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calls him "mentally backward, feeble-minded if kindly; his condition was no secret." In the 1860s, the northern part of the Castle was restored for the projected coronation of Franz Joseph I which never took place though, because it would have given Bohemia at least temporarily the right of self-government. Vienna was against it.

An old Czech myth says that no man except the future king must place the Czech crown on his head. This makes the coronation valid. Anyone else who dares set the Bohemian crown on his head will die an unnatural death. When Reinhard Heydrich, the hated "Reichsprotektor," visited St. Vitus and heard about the myth, he laughed and put the crown on his head. Several weeks later, in June, 1942, Heydrich was assassinated outside of Prague, whereupon Hitler ordered the village of nearby Lidice "erased" in a wholly arbitrary and "terrifying demonstration of the strength of the Third Reich." The village's entire male population, a hundred and ninety-two men and boys, from sixteen to eighty-four, were shot.

Originally, the coronation jewels were kept in an underground chamber near the grave of St. Wenceslas. During the Hussite wars they were transferred to Karlštejn Castle and were shown to "the noblest personages" only with permission of the Bohemian Estates. When they were brought to Prague for a coronation, they were accompanied by the highest dignitaries of the realm, and, just to be safe, by two hundred riders. During the Thirty Years' War, the jewels were taken to a secret hiding place in the collegiate church of Česká Budějovice. Ferdinand III of Habsburg, after his coronation in Prague, took them to Vienna where they were exhibited at the Schatzkammer of the Vienna Burg. Another Habsburg ruler, Leopold II, returned them to Prague, at the urgent request of the Bohemian Estates. The coronation

jewels were deposited in the chamber of the Golden Gate where, at this writing, they still are. The safety measures are regulated by ancient custom: the chamber is closed with seven locks, each of which is opened by a key kept by the President, the Lord Mayor of Prague, the Archbishop and so on. In the case of an impending attack on the Castle, the jewels will be taken to the underground vaults below the old Soběslav Palace.

Work in St. Vitus Cathedral never comes to an end. Prior to the Second World War, the modern Czech painter Max Švabinský painted the middle window at the eastern end illuminating the choir. Švabinský loved to go to the Old Jewish Cemetery for meditation and inspiration. A modern Prague mystic, he felt equally at home near the austere stone sarcophagus of the High Rabbi Loew (1609) and near the pompous silver Baroque tomb of St. John Nepomuk in St. Vitus Cathedral, made in the 1730s by Joseph Emanuel Fischer von Erlach. A present-day restoration problem concerns the fourteenth-century mosaics of Venetian origin above the Cathedral's original main entrance, on the wall containing the Golden Portal. It shows the Casting of the Damned into Hell, the Resurrection, and Charles IV, kneeling in the company of several saints. (The Emperor loved a little publicity, and we must not blame him.) The colors of the mosaics have turned dull, and experts are trying to protect them against the vicissitudes of the climate.

On a wooded hill overlooking the lovely valley of the Berounka river, a short ride from Prague, Charles IV built himself the Castle of Karlštejn, his strange retreat with a French donjon and French-Gothic chapels on the upper floors, a shrine for his sacred relics in whose miraculous power he believed. The walls of his private chapel are cov-

ered with amethysts, carnelians and other precious stones that shimmer in a mystic half-dimness, and the ceiling is covered with large frescoes. "All over the earth no other castle contains such treasures," Beneš von Weitmühl, the Emperor's historian, wrote with more enthusiasm than accuracy.

At the same time, the improbable mystic personally conceived and designed the New Town of Prague, which he called "the work of Our hands," between Cattle Market (now Charles Square) and Horse Market (now Wenceslas Square). "No doubt, Wenceslas Square made Prague a European capital though it was probably more beautiful as a provincial square," writes Wilhelm Hausenstein. Charles IV designed the system of longitudinal blocks with cross streets that still exists. It was walled toward east and south, with five gates leading out. It was to be a Czech town. Special decrees promised civic liberties to new settlers. The ground would become the property of the inhabitants; for the first twelve years everybody was freed from taxation, "provided the settler started to build one month after receiving the ground, and would have his house ready within eighteen months." A very modern inducement; and it was also decreed that no property could be mortgaged higher than half its value. The great mystic was a gifted town planner. Jews from the ghetto in the Old Town were not permitted to move into the New Town, but Jews from abroad were welcome. These inducements attracted many people. Eleven years after the foundation of the New Town there were over a hundred butchers there. The citizens of Prague were given many privileges. They could travel to all towns in Germany and to Venice without paying customs duties. Prague was the first town in Central Europe with paved streets that were

regularly cleaned; since 1340, the whole town had a contract with one Jindřich Mithard "to clean the streets before All Saints' Day and keep them clean thereafter." At the end of Charles's reign, Prague had become a city of forty thousand people and had over four thousand houses. (After the devastation of the Hussite wars, in the sixteenth century, there were less than two thousand nine hundred houses.) A chronicler noted that Charles IV "loves this town more than all other places in his Empire."

In 1348—the very year he founded the New Town—Charles also founded Prague University, one year after Pope Clemens VI, Charles's former teacher, had agreed that in Prague, after the example of Bologna and Paris, "*studium generale vigeat in qualibet facultate*." In 1344, the Emperor had persuaded the Pope to make Prague the seat of an Archbishop—an ambition that the Kings of Bohemia had had for centuries. Charles ordered Czech translations made of Latin legends and meditations; at the Archbishop's residence (today just outside the entrance gate of Hradčany), a copyists' school produced copies of the Holy Scriptures for all convents in the country. The university—the first in Central Europe—was a Church institution. The Archbishop of Prague was also the university's Chancellor. The university would make sure that "the nation may find the fruits of learning set out on its own table." There were four faculties—theology, law, medicine, the arts. The *universitas* of magisters, baccalaurei and students elected the rector. The students were organized by national groups; members of the "Bohemian nation" were not only Czechs and Germans living in Bohemia, but also Hungarians. Famous law teachers were induced to come from Bologna, art professors from Paris. The professors lectured at home, priests in their con-

vents. Soon the *studium generale* in Prague became renowned all over the Christian world. A few years after its foundation, the university had over a thousand students.

Prague was growing, and there were not enough churches for the faithful ones. Charles began to build churches and convents all over town: the Church of Our Lady of the Snow (kostel Panny Marie Sněžné) for the Carmelites; St. Ambrosius; St. Stephen's; St. Henry's, near today's Wenceslas Square; and he supervised the Gothic reconstruction of the old basilica in Vyšehrad. In the heart of the Old Town, near the university and the Old Town Square, the merchants and burghers built the Church of Our Lady of Týn that has remained to this day a sort of people's church in Prague. Jan Hus preached there, later followed by Ultraquist bishops, and Týn Church became *the* Hussite church.

Charles also built the great Monastery of Emmaus ("Na Slovanech") for the Slavonic Benedictines, as "a center of education and the arts." Emmaus later had a violent history, typical of Prague. In 1419, the Benedictines joined the Hussites. The monastery remained untouched during the Hussite wars. In 1445, it became the only Hussite monastery on earth. (Yet the Slavonic part of the Rheims Gospels, on which the Kings of France took the coronation oath until 1782, came from Emmaus.) During the Counter-Reformation, Spanish Benedictines came to Emmaus from Montserrat, the mystic mountain monastery near Barcelona, where Richard Wagner placed his Holy Grail in *Parsifal*. The Spanish monks restyled the Gothic monastery in Baroque, but the Beuron Benedictines who took the monastery over in 1880, after being banished from Germany, restored the building to its earlier Gothic appearance. In 1918, the monastery became Czech. In 1939, the Czech monks were driven out by the Nazis. A few weeks before the end of the war, the

monastery was hit by "Anglo-American" bombs and burned out. In 1959, the monastery was restored and is now used as a secular building, housing several research institutes of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

Prague at the time of Charles IV was one large building site where Peter Parler installed an immense artistic workshop. Painters and sculptors were needed to decorate the new churches and palaces. Nikolaus Wurmser from Strasbourg became the Emperor's "court painter." The Italian tradition was represented by Tomaso Barisini from Modena. A local master, Theodoric, worked in Karlštejn. The nobility and the rich burghers also commissioned artists, who began to specialize. Some did only frescoes, while others created illuminated manuscripts, beautifully drawn and colored, showing both the Italian and French influence. The artists of Prague were organized in a *Zeche* (guild), one of Europe's earliest artists' academies. Their social status was so high that Peter Parler and his assistants dared place the portraits of the builders of St. Vitus Cathedral in the triforium, next to those of members of the ruling dynasty. Parler hardly could have done it without the Emperor's permission.

Cola di Rienzo came from Rome, an excommunicated fugitive with great ideas, and was an honored guest at Hradčany; but eventually Charles handed him over to the Archbishop, and two years later the great visionary, "God's tribune," wound up in Rome again, before the Papal judges. In 1356, Petrarch came to Prague, talked with the Emperor and after his return to Rome wrote excited letters to his new friends in Prague.

The following year, Peter Parler began to work on the most daring project of his life—the great bridge named after Charles that poets, painters, sculptors and a great many

other people (not only in Prague) consider the most beautiful stone bridge on earth. It replaced an earlier, twelfth-century stone bridge that had been constructed by order of Judith, the wife of King Wladislaw I, and had been badly damaged by flood and ice. The remains of the old bridge had to be carried away with the help of primitive cranes; and sixteen pillars were sunk into the river next to the old foundations. (Some remains of the old pillars still remain on the Malá Strana bank.) Charles Bridge, the greatest among Prague's fourteen bridges, is half a kilometer long and ten meters wide. It is not straight but slightly curved against the flow of the river, for aesthetic and technical reasons, in order to deviate the pressure of the waves. Perhaps there was also a strategic reason: from the western bridgehead in Malá Strana the whole bridge could be easily protected. (During the Revolution in March, 1848, Prince Windischgraetz, the Austrian commander, occupied the western approaches of Charles Bridge and turned his guns against the Old Town.)

The unique beauty of Charles Bridge is due to the dramatic contrast of Romanesque elements (the heavy stones of the foundations) and the elegance of the Gothic arches and Gothic bridge towers on both sides, and the harmonious effect created by the statues of Baroque saints. The church tower on the eastern (Old Town) bank of the river is Europe's most beautiful medieval bridge tower. Peter Parler built it on the first pier of the bridge; and he created the magnificent sculptural decorations. Most people headed for Charles Bridge are so eager to see the famous bridge saints, with the magical silhouette of Malá Strana's Baroque cupolas and the Hradčany against the western sky in the rear that they pay scant attention to Parler's masterpiece. The sculptural decorations on the side facing the square have been preserved

almost intact; the decorations on the side looking out on the bridge were destroyed during the Swedish siege of 1648. High up looking onto the square are sculptures of St. Adalbert and St. Sigismund and below them, on either side of a statue of St. Vitus, are the seated figures of Charles IV (who always had to be in the picture) and his son, Wenceslas IV. The face of St. Vitus is unforgettably moving. The lower part of the tower served as a prison for bankrupt debtors. The upper part was used by their guards, who enjoyed one of the finest views of Prague. On the Malá Strana side there are two towers as a counterpart to the tower on the Old Town side but they are much less beautiful.

The parapets of Charles Bridge are decorated with thirty statues and sculptural groups of saints, made of sandstone that has become black. They give the bridge a mystical beauty, especially at night, when the lights accentuate the deep shadows and bring the exultant Baroque saints to life. Most statues were set up at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the bridge was already a few hundred years old, and some had to be replaced rather recently. St. Francis of Assisi was put up in 1855, donated by Count Kolovrat-Liebsteinský in memory of the attempted assassination of Emperor Franz Joseph I in Vienna (where the Votive Church is a reminder of it). The statue of Cyril and Method was put up in 1938, during the celebrations of the twentieth birthday of the Czechoslovak Republic.

Though the statues vary considerably in their artistic value, they form an aesthetic unity with the older bridge. The finest sculpture is the statue of St. Luitgarda, made in 1710 by the great Baroque sculptor Matthias Braun from Innsbruck; the most interesting is the gilded bronze cross with the Corpus Christi, and the Hebrew inscription; the most shocking, at least to the English-born wife of Frederick

of Palatinate, the "Winter King," was the undressed figure of Christ on the Gothic cross; and the most popular, oldest statue on the bridge is St. John Nepomuk, with a bas-relief on the balustrade, showing the Saint's martyrdom. The statue, by Johann Brokoff and Matthias Rauchmiller, became the prototype of hundreds of similar statues all over Bohemia. Another interesting statue is Ferdinand Brokoff's St. Procopius, who is said to have "resurrected forty people from the dead and exorcized seventy devils." Such miracles are common knowledge in Prague, even today.

When Charles died in Prague in 1378 and was buried in the Royal Crypt of St. Vitus Cathedral, there were seventy-six churches and chapels in town, twenty-four convents and monasteries, and also twelve hundred priests who were exempt from taxes. Prague was a center of Church life in Europe, with all its pomp. But there had been a serious famine in the 1360s, and there was growing resentment against the moral debasement of the clergy. ("The bright aspects of Charles's reign throw its shadows into clear relief," writes Miloš Kratochvíl, the present-day historian. "Wealth and prosperity were the prerogative of the royal court, the feudal lords, and the Church hierarchy. Charles was lavish in his support of the hierarchy because he considered it needful to keep in favor with his ally, the Pope. The rich burgher families too, and the traders and financiers prospered.")

That's what the children in Prague learn about Charles IV today. It is true but not the whole story. In his autobiographical writings, Charles IV expresses his fear of future dangers. He was not anti-social, he worried about hunger and poverty among his people, and he sensed the dark undercurrents that eventually led to the Reformation. He was suffering from a terrible guilt complex. Once Johann Milic of Kroměříž, the fanatic Moravian preacher, who campaigned against loose life and "the wicked follies of fashion

. . . the close-fitting men's clothes and low-cut women's dresses" had publicly called the Emperor "the anti-Christ," and Charles IV had done nothing about it. At the end of his life, the pious mystic was tortured by terrible doubts.

His son, Wenceslas IV, was too weak to carry on his father's inheritance. Appearances were deceiving in Prague. "I never saw such a rich city, so inundated with all kinds of things," wrote Uberto Decembrio, member of a delegation from Milan, in 1399. "When you go shopping, better think of old Cato, 'Beware, or you will come home with an empty purse.' The city has almost the appearance of the city of Romulus. Like Rome, Prague is adorned with hills and valleys, instead of the Tiber the Moldau is flowing through the town and across the river Charles built his glorious bridge . . ." The Milanese is highly critical of people's pleasures, the free life in the streets, and the university "which is more renowned in the arts and theology than in jurisprudence and medicine."

Uberto Decembrio didn't see underneath the glitter and luxury the growing social conflicts—between Wenceslas and the high nobility, between the high and the lesser nobility, between wealthy German burghers and the Czech working population, between the high Church hierarchy and the poor clergy. The Church owned almost half the cultivated land in the Czech kingdom through parishes and monasteries. There were similar tensions in France, Italy and England, but when they erupted in Bohemia, nineteen years after Wenceslas IV was deposed by the Electors in 1400, they shook "the heart of Europe" and later the entire continent. At last, there came the revolution Charles IV had been afraid of.

Twice the people of Prague reacted toward a political crisis (and made world history) by throwing their foes out

of the window. Both Prague defenestrations started a chain reaction of events which no one could have foreseen. The first, in 1419, put into motion the Hussite revolutionary forces, which in turn led to the Reformation all over Europe. The second, in 1618, marked the beginning of the Thirty Years' War and "the Age of Darkness" in Bohemia's history. (And in 1948, Jan Masaryk, Czechoslovakia's Foreign Minister, died after a fall from a high window in the courtyard of Černín Palace, the Foreign Office. Perhaps he couldn't bear it that his world, and the world of his father, Tomáš G. Masaryk, was gone, and that the dark age of Stalinism had started. Or, perhaps future historians will once call his death the third Prague defenestration.)

