⁶

These are Masaryk's comments on the personality of Woodrow Wilson, translated from his book of war reminiscences.

From Masaryk's book Světová revoluce (The Making of a State):

My relations with President Wilson were purely matter-of-fact. In all my actions I relied on our just cause and the weight of my arguments. I believed then and I still believe that decent, educated people can be enlightened and convinced by arguments. In my personal discussions with Wilson and in my memoranda and notes I relied solely on arguments and the strength of carefully stated facts. In all this I sought continuity with the President's declarations and writings. Already before the war I had known his writings about the state and the development of the American Congress. I read his speeches carefully and was able to quote his statements in support of my ideas. . . .

When the question was discussed in government circles and in the press whether President Wilson personally should go to Europe to take part in the peace negotiations I gave him my opinion that he should not go or, at least, should not remain in Europe after the opening of the conference. Knowing Wilson's character and his enthusiasm for the League of Nations as the main point of the peace negotiations, and knowing the personalities of the European peacemakers, I feared that both sides would be mutually disappointed. After a long war resulting in a terrible strain on minds and nerves of the peace negotiators, it might easily happen that mutual disillusionment would be aggravated by the

PRESIDENT
ČESKOSLOVENSKÉ
REPUBLIKY

Marville, 15/VI/23.

Dear Mr. Wilson,
My dear Friend,

Thank you for your
very kind letter. I am happy knowing
that you feel so friendly towards me &
our people. My wife was a real American,
living up to the best & loftiest American
ideals; I shared her views & accepted her
americanism & that brought me to you in 1918.
I believed in the American ideals as you
expressed them.

With gratitude & in sincere friendship

T. G. Masaryk.

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Masaryk's letter to Wilson, dated June 15, 1923. Woodrow Wilson Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

experience of personal weaknesses of the participants. I thought that President Wilson might impair, even lose the high authority which he had gradually won in Europe. But the President, aware of the great importance of the peace conference, wished personally to defend his American ideals. He was convinced that it was America's mission to unify mankind and that he could accomplish this task.

We also discussed the question why President Wilson had not formed a coalition government, as the Allied states had done in Europe, but had chosen his cabinet ministers only from the Democratic Party. I asked specifically whether it would not be proper to take politicians of the Republican Party with him to the Paris negotiations. President Wilson thought that in Paris quarrels would arise between the two opposing parties. But he also admitted that he had no talent for compromises and coalitions. "I tell you frankly" — these were about his words — "I am a descendant of Scottish Presbyterians and am therefore somewhat stubborn." I had a different interpretation. One of the consequences of the war, in America as elsewhere, was a sort of dictatorship. Individual statesmen gained decisive power. At the same time Wilson's contact with Congress became closer. I watched this development the more keenly because I knew Wilson's opinion of the centralization of Congress. This trend toward centralization was in my view greatly assisted by the constitutional position of the American President. The American constitution followed too closely the English monarchical model in defining the position of the President. I did not have the impression of partiality in Wilson's choice of military and naval commanders; on the contrary, he appointed many Republicans demonstrating his objectivity. But I admit that the President was somewhat touchy and disliked being criticized.