The first defenestration occurred four years after Jan Hus had died as a heretic on the stake. Hus, a Catholic priest and Rector of Prague University, had preached from the pulpit of Bethlehem Chapel, which had been founded in 1391 by the merchants and burghers of the Old Town and thus was not under ecclesiastical authority. In today's Prague, Bethlehem Chapel is "one of the most hallowed places of the Czech nation," according to Alois Svoboda's *Prague* (1965):

Master John Hus preached here in Czech to the citizens of Prague. The fearless reformer of the Church and the founder of the revolutionary movement which shook the foundations all over Europe in the fifteenth century, was strongly influenced by the teachings of John Wycliffe of Oxford . . . Hus was followed in the pulpit of Bethlehem Chapel by other Hussite preachers. A hundred years later, Thomas Münzer preached here who tried to link up the tradition of the Hussite revolutionary movement with the growing revolutionary trends in Germany. After the victory of the Counter-Reformation, the Chapel was assigned to the Jesuits who destroyed every reminiscence of its revolutionary past: in 1786, it was demolished and the whole area built up

with blocks of flats. In 1954, the Chapel was reconstructed, at great cost and effort, and the remains incorporated in the blocks of flats after old pictures, along with revolutionary inscriptions and Biblical texts which originally adorned the walls.

Bethlehem—that was Hus's life and struggle. In Bethlehem Chapel no high mass must be celebrated. According to a Church encyclical it remained forever a "chapel" though it could hold up to three thousand people, almost a tenth of the population of Prague at that time.

The restoration of "one of the most hallowed places" was a sacred obligation for the Communist regime, and created considerable problems. Shortly after the First World War, Alois Kubiček, a Prague architect, studied the old protocols of the Municipal Building Commission. One sentence attracted his attention: it said that for the new (post-1786) buildings in Bethlehem Square the old walls of the Chapel were retained "up to the second-floor level." Kubiček went to Bethlehem Square and traced the old walls of the Chapel in House No. 255 where a pork butcher made some delicious Prague sausages in his smoking chamber. The pork butcher was a patriot. Kubiček obtained permission to investigate. He broke down the walls and found a Gothic portal, the original entrance to the Chapel, and later he discovered three windows, a well and the foundations of several pillars. On the second floor, fragments of Hussite inscriptions were uncovered.

Kubiček reported his findings to the authorities but nothing happened. Not till the early 1950s did the Communist government order the reconstruction of Bethlehem Chapel. Property deeds, pictures, plans, were studied, samples of mortar were analyzed, part of the text from Hus's writings on the six heresies were uncovered on the Chapel walls. On

the basis of all available information, Jaroslav Fragner, a noted architect, re-created the design for the Chapel. He was quite pleased *after* completion of the reconstructed Chapel, when an archivist in Mnichovo Hradiště found in an old book a plan of Bethlehem Chapel, dated 1786, after the demolition of the Chapel had been ordered. It turned out that the curbstone of the wall inside the Chapel, as Fragner had replaced it, differed from the plan of the original Chapel only by several centimeters in height. No effort nor expense were spared to recreate not only the Chapel but also its original atmosphere. Professors of the Academy of Arts projected on the walls of the Chapel color slides from old chronicles, and the contours were drawn into the damp plaster. The oak used for the door was sprayed under pressure with sand to give it the proper patina. Even experts would find it hard to guess that it was made from trees that had not yet been planted in the days of Jan Hus.

The Hussite movement was a genuine national revolution and the greatest moment in Czech history. Although it ended after an inglorious climax, its memory has sustained the identity of the Czech nation for five hundred years. It began as an intellectual movement. Hus was in close contact with the professors at the universities of Paris and Oxford. Other Czech writers also wrote clerical polemics, among them the Evangelist Petr Chelčický who called for a spiritual struggle of the people against their oppressors. At first, Hus only criticized the Church's "excessive love of gold," the priests' prebends, the indulgences guaranteeing salvation. Then he went further. He told the people that in the Lord's Prayer it does not say "*my* daily bread" but "*our* daily bread." It wasn't God's will that many starved while a few had too much. At the advice of Hus, King Wenceslas IV, by the Decree of Kutná Hora, modified the constitution of

Prague University and gave the Czechs and the Germans residing in Bohemia a majority of the votes. ("The national element in Hus's activities became obvious," wrote Oskar Schürer in *Prag*, published in 1935, and later considered the standard work during Hitler's occupation. "The Germans were infuriated. Over a thousand German professors emigrated to Erfurt and Leipzig . . .")

Hus reached the danger zone of "heresy" when he expressed doubts in the infallibility of the Pope and reserved absolute authority only to "the Word of God" (the Bible), which even the highest cleric must obey. John Wycliffe earlier confined his criticism to Latin tracts that were read mainly by theologians within the walls of universities. Hus addressed himself in Czech to the people of Prague, and they understood him. The Archbishop of Prague summoned Hus to renounce Wycliffe's doctrines. Hus refused to recant, left Prague in 1412 and began to preach in the countryside. There he also wrote grammatical works upholding the purity of the Czech language.

Eventually Hus became too much of a danger to the Church and was summoned to come to the Council of Constance and to defend his doctrine. The Holy German Emperor, Sigismund, the brother of the deposed Wenceslas IV, offered Hus an imperial promise of safe-conduct. But when Hus arrived in Constance, he was thrown into prison and charged with heresy. He was not allowed to defend himself. In vain he demanded that he should be "convinced and convicted" of his errors. He unconditionally refused to recant all that he had taught. On June 6, 1415, he was burned at the stake as an "incorrigible heretic."

Four years later, while unrest was mounting in Bohemia, Wenceslas IV, who had been deposed by the Electors in 1400, died. The Czechs refused to recognize Wenceslas'

brother Sigismund as King of Bohemia. They said Sigismund had broken his word and handed over Hus to the Church. Riots started in Prague. At the Old Town Hall, seven of the King's envoys were thrown by the enraged Czechs through a large window into Old Town Square, where they landed on the pikes of the Hussite soldiers below. The Hussites set up their headquarters in the Bohemian town of Tábor (the fifth movement in Smetana's symphonic poem *My Country* is called "Tábor"), and called it "The Kingdom of God in Bohemia" (the title of a stirring play by the young Franz Werfel that was a great success at the Czech National Theater in Prague). Present-day historians consider Tábor "the first attempt to build a classless society . . . The brave experiment was doomed to failure. Time was not ready yet for such a society."

The revolutionary Hussite movement broke up the old order. The Hussites claimed that not only bread but also wine must be received in the sacrament by every believer. The chalice as a religious symbol appeared on the Hussite banners. "Communion in both kinds" was one of the four principles demanded by the Hussites in the Prague Articles; the others were free preaching, removal of the worldly wealth of the priests, and punishment for mortal sins inflicted on all, whoever they were. The Hussite forces, mostly peasants and people from small towns armed with scythes, spiked flails, and spiked iron balls attached to chains, were led by the brilliant, one-eyed commander, John Žižka of Trocnov. (Prague's Vítkov Hill, where Žižka in 1420 won two victories, later became the district of "Žižkov.") The Hussites were badly outnumbered by the crusading knights and their mercenaries who wore heavy armor from head to foot. But the Hussites' fighting morale was stronger than armor, and they outfought their enemies by revolutionary

tactics. Žižka would form a solid phalanx made of farm wagons manned by marksmen who repulsed powerful cavalry charges. The Hussites' indomitable spirit was feared by their adversaries. Once, at Domažlice, the crusaders fled from the battlefield when the Hussites advanced toward them, chanting their battle hymn "Ye Warriors of God."

After Žižka's death, Prokop Holý ("the Bald-Headed") took command of the Hussite forces. The Hussite forces reached beyond the frontiers of Bohemia, making "glorious raids" into Germany (where they reached the Baltic Sea in 1433), France, Belgium and Spain. Peter Payne, an English preacher and follower of Wycliffe, joined the Hussites in Bohemia. Latin manifestoes explained the Prague Article to people all over Europe. The response was strong in rural areas of Germany.

The Hussites were never defeated by their foes, but the movement broke up when the Emperor and the Pope opened secret negotiations in Basel with Hussite nobles, and concluded a secret treaty with them. The Basel *Compactata* were the result; the Church agreed to "Communion in both kinds," and Emperor Sigismund promised to recognize the confiscation of Church property. The Hussite nobles accepted the *Compactata* but the uncompromising field armies turned them down. At Lipany, in 1434, the two groups virtually exterminated each other in a fratricidal battle—another tragedy in Czech history, and a decisive date in Europe's history. In 1436, Sigismund at last ascended to the Czech throne. The Basel *Compactata* became the legal foundation of the Calixtine (Hussite) Church. The Hussites—and later their successors, the Utraquists—retained their own liturgy (Czech services, the chalice), and did not acknowledge papal authority. For the first time the absolutist power of Roman Catholicism had been broken.

A century later, Martin Luther called Jan Hus his predecessor. "In truth, I and all of us want to defend Jan Hus, and if all of Bohemia should reject him, which God forbid, he shall be ours!"

After an interregnum, during which the Hussite King George of Poděbrady and the dynasty of the Jagellons ruled in Bohemia, the Czech Estates in 1526 elected Ferdinand of Habsburg to be King of Bohemia. (Ferdinand's brother, Charles Quint, already controlled Spain, Flanders, Austria and Germany, and in 1521 he had divided his possessions with Ferdinand who had married Anna of Hungary and Bohemia, increasing the Habsburg possessions through another appropriate marriage, in accordance with the Habsburg House policy.) Ferdinand, the favorite grandson of King Ferdinand of Aragon, had been educated in Spain where the Inquisition had taught him how to deal with "heretics." After his brother's death he became Emperor Ferdinand I and at once began the battle against the Protestant Estates in Vienna, then predominantly a Protestant town. He started out with ordinances and letters-patent, and continued with missionaries and executions. He crushed the mutiny of the Protestant Lower-Austrian Estates and had their leaders executed; he himself acted as presiding judge of the tribunal. In Prague, he crushed the "first revolt" of the Czech Estates, and had some of them tortured and executed. By 1551, he felt strong enough to call the Jesuits to Vienna and Prague; the Jesuit Canisius became his chief adviser.

At Hradčany Castle, Ferdinand introduced a style of ruling that was different from that of his predecessors, the Czech kings. Ferdinand saw himself as a Prince of the Renaissance. He didn't consider the Gothic Castle adequate

for the luxuries of his court. Landscape compositions and formal gardens were laid out. There was not enough room in the Castle's inner area, and the architects created the Royal Garden at the farther side of Stag Moat, which is connected with the Castle by the Powder Bridge. In 1538, Paolo della Stella, an Italian architect, began work on the Belvedere, the new summer palace, a charming, elegant building with slender colonnades; later two other architects, Hans von Tirol and Boniface Wohlmuth of Constance, didn't improve its appearance by adding a top floor and a copper roof. New living apartments were built in the south wing of the Castle, and the former royal apartments at the Old Palace were converted into offices and archives—the Office of the Bohemian Nobiliary, the Bohemian Chancellery, the Imperial Chancellery.

After the terrible fire of 1541 in Malá Strana which spread all the way to the Castle and caused enormous damage, Hans von Tirol worked together with della Stella on many projects. Reconstruction and new building went on side by side. Wohlmuth created the Renaissance helm-shaped cupola that has puzzled many experts on the Czech-Gothic tower of St. Vitus Cathedral; he also built the Renaissance choir on the western side of the uncompleted Cathedral (which was transferred in 1925 to the northern part of the crossing). In the Old Diet, Wohlmuth constructed a new vault, imitating out of admiration the Late Gothic style of an earlier architectural genius, Benedikt Rejt of Píseň whose greatest work at the Castle is the present Vladislav Hall, one of the largest throne rooms in Europe. Built between 1487 and 1500, it combines the spirit of the Late Gothic (the vaulted ceiling with intersecting curved ribs) and the Early Renaissance (the windows). The great architects of the transitional periods were able to combine various styles into a harmonious

whole. Rejt's famous doorway that opens into the Riders' Staircase is a mixture of Romanesque reminiscences with a successful blend of Late Gothic and Renaissance elements. In the northwest corner of the Diet, Wohlmuth built a Renaissance tribune. With an Italian architect, Oldřich Avostalis, he added a court for ball games. The Castle was beginning to look like a great Renaissance residence while Prague remained a Gothic city. Only the ruler was missing who would express the spirit of a complex, contrasting period in history, and he appeared in Prague in 1576, when Rudolph II of Habsburg decided to move his residence from Vienna to Hradčany Castle.

Rudolph's predecessor, the tolerant Maximilian II (who was said to have secret sympathies for the "heretic" Lutherans), had rarely been in Prague. Rudolph came there when he was twenty-four. He was the last of the great mystics at Hradčany, and he gave Prague her last Golden Age. He had been educated in Spain by fanatical priests in the strictest court ceremonial. When he came to Gothic Prague, he was immediately bewitched by the magic of the mystical city—the dark church towers and dim chapels, religious fanatics and strange superstitions, St. Vitus Cathedral and the Old Jewish Cemetery. This was the era of martyrs and saints, of the Cabala and the Golem. Like Charles IV, Rudolph was a fanatical collector, but unlike his great predecessor, he was no planner and organizer. He was a mystical dreamer; his world was the stars, by which he lived; he was not interested in architects but in astronomers. His pictures show a deeply tortured man, with a veil of insanity in the dark eyes. Among the politically astute Habsburgs who enlarged their empire by brilliant compromise and dynastic marriages, Rudolph—reticent, silent, melancholy, a lifelong bachelor though fond

of pretty women—must have been something of an eccentric. He would have been impossible in gay, irresponsible Vienna. In Prague, the mystical city, they understood him.

In his earlier years, Rudolph tried to overcome his frequent depressions by escaping into festivities, splendor, make-believe. Hradčany Castle became a large stage where the Emperor's court artists performed for the European nobles. Rudolph had inherited his dynasty's love of music. His court orchestra was the best on earth. From the Habsburgs' Netherlands, then a center of great music, he summoned Jakob Regnard, Charles Luyton, Lambert de Savye, Philippe de Monte, Hans Lemmens. From Austria came Jacob Gallus, from Germany Hans Leo Hassler. Organists, singers, instrument makers settled in town. The nobles too had their own orchestras; one of them, Krystophe Harant of Polžice, was a noted composer. The Jewish Town had a famous dance orchestra. And the burghers later founded the *Collegium Musicum*. Music was opium for the Emperor. Even in his last years when his mind was dimmed, he found moments of peace in the works of the great composers.

Art historians call Rudolph a "fanatical" collector, owing to his passion for Albrecht Dürer and the Brueghels. He sent his emissaries to Nuremberg and Breslau and Wittenberg (where they purchased Dürer's "Anbetung der heiligen drei Könige"). Dürer's "Rosenkranzfest," which hung above the altar of San Bartolomeo in Venice, was bought and carried in 1601 by four strong men across the Alps, "hanging on poles, so it won't be damaged," all the way to the Castle in Prague. In Madrid, Rudolph's ambassador, Count Khevenhüller, offered 13,000 thalers for the collection left by Cardinal Granvelle—thirty-three paintings, among them Dürer's "Marter der Zehntausend." When the Emperor couldn't get

a painting by Pieter Brueghel the Elder that he wanted very much, he told Pieter the Younger and Johann Brueghel to copy it. In 1604, Johann Brueghel was in Prague.

Rudolph was fascinated by the Italian Renaissance but the Gothic style was too deeply rooted in dark, mystic Prague, and Renaissance experiments usually ended in a compromise between Gothic and Renaissance ideas. The Belvedere, that masterpiece of pure Italian Renaissance, is the glorious exception; it has been called the most beautiful work of its kind north of the Alps. "It affects you as though it too had been carried from Italy across the Alps," writes Johanna Baroness Herzogenberg. It was planned by Paolo della Stella, during the reign of Ferdinand I, who wanted it for his wife. She didn't live to see it completed.

The era of Rudolph II is now remembered as the Golden Age of Czech literature. The two leading spiritual trends—European humanism and the Evangelical *Unitas Fratrum*—spread the ideas of individual freedom and social justice. Czech writers, many of them still writing in Latin, were cosmopolitan-minded. The Králice Bible appeared—which for centuries set the highest literary standard in all Czech-speaking countries.

Rudolph summoned painters, sculptors and artisans from all over Europe. Italian architects designed ceremonial halls and galleries; Hradčany Castle became Europe's "art chamber," filled with paintings by Titian, Correggio (in addition to the many Dürers and Brueghels), sculptures, books, rare coins. In 1577, Jacopo Strada from Mantua, a famous numismatic scholar, became director of the Imperial collections. Unfortunately, worthless trinkets and monstrosities were placed among genuine art works. An inventory of the Prague Castle that is now kept at Vienna's National Library lists next to Italian masters, "all sorts of strange sea fish, a

bat, a box with four thunderstones, two boxes with magnet stones, two iron nails, presumably from Noah's Ark, 'a stone that grows, a gift of Herr Rosenberg,' a crocodile, a monstrem with two heads. . . ."

Not surprisingly, the Prague Castle attracted artists and adventurers, honest dealers and sly crooks. The great Dutch artist, Adriaen de Vries, was named "court sculptor." His bronze horse, made in 1560, is now at the National Gallery in Sternberg Palace, and copies of his sculptures have remained in the gardens of the Waldstein (or Valdštejn) Palace, but the beautiful originals were taken away by the Swedes during the Thirty Years' War and are now in the park of the Royal Castle of Drottningholm. Rudolph installed a workshop for bronze-founding near the Romanesque Mihulka Tower. The fashion spread and many nobles in town ordered bronze fountains and bronze statues. Some of the biggest workshops at the Castle were turned into "kitchens" for Rudolph's favorite alchemists and charlatans who obtained a lot of genuine gold from him on the promise of producing a little. Two other Romanesque towers at the Castle, the White Tower and the Bishop's Tower (later called "Mathematical Tower"), were converted into astronomical and astrological observatories. Two of the world's great astronomers were in residence at the Castle, Tycho de Brahe and Johannes Kepler.

The court became a strange, remote world, full of mysteries and mysticism. Frightening rumors circulated in town about the Emperor and his advisers. It was said that Rudolph was interested mainly in mystical and allegorical *objets d'art*. The painters, sculptors, goldsmiths, instrument makers, who lived at the Castle, combined in their works the ideas of Late Renaissance Mannerism with mystical subject matter, elegance and subtlety. This was what the Emperor

liked best. His court ceremonial, modeled on the Spanish Habsburg court, was gloomy, severe, formal. "Spanish" became the word for all that was grandiose. When a new ceremonial hall was built in 1598, it was called the "Spanish Hall." No one was exempted from the rigidity of the Spanish court ceremonial. The Emperor allowed no one to leave the table when he gave a ceremonial banquet. Tycho de Brahe, the Danish astronomer, is reported to have died at such a banquet of a burst bladder "because he had drunk too freely and didn't dare leave and relieve himself."

Rudolph was a lonely man. He loved the beautiful Katharina Strada, the daughter of his court antiquary Jacopo da Strada (whom Titian painted), and had six children by her, but couldn't think of marrying her. While he became more deeply immersed in his dream world, his Empire was falling apart. The Protestant Netherlands had seceded from Catholic Spain. In Hungary, the Protestants had demanded and obtained religious freedom. The religious schism grew everywhere—especially in Prague, "the heretical town," as they called it in Rome. In Malá Strana and in the Old Town the Catholics had the majority. In the New Town, the Czech Estates, many of them Utraquists (the successors of the Hussites) were getting strong and restive. Rudolph tried to avert the crisis by conceding to the Czech Estates equal status for the Catholic and Protestant faiths. No wonder the Habsburgs in Vienna and Madrid were shocked; the House was in serious trouble; Rudolph's brother, Matthias, demanded the replacement of "the eccentric and irresponsible celibate." Rudolph was forced to abdicate in favor of Matthias who was crowned in St. Vitus Cathedral in 1611.

Rudolph died the following year, a broken, bitter man, and perhaps demented, as many people said. The learned

Melchior Goldast who was permitted to see "the greatest head in Christendom" writes about the embalmed body, "the face was uncovered, and they'd put in glass eyes." The strangest Habsburg of all is buried in a modest coffin in St. Vitus Cathedral, in his beloved Prague. The crown that he had had made later became the crown of the Austrian Empire, after the end of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation. The crown is now shown—not in Prague but at the Treasury in Vienna's Imperial Palace.

Matthias transferred his residence to Vienna but building continued at the Prague Castle where the Emperor was represented by two *Statthalter* (vice regents). The Italian builder Vincenzo Scamozzi (who created the great Baroque dome in Salzburg) designed the monumental Matthias Gateway in the second courtyard of Hradčany. The year was 1614: the Italian Baroque made its entrance in Prague.

Four years later, the religious and political tensions erupted. Riots broke out in Prague between the Protestant Estates that were allied with the Czech brethren, and the Catholics. The "second rising" of the Czech Estates was climaxed by the revolt of May 23, 1618. A large group of Czech nobles went to Hradčany and demanded an audience with the vice regents, Jaroslav Bořita of Martinice and Vilém Slavata of Chlum. They were received in the Bohemian Chancellery, and there were "sharp verbal exchanges." The vice regents were called "serfs of the Jesuits" and accused of being against religious freedom. Somebody shouted, "Throw them out of the window, *po staročesku!*" (as is the old Czech custom). Two aged nobles, Oberstburggrat von Sternberg and the Maltese Prior von Lobkowitz, were tactfully led out of the room "so they wouldn't be involved." Count Bořita fell to his knees and begged for mercy. When he asked to see a confessor, he was told "to

turn to God Himself," because they wouldn't think of calling in "a roguish Jesuit." Thereupon, the Count was thrown, head forward, through the large window. According to the report of Count Slavata (whose turn was still to come), Bořita of Martinice, while falling down, incessantly called out "Jesus, Maria!" and floated down so slowly on the ground as though he would sit down there, so that owing to the intercession of the Virgin Mary and God's protection the terrible fall didn't hurt his health though he was a heavy man. Certain pious and trustworthy people later claimed that while they crossed the bridge toward Malá Strana, they saw the Virgin Mary, while she carried Count Bořita in her robe . . . The Count himself didn't notice this but he realized it after his fall.

Count Slavata himself tried to put up some resistance which didn't help him. Out he went too, "making the sign of the Cross, saying with a contrite heart, '*Deus propitius esto mihi peccatori*,' May God be merciful to me, the sinner. His hat, trimmed with gold roses and diamonds, remained at the Chancellery."

Philippe Fabricius, the vice regents' secretary, told the Estates what he thought of them. Somebody wanted to stab him to death but Count Schlick said that "they must not desecrate the place with a murder." So they threw Fabricius after his masters "like a sheaf of corn."

The second Prague defenestration, which was followed by the Thirty Years' War and made a shambles out of Europe, ended on a note of low comedy. Though the three men fell fifty feet into the Castle moat, none of them was seriously hurt because the moat was filled with garbage. Bořita and Fabricius ran away; Fabricius went all the way to Vienna where he reported to His Majesty. Count Slavata was given first aid by Madame Polyxena, the attractive wife of Chancellor Lobkowitz. Funny songs were sung all over

Prague about the defenestration which the chronicler Pavel Skála of Zhor called "an ancient Bohemian custom" that was also known "among the Romans and other famous people." But what came later, was not funny: the open revolt of the Czech Estates that led to the disastrous battle on the White Mountain. Today a streetcar (No. 1) will take you for one crown (3¢) from the former battlefield, past Hradčany (where the revolt began), almost to the Old Town Square (where the revolt ended with the execution of the leaders of the Estates).

There is much disagreement about the battle of the White Mountain among Czech historians, depending on where they stand. The present-day opinion is summed up by Alois Svoboda, "The common people could not see what the Czech gentry were fighting for, and would not take up arms; and so the fate of the struggle lay in the hands of mercenaries, badly paid and for the most part foreigners, adventurers interested only in booty."

November 8, 1620, most fateful day in Bohemia's history, was dark and gloomy, reflecting the low spirit of the army of the Bohemian Estates. Their troops were encamped along a two-mile stretch on Bílá Hora (White Mountain, now a pleasant residential suburb of Prague). The army consisted of Bohemians, Moravians, Germans, Hungarians, Austrian cavalymen and various adventurers. There was also a regiment of English mercenaries. A few months earlier the Estates had elected Frederick of the Palatinate to be King of Bohemia. The "Winter King" (because he lasted just through the winter) was the son-in-law of King James I of England. The Estates hoped he would get help from England and the German Union, to which Frederick belonged. Their hope was not fulfilled.

Count Thurn, the Bohemian Minister of War, inspected his army and declared, "If we had fallen from heaven into formation, we couldn't have found a better spot." This turned out to be a somewhat over-optimistic appraisal of the situation. His commanders told him there were not enough spades available for digging trenches. Others complained about the morale of their troops. Thurn shrugged off their doubts. He said he was certain that the Imperial forces were "not yet ready for battle." (Some of the lower officers were not so certain. Chroniclers report that a great many officers of the Estates' army quietly slipped away into wine houses and brothels in nearby Malá Strana because they thought the battle was imminent, and they were not eager to be there when it started.)

The Bohemian Estates, whose intelligence was deplorable, had no idea that right then an Imperial council of war was being held, arguing whether to fight or not to fight. Colonel Spinelli of the Neapolitan infantry suggested an Austrian-style compromise: they would give the signal for "a major skirmish" but not for a real battle. The Imperial commanders agreed on the password "Sancta Maria" and put white ribbons—the battle emblem—on caps and sleeves. At about half past twelve, two companies of infantrymen started moving up the hill, beginning the "major skirmish." A Carmelite monk, Dominicus a Jesu, "inflamed the Imperial troops to destroy the heretics."

Thurn and the Bohemian commander, Christian Count of Anhalt, at once ordered their men to counter-attack. The Imperial troops were making progress, however, and Anhalt sent thirteen hundred men into the "skirmish" that was fast developing into a full-sized battle. There is confusion among the historians about what happened next, but most agree that the troops of the Estates didn't put up much of a fight.

Some units were already seen in wild flight toward Prague. Then the young Count Anhalt, son of the Estates' commander, charged into the enemy's flank with a courageous cavalry attack (approximately where the Church of St. Mary now stands), causing confusion among the Imperial troops. The Austrian cavalymen fighting with the Estates were ordered to make a charge but they stopped when they met the Imperial infantry, fired one volley, turned around and made off toward Prague; they had done their fighting for the day. Then the Polish Cossacks, fighting on the side of the Imperial army, charged the Hungarian cavalry of the Protestants. "Brandishing a sabre in each hand, holding the reins between their teeth, the Cossacks were a frightful sight," a chronicler reports. The Hungarians dismounted and fled through the vineyards.

Even the commanders were in flight now. When the Duke of Weimar asked the Hungarian Colonel Kornish to turn and face the enemy, the Hungarian pointed at the fleeing German cavalymen and said. "*Germani currunt*," the Germans are running. (The Estates' army commanders conversed in broken Latin.) Anhalt tried to argue with a group of cavalymen "to turn and fight." They refused and ran away, and poor Anhalt had to join the retreat. He rode down to Prague, which was filled with confusion and fleeing soldiers, and went to see King Frederick who was sitting at the table, presiding at a lunch in honor of the English Ambassador. Anhalt told the King that the battle was going badly. The King "at once gave orders to pack."

But the battle wasn't over yet. The Czechs resisted stubbornly against the Imperial troops near the Star Hunting Lodge. There were eighteen hundred men of the reserves near the Lodge, but they were never ordered into battle. Joachim Andreas Count Schlick, a German Bohemian noble-

man from Eger, tried a last-ditch defense, organizing his Moravian infantrymen in a semi-circle, but they were pushed into a deep hollow (which is still there, near the wall of the park). The five hundred Moravians fought bravely for a lost cause, and in the end most of them were killed; and when it was all over, "the dead were piled ten high by the wall." Among the mercenary officers of the Imperial army was a young adventurer named René Descartes who later became a French philosopher, physicist and mathematician.

All in all, the battle of the White Mountain had lasted "perhaps less than a hundred minutes," but it decided the fate of the Czech nation for the next three hundred years. The final act was the execution, on June 21, 1621, of twenty-seven leaders of the revolt—Czech and German noblemen and burghers of Prague and other Bohemian towns—in the Old Town Square. Contemporary pamphlets gave detailed descriptions of the gory event. The first man executed was Count Schlick (who had saved Fabricius from being killed because he didn't want the Chancellery to be "desecrated with murder"):

First Count Schlick, wearing a black silk coat and holding a prayer book in his hands stepped on the stage, quite confident and praying, unafraid and relaxed, as all the others who were about to be executed. His servant took the clothes off the upper part of his body, and the Count knelt down on the cloth and offered his head with great patience and truly invoking God. His decapitation was swiftly done, and then his right hand was also cut off, and head and hand were taken into custody . . . After each execution a new cloth was spread out on the stage . . .

A macabre Prague legend reports that twelve heads of the executed men were secretly buried ten years later at Týn Church "in the presence of sixty Protestant clergymen." At the nearby Škréta house that once belonged to Václav

Budovec of Budov, one of the executed men, a statue at the corner has "a stunted appearance . . . here the cutting edge of the executioner's sword and the shadow of the gallows are an almost physical emanation," writes Alois Svoboda.

Catholicism was proclaimed the only permitted religion although nine tenths of the population of Bohemia were then Protestants. Many members of the Czech nobility had their possessions confiscated by a commission headed by Prince Charles of Liechtenstein, Governor of Bohemia. (Liechtenstein himself kept several castles and much wooded land and founded his dynasty's enormous wealth much of which the Liechtensteins lost in 1945 when the Czechoslovak government expropriated the family's Czechoslovak possessions.) Another beneficiary was Generalissimo Albrecht von Wallenstein, the great adventurer, soldier, mystic.

Many Czech intellectuals emigrated. The most famous of them was John Amos Comenius, the last bishop of the Evangelical *Unitas Fratrum* in Uherský Brod, Moravia—one of the great humanists that appear in irregular intervals in Czech history until Tomáš G. Masaryk. In 1957, UNESCO observed the three hundredth anniversary of the first publication of Comenius' *Opera Didactica Omnia*.

The rights of the Czech Estates were annulled. Only ecclesiastical and judicial institutions were permitted in Hradčany Castle. A Latin sign at the Office of the Nobiliary Quartos said, *Iuste indicate, filii hominum* (Judge justly, sons of men). Next to it a small Czech sign said, "Nobody will have anything read or written for him which has not first been paid in cash."

By the middle of the seventeenth century, Hradčany Castle had become a vast complex the size of a town—a town within the town of Prague. The jurisdiction of the Prague

authorities ended at the ramparts of the Castle. Its territorial status attracted people who liked to be out of the reach of the Prague authorities—artisans, who had not been accepted into the guilds, tradesmen not eager to pay taxes and shady characters who liked to elude the law. Naturally, they couldn't live in the various palaces, and they began to install themselves in improvised huts and hovels between the buttresses of St. Vitus Cathedral, in the niches between the palaces, in the projections between the church buildings. The Castle was even then popular with tourists and sightseeing people. Tradesmen arranged their booths, and servants set up taprooms wherever there was space. (Not long ago, several wooden pegs were found under the floor of Vladislav Hall on which an innkeeper had marked his customers' debts for wine.)

Along the Romanesque and the Vladislav ramparts there ran a causeway which was supported by a succession of arches on pillars. Many "parasite" dwellings were haphazardly built under these arches, which were allotted as a special privilege to certain applicants. Rudolph II permitted his Castle gunners to live there. Later the gunners disappeared and more doubtful people settled in "Golden Lane," as it became known. There were no sanitary installations and people lived in crowded conditions. Prisoners at the nearby White Tower—mostly debtors who had failed to pay up—were permitted to receive visitors and to give parties, and some stored their own firewood in the Castle gangway connecting with Daliborka Tower, and kept their chickens there. The parasite dwellings were later demolished because they were a constant fire hazard. (In 1690, there was another terrible fire in Prague. In 1679, the Great Plague had killed "tens of thousands of people," though official figures don't exist.) Golden Lane remained there

through the centuries, a breeding ground of legends about alchemists and tales about mystics.

When Lady Mary Wortley Montague, the wife of the British Ambassador in Vienna, visited Prague in 1716, she was not overwhelmed. "There are the remains of former splendor when Prague was one of the biggest cities in Germany," she wrote. "But the houses are old, hardly inhabited, poorly looking. People live in needy circumstances and can hardly be compared with those in Vienna." Lady Mary noticed that some people—she meant *her* kind of people—stayed here "for the music and the entertainment" and that there was an abundance of everything, "especially the best game I've ever eaten." Thanks to the good cooks of Prague, Lady Mary's journey was not a complete loss after all.