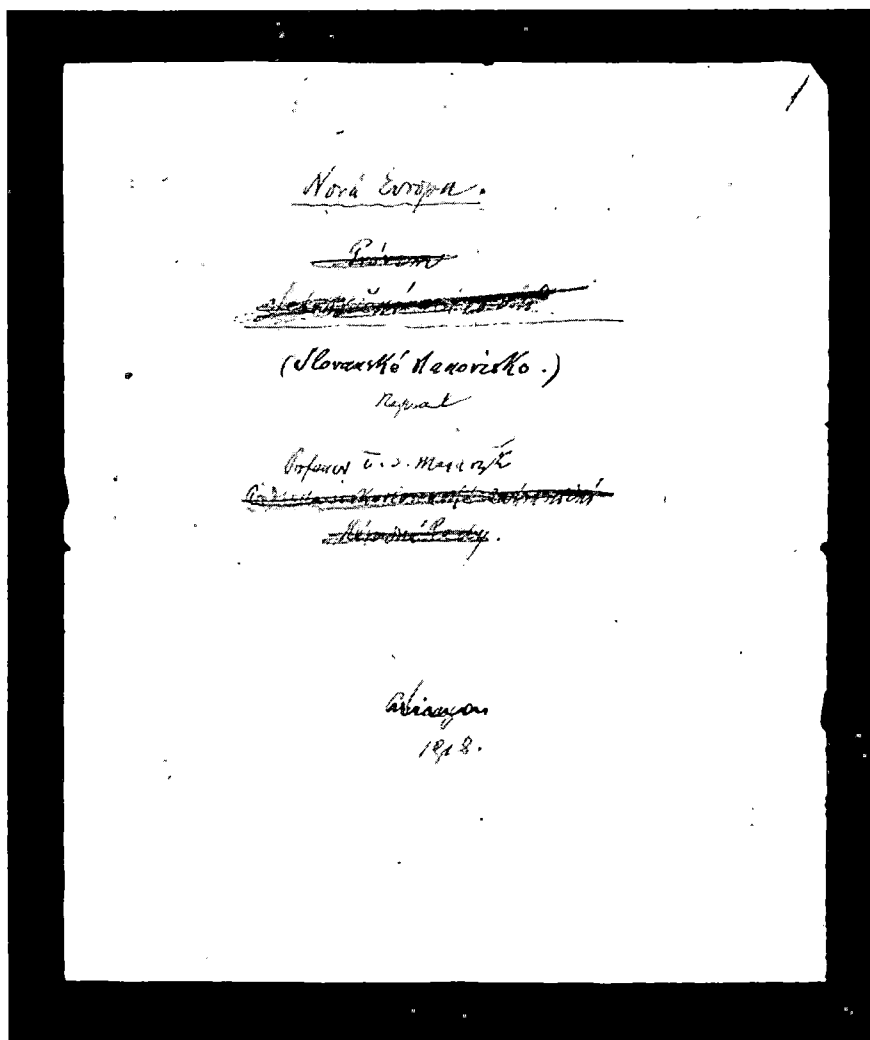
I started my personal relations with President Wilson relatively late. I arrived in Washington on May 9 [1918] and met Wilson for the first time on June 19, the invitation being conveyed by Mr. Charles R. Crane. In all my political campaigns abroad it has been my method to try to influence the statesmen by public declarations, articles and interviews. And before I saw the President I spoke with people with whom he was in contact and who had a certain influence on him. Discussion with men who already know the facts is, naturally, more fruitful and can take less time.

The significance of Wilson's decision against Austria was spontaneously recognized by our people at home; a visible proof of our gratitude are the buildings, streets, squares and institutions named after Wilson. It would not be difficult for me to portray his character both as a man and as a statesman. I heard much about him from people who were quite close to him. I read his speeches very carefully and occupied myself intensely with his thinking. I observed the initial warm reception of Wilson in allied countries which later became cool to him. The Germans, too, accepted him, and later turned against him. From the beginning I saw in Wilson a conscientious interpreter of Lincoln's democracy and

American political and cultural ideals in general. I have already mentioned his view of America's destiny. He would have described his ideals in a more practical fashion had he known more of Europe and its difficulties. He made a clear distinction between the "Allies" and America, only an "associated" power in his terminology. The continental dimension of the United States accounts for his being too abstract in dealing with European politics. His great notion of the self-determination of nations was too general to provide a safe guiding principle for Europe. And he can be at least partly blamed for the lack of understanding for his plan of the League of Nations. It was a magnificent and just concept, mainly the idea of making the League an essential part of the peace settlement.

Unlike other American thinkers Wilson impressed me as a theoretician rather than a practical man, his thinking was more deductive than inductive. In this respect it was interesting to hear that he preferred to correspond with his ministers (even typing his decisions and suggestions with his own hands). He was probably a somewhat solitary man, a status conducive to a calm and matter-of-fact judgment of political affairs. He showed these qualities, I think, in his attitude toward Germany and in his decision for war; he stayed cool, registering the individual acts, and after enough of them had accumulated, he declared war in a resolute way. The American people followed him. He was equally resolute in conducting the war; this was why the Germans turned against him. Ludendorff understood correctly the gravity of Wilson's replies to the German proposals for an armistice and peace. Roosevelt and others were, in my view, not fair in saying that Wilson ought to have declared war earlier.