A guidebook for European travelers, published in 1736, calls it "*remarquable*" that "in the butcher shops of the Old Town no fly ever sits on the meat which, they say, must have been done by a magician." Another *remarquable* curiosity was the so-called English secular chapter house, founded in 1701 for the nobility; a Countess Berlepsch was the first abbess. But there were less *remarquable* aspects too. An Italian writer named Quarinoni complained that Prague was a wicked place. "The streets are full of small taverns and wine-houses crowded with drunks. One cannot lift one's eyes without seeing one of these scandalous inns."

After the Thirty Years' War, Prague was no longer one of the world's great cities and cultural centers, as it had been under Charles IV and Rudolph II. It was demoted to the status of a provincial capital. There were sieges, in 1741 and 1743, and in 1744 the Prussians occupied Prague, but history had bypassed it. In 1784, the four royal districts (Old Town, Malá Strana, New Town, Hradčany) were

merged into the city of Prague. Still, Prague was not the seat of political power. The rulers came there from Vienna only for the coronation ceremony, if they cared enough to be crowned as Kings of Bohemia, or on state visits. Hradčany, the Castle of the Czech Kings, had become a noble monument of the past.

("Much worse, however, was that the old tradition of the Castle began to be misused in favor of Counter-Reformatory struggle, to promote the forcible re-Catholicization of Bohemia, and in support of monarchial absolutism," the authors of *The Prague Castle* write. "At St. Vitus Cathedral, close by the St. Wenceslas Chapel, the new patron saint, John Nepomuk, was buried in a magnificent sepulchral monument of silver.")

The struggle that had begun with the arrival of the Habsburgs in Bohemia in 1526 ended only in 1918. The Habsburgs ruled "by the Grace of God." They expected everybody in their lands to communicate with God in *their* fashion. Pressure started resistance. Resistance was met by force. The Thirty Years' War that began and ended in Prague is exemplified by the fascinating figure of Albrecht von Wallenstein, the mysterious Bohemian mystic of whom Friedrich Schiller, in his *Wallenstein* trilogy said, "His character fluctuates in history."

He was called a genius by some, a demon by others. No one understood him; perhaps he didn't understand himself. Wallenstein (also called Waldstein, or Valdštejn) was ambitious and ambiguous. Johannes Kepler, the great astronomer, had written Wallenstein's horoscope,

... Saturnus ascending creates melancholy thoughts, alchemism, black magic, intercommunion with ghosts, disregard for laws, customs, religions; suspicious toward God and people, as though

it were only deceit . . . And because Mercurious is *in opposito* to Jovis, he will make people convinced of his dark powers and attract them, or lead a group of malcontents . . .

At the height of power, Wallenstein was Prague's "secret king." He received secret messengers from all courts in Europe. Just below Hradčany in Malá Strana, he built himself one of the most beautiful Baroque palaces. He didn't leave his dark cabinets for weeks, brooding over the counsels of his astrologers. He betrayed his Emperor and became turncoat again, fighting the Emperor's enemies. He drove the Swedes out of Prague but later got secretly in touch with them and was ready to betray the Emperor again. The Emperor was faster and had Wallenstein assassinated in Eger, in 1634. No one will ever know how many people Wallenstein had assassinated; once, in 1631, he ordered seventeen of his officers executed—in Prague's Old Town Square—for "cowardice in battle."

Always violence. The Counter-Reformation was more brutal in Bohemia, the country of Jan Hus, than elsewhere. The Church never forgot that it was in Prague, "the heretical city," where it had all started. Prague had a brief respite under the enlightened absolutism of Emperor Joseph II of Habsburg who disliked ecclesiastical pomp and in 1773 drove the Jesuits out of Prague. Ten years later, he dissolved the School of Painting and broke up the great "Kunstammer" of Rudolph II.

Earlier, Joseph's grandfather, Charles VI, had ordered that some important paintings be brought from Prague to Vienna. When Joseph's mother, the Austrian Empress Maria Theresa, needed money to finance her wars against the Prussians, many paintings were sold to Saxony "through doubtful intermediaries." In 1749, sixty-nine paintings were sent to Dresden, among them Rubens' "Boar Hunt" and

van Dyck's "Charles I with His Wife," for 50,000 thalers. Rudolph II had paid much less for them; the price of good paintings was already going up. Paintings by Correggio, Titian, Rembrandt and Velasquez were sold to St. Petersburg; they can now be admired in Leningrad's Hermitage. When Frederick of Prussia attacked Prague for the second time, in 1756, many valuable paintings, statues, porcelain, cameos and other art works were hurriedly taken down to subterranean vaults that had been hewn out of the rocks below Hradčany Castle. After the war, the art treasures were simply forgotten and left there. It is reported that in 1781 there were still paintings by van Dyck, Rubens, Paolo Veronese, Caravaggio and Tintoretto there. Then somebody "remembered," and Joseph II gave orders to take them to Vienna where they are now the glory of the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

The end of Rudolph's "art chamber" was as grotesque as some of its beginnings. In 1781, it was decided to turn part of the Prague Castle into artillery barracks. (The western part had just been reconstructed—after damages suffered during the Prussian sieges—in the style of classicist Baroque, under the Viennese architect Niccolo Pacassi, giving it more or less today's appearance.) The artillery would need ammunition, and the cellars were to become an ammunition magazine. A commission of artillery officers inspected the cellars and was "much amused" (as a chronicler reports) to find Rudolph's art treasures there, carelessly thrown together, half-broken statues, music instruments, armor, paintings; the place must have looked like a large antique store. The best things were sent to Vienna, and the rest was sold, during a memorable auction, in May, 1782. Semi-precious stones were inventoried "in bulk according to color." Old, Imperial letters were sold as "parchment" and "used paper."

Heintz's copy of Correggio's "Leda" was offered as "naked woman, bitten by angry goose." Masterpieces were practically given away, provided the buyer would carry away the "junk" (*Gerümpel*) at once.

Smart connoisseurs founded their collection that day. The great statue of Iloneus that Hans von Aachen had bought two hundred years earlier for 34,000 guilders, and which had lost its head and arms, was offered for 50 kreutzer (half a thaler). "Everybody laughed," reports an anonymous chronicler. An antique dealer named Helfer offered 51 kreutzer and walked away with the torso. He later sold it to a stonemason named Malinsky for 4 guilders, at a 1000 per cent profit. (When Helfer later discovered the head of the statue, he sent it to Malinsky, free of charge.) There the Viennese collector Barth found the statue and took it to Vienna for an undisclosed price. During the Congress of Vienna, the Crown Prince of Bavaria saw it at Barth's and bought it immediately for 6000 ducats. The Iloneus torso is now one of the priceless treasures of the Munich Glyptothek.

"A Poem Written in Stone"

SIGHTSEEING BUSES now "make" the city of Prague in a couple of hours, including time for refreshments and writing picture postcards, but that's the wrong way of seeing the sights. To catch the magic and mystique of Prague, one

has to walk—alone or in congenial company—slowly and deliberately, prying into the secrets of old houses and the interiors of mysterious courtyards, especially in the Malá Strana district. “There is not one stone here that is not in harmony with the whims of history,” writes Jacques Guenne. “In Prague, during a short walk, we see real poems,” Jan Neruda wrote in 1890. When he said “Prague” he meant “Malá Strana,” where he’d been born and lived all his life. He wrote about houses and inns with strange names (“To the Three Ostriches,” “At the Green Crab,” or “At the Two Suns”—Neruda’s own house) and about the small shopkeepers and artisans, the seamstresses and old women living there. When Detlev von Liliencron (who called Prague “a golden net of poems”) walked with a friend to Malá Strana, he stopped in the middle of Charles Bridge and stared down into the dark river. “Do you think the water is deep enough here?” he asked. The friend didn’t ask, “Deep enough for what?” He understood. Charles Bridge and Malá Strana do this to people.

L. N. Zvěřina, a Czech writer, calls Malá Strana “a poem written in stone,” and the spiritual home of poets. Neruda, Arbes, Vrchlický, Hašek lived here. Zeyer, Sládek, Sova came for inspiration. They understood the stone poetry and got drunk on it . . . Each palace here is a capital letter, the beginning of a line of poetry.” This was the Prague of Rilke and Meyrink and the older generation of poets, and later of Kafka and Werfel and Brod who rarely talked about Prague because they wanted to be more “realistic” about their city than the older “mystics.” “But our thoughts were full of Prague,” Brod admits, “and of Malá Strana where we walked and which was a different world, far more important than the modern Prague.”

Malá Strana is a symphony in High Baroque, a timeless

fairy-tale world of churches, monasteries and palaces (most of the palaces are now ministries or embassies), of hidden squares with unusual names (“Square of the Five Churches”), of towers and cupolas and chapels and street-corner saints that were placed there to lead the heretic citizens to the True Faith and to remind the poor sinners of Heaven and Hell, mostly Hell. There are dark corners where time seems to have stopped. Any moment Charles IV will emerge from one of the secret underground passages; they haven’t been discovered yet but everybody claims they are there, and the Emperor used them when he wanted to spend a few hours away from the court ceremonial and have some incognito fun in town; he was fond of wine and women and had valuable collections of both. Malá Strana is a large alfresco museum, and walking there is like turning the pages of petrified history. The façades are not merely historical decorations but curtains shielding a strange, secret life. In Malá Strana, I always feel that Prague has two faces: today’s face and, behind it, the invisible, eternal face that one must search for with love. Prague gives herself only to those who court her for a long time.

Nowadays some people in Prague say that one must fight off “that mystical feeling you get in Malá Strana.” They say it isn’t “realistic” or that it’s “politically unwise.” At the end of the twentieth century one must not believe “in these things.” I know a young, successful architect who supports the regime though he is not a member of the Communist Party; he even admits that many mistakes are made but he is optimistic about the future of socialism. He has no patience with what he calls “the mystical nonsense of Prague.” Yet once in a while he walks—alone—in Malá Strana. He loves Our Lady of Loretto Church with Giovanni Battista Orsi’s beautiful copy of the Santa Casa in Loretto,

near Ravenna, revered as the supposed dwelling of the Virgin and Jesus in Nazareth. Loretto was the first Baroque church built in Prague, six years after the battle at the White Mountain. It was a pilgrimage church and the clerical authorities kept beautifying it for half a century. Having learned his socialist history, the young architect knows that Loretto, like the canonization, a hundred years later, of St. John Nepomuk, was intended to make the Czech people forget their national "saint," Jan Hus. Loretto became an attraction by offering the services of four much-needed saints. St. Sebastian would guarantee protection against the plague that killed off almost one third of the population of Bohemia during the Thirty Years' War. St. Florian gave protection against fire, and St. Anthony against both plague *and* fire. And for those suffering from a toothache there was St. Apollonia. Arne Novák, a modern writer who perceived the spirit of the Baroque, calls Loretto "a meeting place of love." There is love on the ceiling of the Casa Santa, showing the Virgin surrounded by saints, or around St. Appollonia and the angels love everywhere.

The young architect, strictly a non-believer, knows all this, but he goes there "because it is so beautiful." The façade of Loretto is one of the most beautiful works of Kilian Ignatius Dientzenhofer, who was the greatest architect of the Baroque Prague. Inside, there is an early Baroque courtyard with cloistered arcades and fountains. Every hour the twenty-seven bells of the carillon in the dome-covered bell tower play a sweet melody which doesn't sound kitschy at all as one listens in the courtyard. Upstairs is the great Loretto Treasure, a collection of inestimable monstrosities, among them the Diamond Monstrance, made by a Viennese goldsmith in 1699 who used 6222 diamonds. Benvenuto Cellini would have loved it. The Loretto monstrosities dis-

appeared during the last war, and it was assumed that they had been stolen by a prominent Nazi art lover. But one day in 1961, workmen tearing down a wall found several parcels wrapped in newspapers that had been hidden under stones and were covered with pieces of mortar. What made the parcels interesting were the newspapers in which they had been wrapped: they were dated 1941, when the Nazi terror had been very bad in Prague. The parcels contained the monstrances, chalices and other relics that had disappeared. Someone must have been in an awful hurry as he wrapped the parcels and hastily put up the wall; whoever it was may have been warned that the Gestapo was about to enter Loretto. Efforts to find the mysterious savior of the Loretto Treasure remained unsuccessful although in 1961 he would have been certain of the nation's gratitude. It is assumed that he or she is dead. Another unsolved mystery of Prague.

Prague's Baroque began a few years prior to the battle of the White Mountain, penetrated Malá Strana during the Thirty Years' War and developed to its greatest beauty during the saddest period in the city's history. ("It underlines the contention of historians that periods of unusual development in the arts do not necessarily coincide with the forward movement of society as a whole," writes Václav Pelišek in 1966.) The Hussite era, the most glorious epoch in Czech history, from 1400 to 1526, produced little art in Prague. Not a single church was built in Prague, since the Hussites opposed all religious building. Iconoclast "crusaders" broke up many valuable statues, and Vyšehrad Castle was razed.

While Comenius in his *Labyrinth of the World* wrote about the "vanity of palaces, churches, cupolas, towers" and

called their construction "a sensuous pleasure," the Jesuits systematically transformed the Gothic town where the Renaissance had become hardly noticeable into Europe's most beautiful Baroque town. Not a single religious building remained in Prague that wasn't remodeled during the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. At Hradčany Castle, the influence of the Baroque is hardly evident—except in St. Vitus Cathedral where the Baroque artist F. M. Kanka built a small chapel consecrated to St. John Nepomuk whose canonization had been announced in 1721 by Pope Benedict XIII. The younger Fischer von Erlach in Vienna was commissioned to design a Baroque tomb, "made of thirty-seven hundredweights of silver," that gives the impression that "the Saint is dancing in his grave." An enormous Baroque scaffold was set up for the celebration; and the canonization, in 1729, lasted a whole week.

Not only the Church was building in Malá Strana. After the victory at the White Mountain, the Emperor had distributed the property of executed or exiled Bohemian nobles among his loyal generals, and the great condottieri built themselves magnificent showplaces of secular Baroque. The greatest and least loyal of the condottieri, Albrecht von Waldstein, Duke of Friedland, the Emperor's generalissimus, had an immense district razed where an army of Italian workmen under Andrea Spezza built a truly imperial residence. It was noted that from his windows he could see the slopes of Hradčany, with the Imperial residence. There he lived in imperial style. Friedrich Lebzelter, a Saxonian agent, wrote in 1631, "The Duke of Friedland has a large court, including several counts and knights, and fifty servants, keeping four dining rooms and 160 horses. They pay their servants every quarter of the year. But otherwise the Duke is quite parsimonious . . ."

Waldstein believed in astrology. For several years he had Johannes Kepler in his house. After Kepler's death in 1630, the astrologer Seni had great influence at the palace. Some historians consider Seni a paid stool pigeon of the Viennese court where people worried about the ambitious generalissimus who was later killed in Eger, by order of the Emperor, for "treason."

His palace remains a masterpiece of the secular Baroque, with its fantastic marble hall, galleries and vestibules, a beautiful *sala terrena* (now the scene of lovely summer evening concerts) with fountains, grottos, statues (some made by Adriaen de Vries), an ornamental lake, stalactites and a great burial place for the horse that had been killed under Wallenstein in the Battle of Luetzen—truly a pre-Wagnerian idea.

The Gothic Prague of Charles IV had been created by artists from France (Matthias of Arras) and Germany (Peter Parler and his disciples). The few Renaissance buildings were done by Italians. The Baroque of Prague that now dominates the appearance of the city was also mostly the work of foreign artists. The Dientzenhofers came from Bavaria, the Luragos from Italy, the Brokoffs from Hungary. Matthias Braun, the great sculptor, came from Tyrol, and so did Johann Georg Bendel. But no matter where they came from, they fell under the spell of Prague, and their Baroque is quite distinct from the Baroque in Italy, in Austria, in Dresden. Obviously the *genius loci* of Prague was so strong that it made the great artists there create something that could only be in Prague. The city never originated a new style but modified the great styles by its atmosphere.

In Italy, the Baroque had emerged as a reaction against the Renaissance that was devoted to the ideals of Greek

and Roman art, not exactly a "Christian" style spiritually. The Baroque developed as a "religious" style after the middle of the sixteenth century when the Church suffered many disasters. It was not "ordered" by the Popes and "executed" by the Jesuits as some fashionable art historians now claim in Prague. But after the victory of the Counter-Reformation was a certainty, the Church considered the Baroque an efficient means of architectural propaganda. Not surprisingly, the main "campaign" was directed against "heretical" Prague, which was surrounded by a cloud of sulphur ever since Jan Hus had preached in Bethlehem Chapel. From the Church's point of view, the appearance of Prague had to be changed.

The great Baroque artists were more interested in decorative effect than in architectural creation. They sensed that their style was able to animate lifeless material. They turned cold stone into living matter. The great Renaissance artists preserved discipline and dignity even when their heroes—as Michelangelo's—are agonized with suffering. The heroes of the Baroque have no such inhibitions. They smile at the onlooker and stretch out their hands. They unmistakably communicate their exultation or their grief. The statue of St. John Nepomuk on Charles Bridge, made by Johann Brokoff, which was later imitated hundreds of times, is a true Baroque work of art. With an indescribably melancholy face the saint gazes toward Heaven, embracing Christ in his hands.

The Baroque didn't want to be austere as the Gothic or serene as the Renaissance; the Baroque artists probably sensed that their work was not always in impeccable taste. But it fulfilled a purpose. The Baroque cupolas polarized the vertical towers of the Gothic town. Even today the Baroque of Prague's Malá Strana keeps many spectators

spellbound. One doesn't have to be a believer to get excited in St. Nicholas Church, the masterpiece of Christopher and Kilian Ignatius Dientzenhofer, with its fantastic cupola, its strangely luxurious interior, its mystical dimness, its violent rhythm swinging among the big pillars. Everywhere there is a confusion of frescoes, stucco, marble, gold, triumphant saints, altars and more gold. The various components have been criticized on aesthetic grounds, but the overall impression is overwhelming. No other Baroque church on earth compares with it, not even Vienna's flamboyant Charles Church. It is not exactly a church for the performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* but rather for Verdi's *Requiem*. (I would love to hear his "Dies Irae" there. I wouldn't be surprised if the exultant saints would suddenly come to life.)

"The art of the Baroque found perhaps its happiest expression in Prague, more than in Vienna, in Bavaria or in Italy," writes Paul Claudel. "Here it achieved the difficult moment, the balance between sincerity and lyrical transfiguration." In Prague's Baroque, there is none of the elegant splendor of Vienna's Belvedere or the airy charm of Dresden's Zwinger. Prague is located halfway between Vienna and Dresden but she remains withdrawn and mysterious, the somber, suffering city under a dark sky. The Prague Baroque is the most powerful of all because it is an architectural expression of mysticism. In Italy and Vienna, the Baroque often covers up former styles and creates harmony—in Italy, visual harmony, and in Vienna, musical harmony. In Prague, there is never harmony—always drama and contrast.

Except in Prague's great Baroque gardens. I've never seen anything similar elsewhere. The gardens are the result of a problem that has always bothered the great Baroque architects in Prague: lack of space. Magnificent buildings—

St. Nicholas Church in Malá Strana, St. John on the Rock, and the immense Černín Palace, a seventeenth-century skyscraper, had to be built on limited sites. Černín Palace, across from Our Lady of Loretto, was built by Francesco Caratti for Jan Humprecht Černín of Chudenitz, a former ambassador at Venice. Its 450-foot-long, four-story façade is cut by thirty demi-columns between the windows, and the cornice of the roof forms a long, horizontal bar. It looks like a Florentine palace magically transposed to Prague. During the War of the Austrian Succession, the French occupiers in 1742 decided to demolish the palace but refrained from doing so when the Austrians threatened to destroy the Elector's residence in Munich which *they* kept occupied; the deterrent was already a means of practical diplomacy. The Baroque artists F. M. Kanka and Anselmo Lurago later restored Černín Palace, showing how much beauty could be concentrated in a very small space.

These architects considered the Baroque gardens *alfresco* extensions of the palaces to which they belonged. Putting sculptures, terraces, loggias, fountains, into these gardens, they merged them completely with the buildings, achieving yet another effect: the palaces, in turn, became part of the Baroque landscape.

You will have to do some walking up to enjoy the full beauty of the gardens in Malá Strana. Most of them are artistically laid out on narrow, steep slopes behind the buildings. Since there was so little horizontal space, the garden architects of the Baroque simply built up and up. My favorite Baroque garden (neither the largest nor the most famous) is the intimate, lovely paradise behind the Vrtba Palace. The Vrtbas were Bohemian nobles living in rather modest circumstances by the exalted standards of Baroque Prague where it was not unusual to build one's own theater

for the guests (as Count Sporck did) or to lose a fortune during a night of gambling (as Wallenstein did), whereupon one went to confession.

The Late-Renaissance Vrtba Palace (now housing the Czechoslovak Foreign Institute) is no match for the magnificent Malá Strana residences of other nobles and generals—Wallenstein, Schönborn, Palffy, Golz, Gallas, Nostic, Piccolomini, Sporck, Kolovrat, Fürstenberg, Morzin, Thun and others. All the Vrtbas could afford was a portal ornamented with sculptures, but they had them done by the best Baroque sculptor in Prague, Matthias Braun, who also did the sculptures and vases for their garden. They must have had a first-rate garden architect. He created a magical atmosphere on very limited space behind the house. On a gently terraced slope, one walks up between statues that make you forget how steep the slope is. Gradually a magnificent panorama unfolds, as one reaches the top of the garden—a small platform between rosebushes and Baroque sculptures.

Looking from left to right, one sees the "Prague of The Hundred Towers"—Hradčany with Parler's tall bell-tower of St. Vitus, St. Nicholas in Malá Strana with Dientzenhofer's greenish cupola and Lurago's belfry tower, the violet spire of St. Thomas with the famous "black beer" brewery of the Augustinians (in Prague the monks were always the best beer brewers), Parler's tower on Charles Bridge, the unsymmetric towers of Týn Church, the Clementinum, and at the extreme right, the Renaissance façade of St. Savior. The guests of the Vrtbas must have been delighted with the view, and a garden party was a success before it even began.

In a small house below the slope, Mikoláš Aleš, the famous and now fashionable Czech painter, had his study. There is nothing Baroque about the robust, realistic characters in Aleš' paintings but he loved the intimate atmosphere of this

garden. The intimacy of the gardens of Prague sets them apart from the more grandiose gardens in Rome, Paris, Vienna. Even the large ones—Wallenstein, Ledebour, Fürstenberg—have an air of elegant seclusion about them. At the Fürstenberg Garden, there is a small Baroque pavilion that was sometimes used as a bathtub by the Countess. "The purpose was perhaps not only a cleansing bath," writes an anonymous chronicler. At the Palfy Gardens, there are hidden corridors, loggias, tritons and fountains. At the nearby Ledebour Gardens there is a *sala terrena*, where Shakespeare comedies are now performed in summertime in a charming setting. Looking up one sees Rajská Zahrada (the Paradise Garden) with its summer houses and fountains; it deserves its name.

Nothing in Malá Strana adds a wrong, disturbing note. In certain parts—Na Tržistě, Nerudova, Valdštejn Square—no houses were put up after the Baroque era, and the spell of the past remains unbroken. Little restoration has been done in the past thirty years and the paint begins to peel off some façades. Heavy trucks and cars rumbling by over the cobblestone pavement have done heavy damage to the palaces and churches, which were not built to withstand the shocks of motorized traffic. They now talk of keeping certain streets and squares closed to all traffic to keep them alive a little longer.

Many Czechs—sober, rational people—have an instinctive distrust of the Baroque. The feeling is especially strong among Protestants, Utraquists, members of the Bohemian Brethren, and lately among atheists. Few people try to get close to the spirit of the Baroque as did Arne Novák, who belonged to T. G. Masaryk's circle and wrote in 1911, "The Prague Baroque represents a new love for the hierarchy of a new society . . . directed against those loyal to the state. It

announces the blood-soaked glory of the aristocracy and Church imperialism. The face of a humiliated people was built into the foundations of the magnificent Prague Baroque." (A Communist writer, Dr. Josef Janáček, assesses the Baroque from the viewpoint of social realism. "Baroque . . . became the outer symbol of the citizenry's economic and political impotence. This state expressed itself in the frightening power of the nobility and the Church over ordinary burghers. Palaces, monasteries, and churches swallowed up whole blocks of burghers' houses. . . . The depression lasted up to the middle of the eighteenth century.")

The Baroque had no sense of social justice; one sympathizes with the impoverished slum dwellers in Malá Strana who were chased out of their crowded, unsanitary homes (God knows where they went) because Wallenstein just wanted to have an enormous palace there, with a tomb for a dead horse. But the "depression" also made Prague one of the most beautiful cities on earth. The Baroque was no style for ordinary mortals; only princes and cardinals could afford it. By contrast, on Castle Hill overlooking Budapest, the Baroque architects didn't build "palaces, monasteries and churches" but simply fixed up the burghers' older houses, which had been damaged during the Turkish domination. This bourgeois "provincial" Baroque compares poorly with the noble Baroque in Prague. When the Hungarian nobles, the Palfys or Eszterhazys, wanted a great, Baroque palace, they had it built in Vienna or Prague.

Malá Strana may need a new coat of paint now but its aristocratic beauty has survived for three hundred years. Will this be said one day of the architectural achievements of the present regime—the depressing rows of faceless apartment houses, the functional structures of a soulless era, that are

always proudly shown to visiting delegations? Prague's largest Communist monument—the enormous Stalin statue—was less outstanding for style and taste than for size and servility. Its religious appeal lasted a much shorter time than the tombs of St. Wenceslas and St. John Nepomuk.

Toward the end of the past century, Czech artists, writers and architects became concerned about the beauty of Prague. Could the old city be saved from an inevitable deterioration? As early as 1873, Vítězslav Hálek wrote about the smoke problem in Prague, "the city not only of a hundred churches but of a hundred chimneys." The experts agreed that the harmonious lines of Prague's beautiful panorama must be preserved." In 1899, Vilém Mrštík wrote, "The fight for Prague is the first big test of our cultural life."

Many thought that Prague was losing the fight. Ignát Hermann wrote, "Old houses collapse and are replaced by buildings without character . . . picturesque districts disappear or are turning into building sites." Everybody agreed that the Municipal House, next to the beautiful fifteenth-century Prašná Brána (Powder Tower, because it was once used as a gunpowder magazine), was "the most monumental artistic disgrace of our time." A Czech art historian, Dr. Gustav Pazourek, asked St. John Nepomuk "to arrange for a locally limited earthquake." Emile Bourdet, the sculptor, took one horrified look at the atrocious Secession-style façade and exclaimed, "*Fi donc!*" He was told that at one time the authorities wanted to tear down the beautiful Powder Tower.

In 1900, J. Heran bitterly complained that during the preceding century over five hundred valuable old statues had been wilfully destroyed and "terrible things were done under the guise of regulation, canalization, navigation . . ." The Czech writer, Ladislav Procházka, in 1924 asked people to

pray for each old house. "The young generation talks about unhealthy districts. But the old parts of our city are the most beautiful; let's admit that what was built in the past hundred years isn't worth much. When they say that Prague is beautiful, they don't mean the new Prague. The old Prague that is in our hearts is not only the property of our nation but of the whole world." Another Czech writer, Zdeněk Wirth, who admitted that the great building epoch of Prague had ended with the Baroque, in 1921 evoked "the spirit of a modern Charles IV" to create a new Prague "that would be Prague and European in its character, just as the Prague Gothic and the Prague Baroque were."

No one knows how to save for eternity the Old Jewish Cemetery whose oldest tombstone, of the poet Avigdor Karo, bears the date: April 25, 1439. Though it was enlarged several times, the Cemetery became too small as the Jewish population increased. There was no more horizontal space to enlarge it. The only solution remained to cover the existing graves with fresh soil and put the new coffins in. After a few more centuries, there were twelve different layers of graves, one on top of the other, and now the agglomeration of tombstones gives a picture of the conditions in the former Prague ghetto. The twelve thousand stones are only one sixth of all the people buried at the Cemetery. No more funerals took place after 1787 when Emperor Joseph II prohibited burials amidst the residential parts of the town. The Old Jewish Cemetery remained a cultural and historical relic.

In 1903, some parts of the Old Jewish Cemetery had to be liquidated to make space for the construction of roads and the new Industrial Art Museum. The tombstones from the liquidated area were brought to the remaining parts and

placed in less densely occupied corners or in the surrounding walls. The sandstones—gray, reddish, dark, black—wear off slowly and inexorably. In winter, the cold bites into them, and all year long, there are exhaust fumes from the street and the mist from the nearby river. The tombstones that have no space lean against each other and sometimes fall on top of each other, like drunks. The Talmud says they must not be moved, but even the Talmud cannot prevent them from sinking lower into the earth as the years go by. Every century, the tombstones disappear another ten centimeters; of some, only the tops remain visible; and one day, there will be none, and only the catalogued tombstone inscriptions will remain of twelve superimposed layers of graves.

The Hebrew inscriptions are mostly simple: the date of death, the name of the deceased, sometimes a short eulogy, indicating the deceased's profession and social status, or a simple image, derived from the name: a lion, a deer, a bear, a dove. A lance for a surgeon, a pair of scissors for a tailor. Often the letters have disappeared and the image is all that remains.

During the Nazi occupation, the Old Jewish Cemetery was the only place assigned to the Jews of Prague for their walks and to their children as a playground; all other parks and playgrounds were forbidden to them. Walking between the tombstones, the people could prepare themselves for their eventual fate (though they didn't know then that most of them would never have a tombstone). Occasionally, an old Jewish scholar, Dr. Tobias Jakobovic, was escorted to the Cemetery by S. S. guards to blow the *shofar* (ram's horn) amidst the tombstones for the entertainment of visiting Nazi and S. S. bosses. Jakobovic knew well of course that the Talmud forbids the *shofar* to be blown except on the Jewish New Year, but he had strictest orders from Hans Günther,

head of the S. S. Central Office for Jewish Affairs (read: extinction) in Bohemia and Moravia.

Günther also issued instructions that all objects found in synagogues and in the homes of Jews who were sent away for liquidation would have to be delivered in Prague; he even postponed executions for Jewish scholars who could decipher old Hebrew texts. At the Klaus and Pinkas Synagogues, Günther set up a Jewish Museum that would one day show "the culture of an extinct race." Today the Pinkas Synagogue is a Memorial, its walls showing the names of seventy-seven thousand and two hundred and ninety people—Jewish men, women and children from Bohemia and Moravia who were made "extinct" by the Nazis.

In the 1920s, Karel Čapek wrote, "The fight for Old Prague is already lost if it isn't tied up with the building of modern Prague. And with the lost battle, modern Prague loses much that she should keep as a family jewel," and he called, "the Castle, the Old Town Square and the National Theater the three symbols of Prague." He complained that every new "landlord" at the Castle had "torn down, ruined, rebuilt, moved things around, enlarged and torn down again." Before 1918, the Castle had been badly kept. Grass blades grew between the stones of the pavement.

In Prague, a political city, architecture was always a political art. The Counter-Reformation had shown that a political and religious idea was strong enough to change the appearance of whole city districts. The art historians of the present regime are critical of the work done at the Castle during the "bourgeois" Republic. ("The former nimbus of a royal residence was replaced by a bourgeois republican nimbus . . . Republican present often clashed sharply with feudal past, inscribed inerasably in the stone book of the

Castle.") A Slovene architect, Josip Plečnik of Ljubljana, designed plans for the reconstruction of the Third Courtyard (where excavations had uncovered remains of old fortifications). He created reception rooms in the southern wing, and designed plans for the bastion garden, the Paradise Garden, and the garden on the ramparts.

Present planners claim that "the romantic approach to architectural alterations is dead" but admit that Plečnik had an imposing breadth of conception." When he began work at the Castle, the Third Courtyard gravitated down toward the Old Palace. Plečnik created a monumental level square south of St. Vitus Cathedral, and a small square in front of the western façade. Between the two new level spaces he placed a monolith, and in the center of the panorama he put a Gothic sculpture of St. George on a modern pedestal.

Today restoration continues at the Castle—under a different aspect. The official guidebook says, "Hradčany continues to be the seat of the President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. . . . Mainly, however, the Castle is an art-historical and cultural monument designed to call up in the mind of the visitor the past and present of the Czechoslovak people." The building program is directed by the Ideological Council of Hradčany; the President of the Republic is its chairman. (Actually, President Antonín Novotný had his offices in Hradčany but lived in a small, comfortable villa in the garden near Belvedere Palace. So does President Ludvík Svoboda.) At the Castle, important Communist Party sessions are held, and acts of state take place.