Wilson was and remains one of the greatest pioneers of modern democracy. Already in his first political campaign for the governorship of New Jersey he proclaimed the faith and confidence in the people as the basis of democracy, in opposition to monarchism and aristocracy: nations are regenerated from below, not from above; monarchism and aristocracy always and everywhere lead to decline. This proved to be true on a grand scale in the world war: three great monarchies with their aristocracies perished in the clash with more democratic nations.³⁷



Title page of the Czech manuscript of Masaryk's *The New Europe*. T. G. Masaryk Papers, MMC 3502, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

CHAPTER

SIX

THE NEW EUROPE

The most valuable *Masarykanum* in the Library of Congress, and probably in any library or archive outside Czechoslovakia, is the complete manuscript of Masaryk's book *The New Europe* (*Nová Evropa*). The manuscript was donated to the Library of Congress by Masaryk's secretary Jaroslav Císař, who had received it as a present from the author for translating the work into English. Washington is the proper place of custody; the final version of *The New Europe* was prepared mainly in the U.S. capital in 1918. But the book has a history of its own, as turbulent as the era in which it was written.

Our main sources of information about the origin of *The New Europe* are, first of all, Masaryk's three prefaces written at different times; the first preface, dated January 15, 1918 in Kiev; a second unpublished preface, dated July 1918, in Washington; and the preface to the first English and French edition of the book, dated October 1918, in Washington. Additional insights into the history of the book were obtained from Josef Kudela's *Profesor Masaryk a československé vojsko na Rusi* (*Professor Masaryk and the Czechoslovak Army in Russia*) and from Masaryk's war memoirs, *Světová revoluce*; a few interesting details were added in a private letter written by Jaroslav Císař.

From all the known facts and dates it can be extrapolated that Masaryk wrote the first basic version of *The New Europe* in one brief creative period of several weeks during his second stay in Petrograd, between September 8 and October 16, 1917. It was a time of great tension in Russia, with a new revolution lurking

around the corner. Masaryk visited southern Russia in the second part of October, 1917, and after his return to Petrograd he intended to correct and amend his manuscript. He sat down to work on a day that quickly proved to be a bad choice for untroubled literary activity. The date was November 7, 1917. The Bolshevik Party sent its troops into the streets of Petrograd, seized the main points of the city and established the Soviet regime. Three days later, on November 10, Masaryk departed for Moscow hoping to leave the revolutionary upheavals behind him. But the revolution traveled with him, as it were. He arrived in Moscow in the midst of street fighting and spent several dramatic and dangerous days in and around the hotel Metropol. As a writer's haven Moscow was no better place than Petrograd.

On November 22, 1917, Masaryk arrived in Kiev where he spent most of his remaining time in Russia, organizing the Czech Army and working, whenever possible, on his book. The date of the first preface, January 15, 1918, indicates that about this time Masaryk decided to publish his work. He did not consider the manuscript as finished but, seeing the impossibility of completing it before his departure to the United States, he concluded that the book should be printed as it was, with a possible later revision. His main purpose was to tell the Czech and Slovak soldiers his views of the European future. In leaving the manuscript in Kiev he hoped to provide his soldiers with a political legacy for a better understanding of their efforts and sacrifices.

Again the revolutionary turmoil interfered with Masaryk's intentions. One copy of the manuscript was handed to the Czech printer and publisher in Kiev Věnceslav Švihovský, but before the book could be printed the Ukraine became the chessboard of violent political and military moves. On February 8, 1918, Bolshevik troops entered Kiev while the Czech soldiers stationed in the area maintained neutrality in the domestic Russian conflict. On March 1, the Czechoslovak Army was withdrawn from Kiev, one day before the city was occupied by the Germans. Masaryk's manuscript, left in Kiev during the evacuation, was recovered by the Czech soldier V. Svoboda, who crossed the German lines dis-

guised as a civilian, found the manuscript, and brought it back to the safe custody of the Czechoslovak troops.

Owing to the chaotic situation, *The New Europe* could not be published as a book in Russia. The Czechoslovak soldiers, nevertheless, had a chance to read Masaryk's text. The secured manuscript was published in installments, beginning in April 1918, in the Czechoslovak Army newspaper, *Československý deník*.