The Castle Riding School was converted into an exhibition hall. The covered Ball Court (Mičovna) in the royal gardens was restored. Between the Second and Third Courtyard an Information Center for visitors, with refreshment rooms and an exchange office, was installed. The Renais-

sance building of the Old Burgrave's House has become the House of Czechoslovak Children. Ceiling and wall paintings in the St. Wenceslas Chapel were restored. An investigation of the Institute of the Theory and History of Art confirmed the existence of some great paintings (Rubens, Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, Pordenone and others) among the old pictures in the Castle depositories, survivals of the collections of the Habsburg emperors.

Future plans of projects in and around Hradčany are discussed by architects, urban planners, historians and sociologists. "The possibilities of structural alterations are being studied from the ideological viewpoint," an architect tells me. The ideological architects survey the surroundings of the Castle. A new bridge may be built over Stag Moat (Jelení příkop), and the northern approaches of the Castle in the vicinity of the Riding School are studied. The Castle is a national monument and more paths are needed around it to give the increasing number of visitors a chance of looking at it from various approaches. The present thinking is summed up by Václav Formánek:

Our modern scientific age is far removed from the dark and complicated symbolism of the St. Wenceslas cult and its view of the false halo surrounding feudal and bourgeois fetishes. . . . Prague Castle nevertheless always will have a firm place in the life of the Czechoslovak people as a monument of its own history, a memorial in stone brought to life by a collective vision of its past and its future.

A Great Place for Music

"MUSIC IS PART of the life of the Czechs," Bedřich Smetana said in 1868, when the cornerstone was laid for the National Theater in Prague. Music was always a vital component of the Czech national character. Dr. Charles Burney, the English eighteenth-century musicologist, called Bohemia "Europe's Conservatory." ("Not only in every large town but in every village there is a reading and writing school, the children are taught music.") Actually, the first conservatory in Central Europe was founded in 1810 in Prague, in the Dominican monastery near St. Giles Church. Long before the emergence of a Czech national music, the *České muzikanti* (Czech musicians) were as famous in Europe as Czech humanists and Czech heretics, Czech tailors and Czech artisans.

One thousand years ago, St. Vojtěch is said to have composed the first Czech hymn, "Hospodine, pomiluj ny" (Oh God, Have Mercy on Us). And the old song about the death of King Wenceslas has become a sort of popular national prayer (which doesn't much please the present regime). The Bohemian countryside was always filled with music—folk melodies, village dances, drinking songs. Jaromir Erben published a collection of folk songs and polka dances but he didn't do the thorough job that Béla Bartók and Zoltan Kodály did when they traveled for years through Hungary's

backwoods villages to save the country's folk songs from oblivion. A great many old Czech songs have disappeared because they were never written down.

King John, the father of Charles IV, brought Guillaume de Machaut, poet, scholar and creator of the French *ars nova*, to Hradčany Castle, and some Franco-Flemish musicians came to the court of Prague. During the Hussite era, music for the first time reached the soul of the people. Two great battle hymns of the Hussites have been preserved, stirring songs that terrified their enemies: "Povstan, povstan, veliké město Pražské!" (Rise Up, Great City of Prague), and "Ktož jsu boží bojovníci" (Ye Warriors of God) which Smetana artfully used in the last two movements of *My Country*. In 1875, Smetana wrote, "On the basis of this Hussite melody, the rebirth of the Czech people will be worked out, their future happiness and glory." He was already totally deaf (his sickness, worse than Beethoven's, later led to insanity), but he could still see the future. Other old Hussite "fighting and mocking songs" from the fifteenth century have been preserved in the *Jistebnice Cantional*. Some were written by Jan Hus, an able composer himself (just as Martin Luther was a century later). In fact, Luther's hymns have the rousing spirit and the rugged strength that one finds earlier in the songs of Jan Hus. Throughout the whole fight between Catholicism and Reformation, music played an important part.

The music-filled era came to an end with the battle of the White Mountain in 1620, which was followed by the Thirty Years' War. For a long time, the only sounds heard in Prague were the distant thunder of artillery and the ominous rolls of drums, the somber background of executions. Then the militant leaders of the Counter-Reformation began to realize the importance of music. Using the old melodies, the

Jesuits wrote new lyrics for the education of the "heretics" in Bohemia. Many Czech musicians emigrated. Johann V. Stamitz (1717-1757) joined the remarkable group of musicians known as "the Mannheim school" that Duke Carl Theodor, Elector Palatine, assembled at his court in Mannheim. Stamitz is now admired as the precursor of the classical symphony. "The Scherzo in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony was indeed modeled after the Finale of Stamitz' modest trio sonata, opus IV, No. 3," writes Paul Henry Lang. Other Bohemian musicians, who couldn't make a living at home, emigrated to Vienna: Bohuslav Černohorsky, Johann Dismas Zelenka, Franz Tůma, Johann Zach, Josef Mysliveček, Anton Jiránek. Later Zelenka and Jiránek went to Dresden, Mysliveček to Rome, Georg Benda to Berlin, Franz Benda to Gotha. In Vienna, Leopold Anton Koželuh wrote pre-classical symphonies. Jan Stefani from Prague went to Warsaw and founded Poland's national opera there. Antonín Rejha taught composition at the Paris Conservatory (among his pupils were Berlioz, Liszt, Franck, Gounod). Hundreds of Czech orchestra musicians worked all over Europe. Today's cultural ideologists resent the expression *České muzikanti*, which seems to give them an inferiority complex. ("It implies that the Czechs were a nation of *muzikanti*.") Things could be worse; the British are known as a "nation of shopkeepers," the Swiss a "nation of innkeepers." The music-makers of Bohemia made a historical contribution to the glory of "Europe's Conservatory."

Italian opera was performed by Italian companies at Hradčany Castle in the eighteenth century. In 1723, the opera *Costanza e Fortezza* by the Austrian composer Johann Josef Fux was produced for four thousand listeners during the coronation festivities for Charles VI. Later, opera was given

for ordinary citizens in other theaters in town, always by Italian managers.

But Prague's greatest contribution to the art of music is an indirect one: Prague made the short, unhappy life of the world's greatest musical genius a little happier. Mozart was twice in Prague and he loved every moment of it.

On January 13, 1787, the *Prager Oberpostamtszeitung* reported, "Last night our great and beloved composer, Hr. Mozard [sic], arrived here from Vienna. We expect that in his honor Hr. Bondini will schedule performances of 'The Marriage of Figaro,' this popular work of his musical genius . . . We also wish to hear Hr. Mozard play the piano."

The following day Mozart wrote to Gottfried von Jacquin, his friend in Vienna, about "the so-called Bretfeld Ball" (in Malá Strana's Neruda Street) and the beautiful women of Prague who were there:

That would have been something for you, my friend. I mean, I can see you run—well, maybe rather hobble—after all these beautiful girls and women. I didn't dance and I didn't eat anything: the first because I was too tired and the last out of my congenital stupidity [*Blöde*]. I looked on with sheer delight as all the people merrily flew about to the music of my Figaro, arranged for Counter Dances and German Dances. Here they talk nothing but Figaro. Nothing is played, sung or whistled but Figaro. No opera is drawing like Figaro. Certainly a great honor for me.

Mozart, in a happy, exuberant mood, goes on with the names which he and his party invented for themselves on their journey to Prague. "I am Punktiti. My wife is Schabla Pumfa . . . My dog is Schamanuzky . . ." Franz Xaver Niemetschek, the Mozart biographer, remembers in 1808, that

Mozart was cheered at the theater and later played the piano there in a "Big Musical Academy." Niemetschek beautifully conveys the impression of Mozart's genius:

We didn't know what to admire more, the extraordinary composition or the extraordinary performance; both created a total impression on our souls akin to a sweet enchantment. At the end of the Academy, Mozart improvised alone on the piano-forte for half an hour and heightened our fascination to the highest degree, and there were overflowing ovations. In fact, his improvisations surpassed everything that one could imagine about piano playing . . . Certainly, as this Academy was unique for the people of Prague, Mozart counted this day to be the best in his life . . .

A few weeks earlier, Mozart had finished in Vienna his D Major Symphony (K.504), known as the "Prague" Symphony, or "Symphony without Minuet," which was performed there in January, 1787, and, according to Niemetschek, "remained a favorite piece of Prague audiences though it must have been heard a hundred times . . . Mozart loved to be in Prague."

The most important result of the trip was Mozart's decision to follow up his comic masterpiece *Le Nozze di Figaro* with one of the greatest dramatic masterpieces of all times, *Don Giovanni*. Pasquale Bondini, manager of the Italian opera company, wanted to cash in on Mozart's local popularity, and gave him a contract. The opera would also be performed at the Nostitz Theater. Built by Count F. A. Nostitz, from 1781 to 1783, it was, and still is, one of Europe's most charming Baroque theaters, with its beautiful frescoes, its tiers of richly decorated boxes, its low corridors with uneven floors; only the ladies and gentlemen with their powdered wigs from the days of Mozart are missing. In 1798, the theater became the property of the Estates for 60,000 gul-

ders, and was renamed Estates Theater until 1945, when it was called Tyl Theater, after Josef Kajetan Tyl.

Mozart returned to Vienna in the spring of 1787, and at once began to discuss with Lorenzo da Ponte the libretto of the Don Juan theme that had interested him for some time. Da Ponte wrote *Il Dissoluto Punito Ossia Il Don Giovanni*. It was a time of great sorrow for Mozart. His friend, the physician Barisani, died, and then he lost his beloved father. In these dark days, he conceived the unfathomably beautiful music of *Don Giovanni*.

In the summer, he went back to his beloved Prague to finish the score, which he dedicated to the people of Prague. The singers and the technical apparatus of Bondini's theater were not quite up to Mozart's exalted standards. The premiere had been scheduled for the wedding trip of Prince Anton of Saxony and Maria Theresa, the sister of Emperor Joseph II, but it had to be postponed, and instead, *Figaro* was given as a gala performance. On October 29, 1787, Mozart conducted the world premiere of *Don Giovanni*. He had feverishly worked during the last days and nights preceding the premiere at the nearby house in No. 420 Rytířská, a charming building erected on low arcades. Here, according to a much-cherished Prague legend, he finished the magnificent overture just in time for the performance, and the musicians had to sight-read it "from the pages still wet." If there is some truth in it, as in so many Prague legends, the musicians must have been very good. But Mozart once said, "My orchestra is in Prague." Perhaps the legend is true after all.

On November 3, the *Oberpostamtszeitung*, which by now had learned to correctly spell the composer's name, reported:

Connoisseurs and composers agree that such a work has never been given in Prague. Hr. Mozart conducted himself, and when

he stepped into the orchestra pit, he received three ovations, and this happened again when he left. The opera is very hard to execute and everybody admires the good performance after a short rehearsal time.

Apparently, the paper's music critic stuck to the essentials of the performance, cautiously reserving critical judgment on the artistic merits of Mozart's masterpiece. Maybe he didn't really understand it; he wasn't the only one. *Don Giovanni* was a terrific success. Domenico Guardasoni, the stage manager, told Mozart and da Ponte that "as long as they lived there would never be any more bad seasons." *Don Giovanni* was performed 532 times in Prague in the hundred years following the premiere. Casanova was in the audience; he may have contributed some substitutions to the text. He might have watched *Don Giovanni* with mixed feelings. The great seducer fails lamentably in his last efforts. The Don is turned down by Donna Anna; he gets in trouble with his former fiancée, Donna Elvira; he can't even seduce Zerlina, the pretty peasant girl; and then he gets comeuppance from the icy hand of the stony Commendatore. The supreme irony of *Don Giovanni*, which Mozart appreciated, is that it could have been called "The Last, Unhappy Days of Don Giovanni." Mozart later wrote to Jacquin of the enormous applause at the first performance and all that followed. "I wished that my good friends were here for one night to take part in my happiness." And he asked, worried, "Will my opera be given in Vienna? I wish for it."

He had worked hard with his Italian artists. Luigi Bassi from Pesaro, the birthplace of Rossini, was an attractive Don. Teresa Saporiti was a beautiful Donna Anna. Caterina Bondini, the wife of the manager, sang the part of Zerlina. When she didn't utter a convincing cry for help at the end

of the first act, Mozart is said to have pinched her backstage to get a realistic effect.

These were the last happy days of his life. ("A tender public and true friends carried him so-to-speak on hands," writes Niemetschek.) His antagonists, the composers Antonio Salieri and Leopold Koželuh, had come to Prague to intrigue against Mozart. Mozart had done another opera, during the journey to Prague and the preparations for *Don Giovanni*. This was *La Clemenza di Tito*, which he also conducted in Prague, with no success. He was already sick when he went back to Vienna. There, news of the Prague premiere of *Don Giovanni* had reached the ears of the Emperor. After the customary intrigues and delays, it was performed there at the Burgtheater, on May 7, 1788, with no success. The Viennese considered it "confused and dissonant." The only man who appreciated *Don Giovanni* was Joseph Haydn.

The people of Prague have lovingly catalogued all the places that Mozart frequented. At first he stayed with Count Thun at the palace that is now the seat of the British Ambassador. He played the organ in the chapel of Strahov Monastery. The wine cellar in Temple Street and the "New Inn" in Celetná no longer exist. There Mozart listened to Josef Haisler who could read no music and knew nothing about counterpoint but played the harp with such virtuosity that Mozart invited him up to his room and played a theme on his spinet which he thereupon presented as a gift to Haisler. The harp virtuoso immediately began to play his own variations on Mozart's theme.

Mozart was often seen at Steinitz' coffeehouse near the Malá Strana bridgetower. The Villa Bertramka where he stayed with his friends, the composer Franz Dušek and his wife Josephine, a noted singer, is now a Mozart Museum,

with electric chandeliers and central heating. It is a charming pink-and-white rococo house surrounded by a lovely garden. It was public knowledge that the house had been built by Count Clam as a "Tusculum" for Madame Dušek. Egon Erwin Kisch reports that from the garden one could see Malvazinka Cemetery. "In this gallant atmosphere each gentleman was a Don Giovanni who was after his Donna Anna and whose Donna Elvira was thinking of vengeance." In Mozart's days, the Villa Bertramka was on the outskirts of the town. Today it is surrounded by factories and apartment houses.

On December 31, 1791, the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* in Berlin wrote:

Mozart is dead.—He returned from Prague, very ill. He died in Vienna, at the end of last week. His body was badly swollen and it is believed that he was poisoned. One of his last works is said to be a Requiem Mass. Now that he is dead, the Viennese will realize what they lost in him. Neither his "Figaro" nor his "Don Juan" were successful there, but the more in Prague. Peace to his ashes!

On December 14, nine days after Mozart's body had been dumped uncereemoniously into a mass grave in Vienna Hundsturm Cemetery, four thousand people came to St. Nicholas Church in Prague's Malá Strana where his *Requiem Mass* was performed. Josephine Dušek sang the soprano solo. On January 13, 1792, an "Academy" was given at the National Theater in honor of the dead composer.

Mozart's success in Prague proves how intimately the musical Prague was connected with Vienna's musical classicism. In a way, Mozart repaid to Prague the debt which Vienna owed the Czechs for taking away and assimilating so

many excellent Bohemian musicians. (After a visit to Prague, Beethoven wrote to his brother, "My art is gaining me both friends and respect—what more could I ask?")

There was no Czech national music until the early nineteenth century, and no Czech opera. Opera needs the help of the language, and the Czech language, which for centuries had been considered "only a peasant's language," was then slowly being resurrected by Josef Jungmann who created the first Czech-German Dictionary, by the historian František Palacký, and the biologist Jan Evangelista Purkyně. ("The former Czech serfs were going to work in manufacture," writes the contemporary historian Miloš Kratochvíl. "A new intelligentsia was coming forward imbued with patriotism and enlightened ideals.")

In 1806, Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* was given for the first time in a Czech translation. In 1825, the Theater of the Estates gave the first performance of a Czech opera, *Dráteník* (The Tinker), by František Škroup, a simple, comic work that is still in the repertory of many Czech companies. Škroup later became immortal as the composer of "Kde Domov Můj?" (Where Is My Home?), the melancholy, beautiful Czech national anthem—the only one on earth that begins with a question. Perhaps the Czechs were not yet sure where their home was, but Škroup gave them the answer: in the woods and by the rivers and on the meadows, there is my home. Škroup himself had to leave his home; he couldn't make a living in Prague and emigrated to Holland, and there he died in exile. No other Czech opera was successful until Smetana came along—the right genius at the right moment. The time had come for Czech national music, and Smetana was the man to write it.

Born in 1824 in the small Bohemian town of Litomyšl, Smetana was a gifted composer and a Czech patriot. He had

firm convictions about his artistic *and* national mission. He considered music an important expression of human emotions; ideas should be expressed in music, in a broad human sense. Smetana instinctively turned toward the musical drama, which seemed to offer the best possibilities. He has been called "the father of Czech music," and for once the popular epithet is justified. Instead of imitating his Italian and German predecessors, Smetana went back to the sources of folk music, the lore of his country. The national and historical elements in his music are not "exotic color" but the very spirit of this music. He owes much to Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin and Wagner but he was too talented to be overwhelmed by others. His best music sounds like Smetana's and no one else's—the music of Bohemia, often haunting and sad in its harmonies, then again merry with Slav rhythms and dance tunes. His best melodies have the innocence and simplicity of genuine folk melodies.

After several years in Göteborg, Sweden, where he'd gone to make some money, he returned to Prague in 1861, determined to say in music what other Czechs were beginning to say in political speeches. He is a romantic composer. His romanticism doesn't come from nature but from his nation's history; there are epic, heroic undertones in his music, which is always national music. Smetana understood Gluck's operatic reforms, and though he couldn't quite shake off Richard Wagner's influence—no one could, at that time—he didn't share the Bayreuth superman's pseudo-philosophy and strange aesthetic theories. Smetana had to learn to compose for the Czech language, which is not exactly singable, with many words consisting only of consonants. (The classic example is the sentence, "Strč prst skrz krk," which means, "Put the finger down the throat.")

Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* is considered in Prague

"the direct and worthy descendant of Mozart's 'Figaro,'" says Pavel Eckstein. Such comparisons are always problematical; but *The Bartered Bride* is a masterpiece, with a wide range of human emotions, a great comic opera from the scintillating overture to the happy end. Smetana never repeated its success. *The Bartered Bride*, the Czech's national opera, has been performed almost three thousand times in Prague alone; the people there never get tired of it, as the Viennese never get tired of *The Magic Flute*, the Parisians of *Faust*, the Russians of *Boris Godunov*, the Poles of *Halka*. Ironically, *The Bartered Bride* was no success in Prague when it was first performed there. Only after its triumph in Vienna, in a German translation, did it become a hit in Prague. The Viennese have reciprocated for what the people of Prague did earlier for Mozart's *Figaro*.

The tradition of Smetana was continued by Antonín Dvořák, not really an operatic composer though he said toward the end of his life, "People think of me only as a composer of symphonic music but for many years I've expressed my deep affection for opera." Dvořák's earlier works have imagination, temperament and great beauty; everybody liked them except Dvořák, who later wrote "program music." He is not considered *persona gratissima* by the *kultura* bureaucrats of today's regime; perhaps they feel there are "cosmopolitan" sounds in Dvořák's beautiful music, in the "New World" Symphony and the "American" String Quartet, the result of a trip to the United States where he was always homesick for Bohemia. But the bureaucrats and the experts have often been wrong in Prague. Leoš Janáček from Moravia was sixty-two when his masterpiece, *Jenufa*, written twelve years earlier, was at last given in Prague, in 1916; until then, the Prague music critics considered him "a nobody from the provinces." The militant leader of the anti-

Janáček forces was Zdeněk Nejedlý, musicologist and university professor who dismissed the composer because of the folklore elements in his music. Nejedlý later became the powerful Minister of Culture of the Communist government under Klement Gottwald and completely reversed his earlier opinions on Janáček, when folklore became the big thing officially, but that was long after Janáček's death. Incredibly, *Jenufa*, now considered a masterpiece, had been performed for twelve years in Brno, the capital of Moravia, but apparently no one from Prague ever bothered to hear it. Elsewhere Janáček was completely unknown until Max Brod, at Janáček's urgent request, translated *Její Pastorkyně* into *Jenufa*.

Even then it was still a long way toward success. *Jenufa* was accepted by the Vienna Court Opera, allegedly at the personal wish of Emperor Charles, the last Habsburg (he was the nephew of Franz Joseph I), who wanted to show his conciliatory attitude toward the Czechs. It was too little and too late; *Jenufa* was given in February, 1918, eight months before the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy. Maria Jeritza sang the title role. The critics panned the work, which disappeared from the program after ten performances. (It did better though than the original *Figaro*, with only nine performances.) Only the Berlin performance of *Jenufa*, conducted by Erich Kleiber in 1926, started its belated worldwide triumph.

Two years later, Janáček died. His own nation recognized his greatness only after his death—just as the Hungarians realized the genius of Béla Bartók only after he had died in 1945. Both Janáček and Bartók used folklore as the source of their own music; each of them created his own, modern, musical language that is timeless and great. Today Janáček

is very much honored in Prague. Each line he wrote is researched, analyzed, interpreted, approved and officially sanctioned. The soft-spoken, modest genius from the Moravian village of Kukvaldy would be rather amused.

Prague, known as a musical city the world over, never was a musically creative city, such as Vienna where the streets and squares and hills vibrated with music and radiated music. Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven found inspiration in the houses of Vienna; Schubert went out to the Heuriger inns in the suburbs; Brahms and Johann Strauss walked in the Vienna Woods; Schönberg, Berg and Webern created a new musical language in Vienna, which no one there understood. The classical, the romantic and the modern epoch in Western music began in the city of Vienna.

By contrast, Czech and Moravian music is bucolic, not urban, in character. Czech and Moravian composers were inspired by the music-filled countryside—the sounds of the woods, the dances in the villages.

One hears these sounds in Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, in Dvořák's *Rusálka*, in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*. The best-known movement in Smetana's *My Country* is the "Moldau," but its very heart is the fourth movement, "From Bohemia's Woods and Fields." The opening movement is "Vyšehrad," but Smetana is less concerned with the old castle in the vicinity of Prague than with the legend of Princess Libuše and the beginnings of Czech history. (The arpeggio of the seeress' harp at the beginning of the movement is the musical signature of Radio Prague.)

Even the "Moldau," where Smetana traces its course, by his own explanation, "from listening to its two springs, the warm and the cold Vltava . . . until it flows into the Elbe,"

does not reflect on the story of Prague, the stone bridge with its dark, ecstatic saints. Smetana did not write a tone poem about Hradčany. He dedicated the score of *My Country* "to the Royal Capital of Prague," which, in turn dedicated the Smetana Museum to his memory. (The "Prague Spring" Festival, one of Europe's finest, always opens with a performance of *My Country* in Prague's Smetana Hall. Mozart is performed in the Garden of the Knights of Malta, Beethoven in the Garden of the Valdštejn Palace. Prague is more than a mere stage—it becomes part of the music and reason for it.)

The finest music of Antonín Dvořák does not refer to the city of Prague. Its melodies and harmonies suggest the haunting melancholy, the eternal beauty and sometimes the earthly gaiety of the countryside. Janáček, who may one day be considered the greatest musical genius his country produced, creates a new musical idiom out of the impressionistic sounds of his Moravian meadows and woods, with their mystery and magic, sad people and dark secrets. His beautiful opera *The Cunning Vixen*, a moving poem dedicated to love and nature and eternity, begins and ends in the forests. It is Janáček's own *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Prague never inspired its greatest composers—but the people of Prague always appreciated great music. "My Prager understand me," said Mozart. Berlioz, who conducted concerts here in 1845, and performed *Roméo et Juliette* in the presence of Liszt, called the Prague chorus "outstanding and magnificent," and later wrote, "I haven't said yet what a tender yearning I feel for Prague and its people . . . O, Praga! Quando te aspiciam?" (When shall I see you again?) Berlioz reports that Liszt, who was to give a concert at noon the next day, drank champagne all night long and was still asleep at half past eleven. "But he arrived at the

concert hall in time and he played as he'd never played in his life . . . There must be a God of the pianists!"

Tchaikovsky gave a concert at the National Theater on February 21, 1888. Afterward he wrote a short sentence in his diary which he underlined with trembling fingers: "One minute of absolute bliss." Many composers, conductors and great performers have since felt one minute of absolute bliss when they performed in Prague where the people love music.

The year 1888 was remembered by the Germans in Prague for the opening of the German Theater. The theater was built out of private contributions and had a national and often polemical mission, as everything else in Prague. Its first director, Angelo Neumann, was a baptized Jew from Vienna, and one of the earliest, most ardent followers of Richard Wagner. Neumann produced in 1885—only nine years after the first Bayreuth Festival!—a complete *Ring des Nibelungen* in Prague. Two years later, he arranged a complete Mozart cycle. Long before Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Max Reinhardt discussed their ideas for a Salzburg Festival, Neumann set up a May Festival at his theater, during which he presented modern works and dramatic masterpieces from all over the world. He was a theatrical genius who made the German Theater in Prague a famous "springboard" for artists who spent their early years there before they became world-famous. Among its conductors were Gustav Mahler (before he became director of the Vienna Court Opera), Leo Blech, Arthur Bodansky, Otto Klemperer, Alexander von Zemlinsky (Schönberg's teacher and brother-in-law) and George Szell. During the short, happy years of the Masaryk Republic there was a mutually rewarding exchange of works between the German Theater and the (Czech) National Theater in Prague. The German

Theater performed Karel Čapek and Leoš Janáček, and the National Theater gave Goethe and Wagner.

The cornerstone for the National Theater (Národní Divadlo) was laid on May 18, 1868, a significant date in the life of the Czech nation. It was to be more than a theater: the symbol of Czech hope for eventual liberation. Ever since 1848 and the Pan-Slav Congress in Prague, a strong patriotic movement had been alive, under Palacký, Karel Havlíček, František Rieger. Around the magazine *Lumír*, a generation of young Czech scientists gathered—the historian Jaroslav Goll, the aesthete Otakar Hostinský, the cultural historian Miloslav Tyrš, the poet Jaroslav Vrchlický, and later Jan Gebauer, an innovator of the Czech language, and Tomáš Masaryk, the realistic philosopher who continued the ideas of the Hussites and of the great educator and humanist John Amos Comenius.

("The Middle Class National Party split into the Old Czechs and the Young Czechs," writes Communist historian Miloš Kratochvíl. "The former, with the support of the aristocratic landowners and businessmen, wanted a Czech provincial government within the Austrian Monarchy. The Young Czechs represented the interests of the peasants, craftsmen and professional workers . . . The teachings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels found many adherents for they gave a clear aim to the elementary struggle of the workers for economic and political rights.")

"There exist few buildings in Europe whose tones convey so much sentiment and love," wrote the Prague art historian M. Štech about the National Theater. It was built entirely out of contributions of the Czech people; for years collections were made in obscure villages and small towns; the motto

on the façade, "Národ Sobě" (From the Nation to Itself), appeared justified.

Smetana wrote his opera *Libuše* for the opening on June 15, 1881. Two months later, on August 12, owing to an incautious worker, the theater burned down. It was a national tragedy but the forces set in motion were too strong to be stopped. Again collections were made—this time even the Emperor and the Germans in Prague contributed—and the National Theater was rebuilt and re-opened, with *Libuše*. It has been a national shrine ever since—a fortress of the best in Czech culture in bad and good days. It was built on one of the finest sites of Prague, overlooking the Moldau with its quays and flocks of wild white ducks flowing over the dark water. Behind, there are the towers and palaces of Malá Strana, and farther in the rear, the majestic contours of Hradčany Castle.

The Czechs consider the National Theater the finest work of Czech nineteenth-century art. Perhaps a national shrine must not be judged by purely aesthetic considerations. Josef Zíték designed the building in the style of the late North-Italian Renaissance. Václav Myslbek did the sculptures at the portal showing the statues of "Opera" and "Drama"; Mikuláš Aleš painted the lunettes "Homeland" in the foyer; Vojtěch Hynais painted the curtain, eulogizing the nation's self-sacrifice; František Zeníšek did the frescoes on the ceiling of the auditorium. There is a mood of affection, warmth and grandeur inside that affects many people.

The National Theater has remained Prague's unofficial "court theater" and has first call on any work—opera, drama, ballet—it seems worthy to perform. (Works not given there may be performed at one of Prague's other twenty-four theaters.) The National Theater has two full orchestras,

two independent choruses, a large ballet company, some seventy soloists and eight conductors. The company is required to give fifteen operatic performances a week in three houses—the National Theater, the Smetana Theater (the former German Theater until 1945) and the Tyl (Nostitz or Estates) Theater, where Mozart's works are performed. Of about sixty operas in the repertory of the National Theater, half are works by Czech and Moravian composers, including contemporary works. Clearly, the company is a *national* theater, built on native talent, in the spirit of the ensemble and repertory theater that is only a memory in the great houses of New York, Milan, Vienna and London, with their fast-traveling singing stars. It is not unusual to choose between performances of Mozart, Verdi and Janáček on what the opera lovers of Prague call "a typical night." Prague is a great place for music.

Josef Švejk and Josef K.

JAROSLAV HAŠEK's *The Adventures of the Good Soldier Švejk* ("Švejk" begins with "sh" and rhymes with "break") is now compared to the satirical masterpieces of Rabelais, Cervantes, Swift, but Hašek is still widely unknown abroad. The current *Encyclopaedia Britannica* does not list his name. Even in his native Prague, more legends than facts are remembered about him. Until ten years ago, Hašek was blacklisted by the Communist regime. Cautious

people didn't mention his name, or Kafka's. "The Prague Czech popular writer, Jaroslav Hašek, achieved what hundreds of authors try in vain during their lifetime: to create a character that is a human being as well as a prototype," wrote Kafka's friend Max Brod, one of the very few people who early recognized Hašek's greatness. ("I thank you for the lovely review of my book," Hašek humbly wrote to Brod.) Brod and Hans Reimann later created a German dramatic version of *Švejk* for Erwin Piscator in Berlin that made Hašek posthumously world-famous.

The character that Hašek created and named "Švejk" (his first name was Josef) has always existed in Prague. Hašek had the insight and the genius to express in words what other people had instinctively long felt. When "The Good Soldier Švejk" made his appearance in the Czech lands, a great many people recognized him, as though they had intimately known him, and greeted him like a dear, old friend who has been away for a long, long time. Plays about Švejk (by various playwrights, including Brecht) have been performed in many countries. But it is a curious fact that only Czech actors are able to perfectly portray the character of the Good Soldier; the performance by Josef Noll remains unsurpassed, even by the great German comedian, Max Pallenberg, who misunderstood the character and played it for effect. Švejk is a subtle fellow, seemingly an idiot, who is much smarter than many so-called smart people.

Today Švejk is no longer a Czech type. He is a universal species—a good-natured, kind-hearted, naive-but-cunning little man who confounds confusion by following verbatim the letter of the law, reducing bureaucrats, politicians and militarists to absurdity by taking them absurdly seriously. He wants to do everything right and always does everything

wrong. He is forever in trouble but nothing perturbs his philosophical state of mind. Deep down in his heart he knows he is a good citizen who really does the right thing though others may not agree. After being drafted by the Austrian army, he tells the arbitration board,

I shall serve His Majesty to my last breath. Now that I am here, I'm going to stay here. I am now a soldier. I must serve His Majesty. No one can expel me from the army, even if the general would kick me in the behind and throw me out of the barracks. I would come right back and say, "I obediently report, general, Sir, that I must serve His Majesty to my last breath, and that I shall return to my company." And if they don't want to have me there, I shall join the navy, so I can at least serve His Majesty on board ship. And if they don't want me even there and the admiral would kick me in the behind, I am going to serve His Majesty in the air.

Nowadays, Švejk is often associated with the Czech national character. There may be something "of the Švejk" in the actions and reactions of many Czechs today but the current overestimation of Hašek's fictitious character results from the apathy of the Czech literary critics in Hašek's early years. He was unable to find a publisher for his book, and it was finally printed in installments on cheap newsprint in "colportage" booklets, each costing a crown. The author himself would peddle the installments from house to house, to janitors, cooks, servant girls. He was often intoxicated, and there were arguments when he asked for advance payment. For educated Czechs, Jaroslav Hašek, the author of "cheap colportage," did not exist. In his defense of the great writer, Brod attacked the Czech literary establishment as he had earlier attacked the country's musical establishment when he defended Leoš Janáček.