All this was unknown to Masaryk. Since March 7, 1918, he had been on his way through Siberia and Japan to the United States. He assumed that the manuscript copy left in Kiev was irretrievably lost. During his long journey on the Trans-Siberian train he resumed his work on *The New Europe*, reviewing and amending the copy he carried from Russia to America. Working on the manuscript was also one of his occupations on the ship in the Pacific Ocean.

He now intended to publish the book in the United States. In July 1918, in a new preface written in Washington, he presented the work "to the American political public." But being too busy as a statesman in the final stages of the war, Masaryk did not find enough time for his literary pursuits. He worked on his manuscript intermittently throughout his whole stay in America and wrote the final version of the preface in October 1918. Several weeks before his departure from the United States he turned the Czech manuscript over to Jaroslav Císar who dictated a preliminary translation into English. The time was, however, too short for publication in America and the manuscript, supplemented by an English version, crossed another ocean with its author.

Masaryk took the text of *The New Europe* to London, where the English translation was revised by Robert W. Seton-Watson. The book was then quickly published in English and in French for "private circulation," mainly for the use of the diplomats who were gathering for the peace conference in Paris. The English text of *The New Europe*, published at the end of 1918, was considered by Masaryk to be the "original." A Czech version, almost identical to the manuscript preserved in the Library of Congress, was published in Prague in 1920.

Historický T. Masarykova války.

3/1

1. světová válka světovou.

1. To vše bylo, vzniklo-li se o válce, její světovost.

~~celý svět, do toho svět celý, tu je jen otázkou, jak
slovo světovou naplnit, naplnit, naplnit, naplnit, naplnit
všechno světovou, světovou, světovou, světovou, světovou~~

Celý svět rozdělil se na dva tábory - s Rakouskem a Německem
jde jen o to, kdo bude vítězný, vítězný otázkou, kdo je na
straně vítězného; ^(a vítězná karta) vítěznými

The first page of the Czech manuscript of Masaryk's *The New Europe*. T. G. Masaryk Papers, MMC 3502, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

NOVÁ EVROPA.
STANOVISKO SLOVANSKÉ



NAPSAL
T. G. MASARYK.

1920.
NÁKLADEM GUSTAVA DUBSKÉHO
V PRAZE.

Title page of the first Czech edition of *The New Europe*, illustrated by Adolf Kašpar. (D523.M2139)

The New Europe, first written for the Czechoslovak soldiers in Russia, then intended for the American public, and finally circulated among the Allied diplomats, was a book for anybody in its time. In this work Masaryk expressed his need to explain why he had started his revolutionary activity in the first place, and what he hoped for in the future. Read in today's changed world, *The New Europe* is a reminder of Masaryk's vision rather than the balance sheet of a project that awaited fulfillment. Somewhat incorrectly, the book was regarded by some readers as Masaryk's program for the immediate rearrangement of Europe after the First World War. More properly, it was Masaryk's ideal picture of Europe's long-term objectives which would need much effort and courage to be achieved.

At the heart of *The New Europe* lies Masaryk's demand to create an independent Czechoslovak state. This, however, is not an isolated goal. Masaryk also demands an independent Poland and Yugoslavia, and a whole zone of independent nations between Germany and Russia. The political reconstruction of Eastern Europe is considered by him "the principal problem of the war." He invokes the principle of national self-determination, but he also sees that in many territories with mixed population the border lines between the states cannot be based on ethnographic factors. The new states in which the small oppressed Slavic nations will exercise their political freedom will be created within historical and natural borders. Inevitably, these states will include national minorities who will be guaranteed their civil rights by an international agreement, and possibly by an international arbitration tribunal for national questions.

In Masaryk's eyes national independence was not an end in itself but a necessary stage in a prolonged process. As the next stage in a more distant European future he foresaw a federation which would not be imposed by a central authority but would be agreed upon by free partners. He wrote:

A real federation of nations will be accomplished only when the nations are free to unite of their own

accord. The development of Europe points to that end. The program of the Allies answers fully to this development: free and liberated nations will organize themselves, as they find necessary, into greater units, and thus the whole continent will be organized.³⁸

As a practical politician Masaryk saw that a free union of European nations had several preconditions among which the most important was the end of the German supremacy in Europe. Masaryk demanded a complete end to German hegemonial plans, including the dissolution of the Habsburg empire as the willing instrument of German imperialists. He hoped for a permanent victory of the republican and democratic ideal over the anti-democratic, absolutist forces. He thought it could not be otherwise:

It is not possible that this gigantic sacrifice of lives, health, and fortune should have been offered in vain; it is not possible that the present organization of states and nations from which the war has sprung should remain unchanged, that the responsible statesmen, politicians, leaders of parties, individuals, the nations, and all humanity should not comprehend the necessity of radical political reorganization. The war and its significance have knitted mankind closer together; humanity is today an organized unit . . .³⁹

This dream did not come true and was shattered by another world war. But it is difficult to find an alternative for Masaryk's hope. In the words of the Czech-American historian Otakar Odložilík: "The background against which the ideas of *The New Europe* have to be projected has changed profoundly. Details which had their significance at the time of writing have withered in the changing climate. But the beacon of light, Masaryk's unbounded faith in democracy and humanity, has lost nothing of its brightness and radiant energy."

The evaluation of American influences in Masaryk's life is open to further study, but it is obvious that Masaryk, the optimist,

drew a part of his strength from the Anglo-Saxon cultural resources. In *The New Europe* he paid this tribute to England and America:

All my life I was an assiduous, passionate reader and a conscious observer of contemporaneous world happenings. If I had to say which culture I considered to be the highest I would answer, the English and American; at any rate, my stay in England during the war, and a very critical observation of English life convinced me that the English, as a whole, come nearest to the ideals of humanity. The same impression was made upon me by American life.⁴⁰

This personal confession of faith may be considered an appropriate final statement of this documentation.

NOTES

1 *Alice Garrigue Masaryk, 1879-1966: her life* (Pittsburgh, University Center for International Studies, University of Pittsburgh, c1980), p. 14.

2 In International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom, *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion* (Boston, Mass., International Council [1908?]), p. 536-565.

3 Charles R. Crane Papers, Columbia University Library.

4 Woodrow Wilson Papers, Library of Congress.

5 Ibid.

6 New York Times, 16 Jan. 1917.

7 Woodrow Wilson Papers, Library of Congress.

8 U.S. Department of State Records, File 763.72119/1614, National Archives.

9 Ibid., File 763.72119/1616.

10 Breckinridge Long Papers, Library of Congress.

11 Ibid.

12 In Lawyers Club, *Meeting of the Lawyers Club, New York City, Saturday, 16 November 1918* ([New York, 1918]), p. 8-12.

13 U.S. Department of State Records, File 763.72/11172, National Archives.

14 Various drafts and the final text of the Declaration are in the custody of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress. For the complete history of the Declaration see George J. Kovtun, *The Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence: a history of the document* (Washington, D.C., Library of Congress, 1985).

15 U.S. Department of State Records, File 860F.46211, National Archives.

16 Tomáš G. Masaryk, *Světová revoluce: za války a ve válce, 1914-1918*

(V Praze, Čin a Orbis, 1925), p. 267-270.

17 U.S. Department of State records, File 763.72/8108. *Marsden* was the pseudonym in Masaryk's British passport.

18 *Dokumenty o protilidové a protinárodní politice T.G. Masaryka* (Praha, Orbis, 1953), p. 21.

19 Richard Crane Papers, Georgetown University Library.

20 Woodrow Wilson Papers, Library of Congress.

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22 Ibid.

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24 *Dokumenty o protilidové a protinárodní politice T.G. Masaryka* (Praha, Orbis, 1953), p. 22.

25 Woodrow Wilson Papers, Library of Congress.

26 Ibid.

27 Jan Herben, *T.G. Masaryk*, v. 3 (V Praze, Mánes, 1927), following p. 728.

28 Woodrow Wilson Papers, Library of Congress.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Tomáš G. Masaryk, *Světová revoluce: za války a ve válce, 1914-1918* (V Praze, Čin a Orbis, 1925), p. 366-375.

38 Tomáš G. Masaryk, *The New Europe (the Slav standpoint)* (Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press [1972]), p. 77.

39 Ibid., p. 25.

40 Ibid., p. 126.

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