No one except a few faithful drinking companions took notice of Hašek's death in 1923. And while the critics ignored him, the people reading the installments were beginning to identify themselves with Švejk. Wasn't that the little guy down at the *výčep* (the beer joint) down the street who thoughtfully sipped his beer and philosophized about mankind and the world? Like Don Quixote, Švejk began as a caricature and ended up as a symbol—though, actually, he is closer to Sancho Panza than to Don Quixote.

Always a loyal Austrian patriot (this was Hašek's supreme joke, much appreciated by the Czechs in those days), Švejk regrets the Archduke's assassination in Sarajewo, but what interests him most is the construction of the murder weapon. And as a soldier in the k. & k. (Imperial & Royal) Army,

Švejk was smiling, delightful in his manners, and perhaps for this reason nearly always in jail. And when he came back from jail, he would smilingly answer all questions, and with complete composure went to jail again, and soon all officers of the garrison became afraid of him. Not of his toughness, but of his kindness, his obedient answers, his brotherly smile, that was a nightmare for them.

Švejk is "just an ordinary man," who has a deep, almost religious belief in order and authority, and thus nothing ever surprises him. When he is arrested for high treason, he accepts this as an inevitable fate of the loyal citizen. Asked to sign the protocol accusing him of *lèse-majesté*, he doesn't hesitate because he doesn't want "to create complications." As a good citizen he knows there must be order—a subtle *reductio ad absurdum* of the idiotic German saying, *Ordnung ist die erste Bürgerpflicht* (to keep order is the citizen's first duty). Švejk who always says "yes" is the antithesis of

Heinrich von Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas who always says "no," banging his head against the wall. Unlike Kohlhaas who breaks his head, Švejk gloriously proves that his head is stronger than the wall.

By explicitly executing the silliest orders, he gets his superiors into terrible predicaments. When he stands guard in front of the powder magazine and a fire breaks out, Švejk keeps away the fire brigade who don't know the code word, for according to his orders, "No one must approach without knowing the code word." When asked why he didn't think, Švejk says politely, "I obediently report that I do not think because a soldier is not permitted to think. His officers think for him. When a soldier begins to think, he is no longer a soldier but a nuisance, a damned civilian." (This may sound ludicrous, but it was exactly the philosophy of my infantry company commander when I served in the Czechoslovak Army a few years after the death of Jaroslav Hašek. We were not permitted to read *Švejk*, and read it secretly.)

The fortunes of Hašek's masterpiece in Prague fluctuated with the vicissitudes of the political situations. After a brief spell of glory during the Masaryk Republic, Hašek became unpopular among the Czech intellectuals, who claimed that he conveyed the wrong image of the nation. They said it was bad enough for the Czechs to be known abroad as a nation of *muzikanti*, and now they would be known as a nation of Švejks. During the Second World War, Švejk became the nation's secret hero and the idol of the resistance fighters who drove the Germans to despair by explicitly executing stupid military orders and practicing the subtle art of passive resistance. Shipments of arms and ammunition would get mysteriously detoured, trains unaccountably wound up on sidings, reams of official files were filled with

inane double-talk. It was pure *Švejkovina*, the Švejkian state of mind.

During the short democratic postwar interlude, 1945-48, Švejk was a great fellow; but the Communist regime put Hašek's works on the index. The ideologists were exasperated about Švejk, an able-bodied citizen who had never joined the Party, was neither a worker nor a peasant, but lived off the sale of mongrel dogs and spent his nights at the tavern "U Kalicha" (At the Chalice). Only when a different political wind began to blow after the Twentieth Party Congress in Moscow (with Khrushchev's nine-hour denunciation of Stalin that ended the personality cult) was Hašek "rediscovered," this time as a sort of early Communist primitive. By higher orders, Hašek's favorite tavern, U Kalicha, was rebuilt, decorated in the style of Josef Lada's book illustrations, and has been a tourist attraction ever since. The famous life-size painting of Emperor Franz Josef I (that creates the initial complications in the book) is hanging there. The window niches are adorned with quotations from Hašek's book, in German, English and Russian. (Not in Czech, but the people of Prague rarely go to U Kalicha nowadays.) Neither would Švejk, if he saw the place now. He wouldn't tell Sapper Vodička, "When the war's over, drop in to see me—you'll find me at the Chalice every evening after six."

Švejk has brought new fame to the Chalice and that unique Prague institution, the beer parlor. Unlike Vienna and Budapest, Prague was never a city of coffeehouses. In the 1830s, when Vienna had over a hundred coffeehouses, there were only two in Prague, "At the Golden Tiger," in Domínkánská, and Pastor's Kavárna. (*Kavárna* means *café*.) People went there to drink "coffee in the Turkish manner," to

have their pipes filled with Turkish tobacco and to read the newspapers; originally, the news had been written on a blackboard. The Baroque artists—Dientzenhofer, Brandl, Steinfels, Reiner and Canevalli all went to Pastor's Kavárna, and so did Mozart, since it was located in Ovocný Trh (Fruit Market) near the Nostitz Theater.

Around the turn of the century, the Czech intelligentsia, and the Germans and Jews, began to frequent "their" coffee-houses but the common man in Prague had his beer parlor, or *pivnice*. It was his club, retreat, debating society and political forum. It was a local invention in the capital of Bohemia, where some of the world's earliest and best beer had been brewed six hundred years ago. Prague's beer houses range from the small, anonymous *výčep*, a sort of neighborhood pub, to large establishments with a great history and a strange name ("At the Three Ostriches," "At the Red Chestnut," "At the King of Brabant"). Prague's oldest brewery, "U Sv. Tomáše" (At St. Thomas), is named after the nearby church. The Augustinian monks there had a special recipe for their famous "black" beer since 1352. At the nearby "U Schnellů" the beer was said to have such a heavy foam that customers would test it by placing a five-crown coin on top of the foam. The coin never dropped through the foam.

Another famous Prague beer house, "U Fleků," is first mentioned in a document dated 1499, when one Vitus Skřemenec bought the already established brewery and the adjoining warehouse. The present name dates from 1762, when Jakob and Dorothea Flek bought the place. The letters of the name form the dial on the clock above the entrance; Prague, the city of beer taverns, is also the city of strange, archaic clocks. Generations have gone to "Flek's Inn" for the famous "brown" beer, and business was so good that the

competing monks at St. Thomas claimed that the brown beer, unlike their black one, was "an invention of the devil." Flek's beer is known as "13," because of its 13 per cent alcoholic content. Other beers in Prague contain from 7 to 18 per cent alcohol. Only at U Fleků do they make "13," right in the kitchen; nothing else is sold there.

U Fleků has vault-like rooms, wood panels, bas-reliefs enormous tables, heavy oak chairs. The rooms have various names—"Hopyard," "Academy," "Knights' Room," the long-stretched "Sausage," the "Trunk" with its low ceiling, and one called after St. Wenceslas. The geography is dearly familiar to the habitués, who would never go to the "wrong" room. They are artists, students, writers, painters, bums, philosophers, clerks, workers—everybody. Political secrets were conceived and betrayed here, revolutions were plotted or at least hoped for, dreams spoken into the air. Many habitués left melancholy impressions on the walls, such as

Dearest beer, if you would die,
Many orphans here would cry . . .

or,

I drank my beer and paid the band,
And off I went to Happy Land.

Food is not important in the beer taverns of Prague. One goes there for the beer, and above all for the companionship, the togetherness, the gripes, the exchange of political opinions or simply for escape. (One of the bas-reliefs at U Fleků shows a woman who drags off her husband after too many glasses of "13.") At the beginning of *The Good Soldier Švejk*, the Austrian police stool pigeon Bretschneider arrests Švejk at the Chalice, and later also takes Palivec, the owner of the tavern, to the police. Long before and ever since, local

stool pigeons have frequented the beer taverns of Prague where people, after too many glasses, betray their most intimate secrets.

In 1957, the Czech critic, Rudolf Toman, wrote in a foreword to the East German edition of Jaroslav Hašek's *Confession* that "Švejk personifies the soldier who fights against the imperialistic wars." This may surprise some readers but it wouldn't surprise Švejk who once said. "Everybody may make a mistake, and the more he thinks about something, the more mistakes he makes."

Jaroslav Hašek came from a bourgeois family in Prague. He was thrown out of school for taking part in an anti-Habsburg demonstration around the turn of the century. After working as an apprentice in a drugstore, he was fired and began to wander all over Slovakia in the company of gypsies and other interesting people, became a bank clerk, was fired again and joined the anarchists. (Kafka who knew Hašek slightly told Janouch that anarchists were "sweet, amusing people.") Somehow, Hašek was named editor of the magazine *Svět Zvířat* (The World of the Animals). He lost his job when he wrote and published learned articles about animals which were extremely interesting though the animals didn't exist. This caused irritation among some humorless subscribers—natural-science teachers and frustrated zoologists. Next, Hašek began to buy and sell dogs (just as Švejk does) and set up a "Kynological Institute." (Kynology was described by Hašek as "the art and science of training dogs.")

He also invented improbable stories which he sold as strange facts to starved local reporters for a glass of beer. Egon Erwin Kisch reports several Hašek "scoops" in his

book, *Prager Sensationen*. Once Hašek claimed to have seen a man-eating shark in the Moldau, near the Pathological Institute. Another time he had seen two employees of a noted funeral establishment who, being refused by two girls at a dance, "danced with the dead body of a lady that they were about to take to the cemetery." Another news item concerned a five-year-old boy who bit off his playmate's nose and swallowed it, whereupon the injured boy's father was "looking all over Prague for his son's nose."

During the national election of 1911 for the Austrian Parliament, Hašek founded his "Party of Moderate Reactionaries Within The Limits of The Law." Among other things, the Party demanded "the nationalization of the janitors," and protested against "too many earthquakes in Mexico." Hašek—whom Brod describes as a pale man with a round face and a pointed-up nose, not unlike Josef Lada's famous drawings of Švejk—promised every voter a pocket aquarium as a gift. His election rallies took place in cheap beer gardens and dim, dubious cabarets. During his speeches Hašek, who wore a Cossack's hat, was often interrupted by Homeric laughter. He would have been a refreshing figure in the political arena but unfortunately he couldn't get elected because it turned out that he'd forgotten to register as a candidate.

According to the current, official and humorless version, Hašek began to write as a soldier during the First World War, "with Maxim Gorki as his model." He deserted the Austrian Army on the Russian front and joined the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia. Later he returned to Prague and became a member of the Communist Party. "He was no longer the Prague bohemian but became active as an army and Party functionary," writes critic Toman. This doesn't tally with the reminiscences of Max Brod who (unlike

Toman) saw Hašek during the writer's last years. According to Brod, Hašek returned from Russia with a new wife, "a Duchess Lwowska," though he hadn't bothered to get a divorce from his first wife, Jarmila, who lived in Prague with their child. Perhaps he was still the Prague bohemian. He sold the dramatic rights to *Svejk* to a manager "for a glass of Pilsen beer." Toman reports that Hašek wrote for the Communist Party paper *Rudé Pravo*. "His humor is directed against the Church, petit-bourgeois degeneration, the nobility, against bureaucracy, against all weakness of history and society." Hašek certainly was a Czech patriot. In his *Svejk* he writes:

First Lieutenant Lukaš was the type of the professional officer of the Austrian Monarchy who had become a somewhat amphibious character in officers' school. When he was with other people he spoke German and he wrote fluent German, but he read only Czech books, and when he instructed a group of one-year volunteers, all of them Czechs, he said, rather confidentially, "Let's be Czechs, but no one must know about it. I am also Czech." He considered the Czech nationality a sort of secret organization that one should rather avoid.

Brod reports that in 1921 Hašek was sent by his doctor to Lipnice, a small village on the Sazava River, because he had been drinking too much. It was hoped he might stop drinking in the tranquil, rustic environment. This was a vain hope, for Hašek was bored in Lipnice and never left the local tavern. Brod published a postcard dated December 12, 1921, signed by Hašek and his friend, the actor A. E. Longen. Hašek writes, "We are rehearsing the big scenes from 'Svejk,' especially the one about the army chaplain getting dead-drunk with Svejk." Two years later he was dead.

Hašek supplied his biographers with valuable documents.

In 1912, he published a short autobiography titled *Jaroslav Hašek, the Greatest Czech Writer*:

People will have to learn to appreciate me, not only as an enormous literary talent but also for my incomparably decent character. Why do I sing my own praise, you may ask? Because I know myself better than anyone else . . . I shall say it quite simply. In the history of mankind there is only one completely developed human being: I. In my writing, each sentence has its deeper meaning. Each word is in the right place. Everything is true. My Czech is better than that of the Králice Bible. It is a great delight to read every week one single sentence in my writings. If you do it, a sense of enchantment will fill your soul, and you'll smile blissfully. In fact, you won't be able to put the book away. I read each of my printed works to my wife Jarmila, the most charming, most intelligent woman on earth. I can never suppress the thought, "What a wonderful mind must this Jaroslav Hašek have!" I am living proof that our critics lie when they write we Czechs have no authors of world stature. A man who writes as beautifully as I must have a beautiful soul. At the next election the electorate will be ashamed should they overlook the most noble-minded man in the whole Monarchy . . .

A year later, in 1913, Toman reports that "the police tried in vain to locate Hašek." In order to further confuse his critics, "the most noble-minded man in the whole Monarchy" wrote in 1921, two years before his death, a document called *My Confession*:

I admit that I am not only a terrible rascal and a rotter but also an awful libertine. My birth created severe troubles for my dear mother who afterwards couldn't sleep for several days and nights. At the age of three months I bit my wet-nurse to death. When I was six years old, I ate my older brother, and I stole from his coffin the pictures of some saints that I concealed in the bed of our cook. She was sent to prison for ten years for robbing

a coffin. Her fiancé hung himself, leaving six illegitimate children. Some of them became hotel thieves. One became the Abbot of the Premonstrant Convent in Strahov. At the age of three, I was the most debauched boy in Prague, and had an affair with the wife of a very high-ranking personage. At five, I broke into St. Thomas Church and stole a golden chalice which I sold, spending the money in a house of ill fame. Then I went to Vienna where I robbed a bank and was forced to strangle four bank clerks, one after another. At last I returned to Prague. During the railroad journey I lured an old lady out on the platform, took away her handbag, and pushed her out, telling the people that she'd got off at the last station. Unfortunately I didn't find my dear parents alive. My father had killed himself in a fit of despondency. My mother jumped from Charles Bridge into the Moldau, and when they tried to rescue her, she overturned the boat with her rescuers, and they too drowned. I grew up all by myself because I had poisoned my last uncle, stole his savings books and falsified the figure . . . My pen refuses to go on. To end my Confession before the Czech nation, I ask to be accepted by the Radical-Socialist Party. Please tell me where and when I should pay my first membership dues. For the time being, *Na shledanou* [See you again] . . .

For the world-at-large Hašek remains a one-book author, but his *Two Dozens Stories*, the result of his wandering years, are bitter, brilliant tales about Carpathian robbers, Rumanian thieves, beautiful gypsy girls. He left many short essays, among them "The Complete Etiquette." Samples: "If you manage to get into the leading lady's dressing room at the theatre, you should quietly hide below the table so you won't frighten her when she gets undressed." Or, "At a ball game, it is unfair to kill the umpire with a rusty blade."

In a remarkable essay, written in 1921, "What I Would Advise the Communists if I Were Editor-in-Chief of The Official Paper, *Československá Republika*," Hašek suggested, "The Communists should not try to deal with politics

and the solution of social problems. Instead of holding meetings they should arrange games in the park . . ."

The Pražan

GREAT CITIES shape their inhabitants; some shape them more than others. "Local patriotism," a provincial attitude, has existed since the Athenians considered themselves far superior to the citizens of Sparta. (A famous Prague soccer club of the 1930s was called "Sparta"; the Communists now have "Spartakiades," tough physical-education contests.) The Florentines have looked down upon the Romans for a thousand years, and today both the people of Rome and Florence dislike (and secretly admire) the successful Milanese for their business-minded aggressiveness. The distinctions between Bostonians and New Yorkers, or between Angelenos and San Franciscans may be largely superficial yet they exist. But is there a prototype among the inhabitants of a certain city? The unkempt concierge or the cigarette-chewing habitué of the neighborhood bistro are "typical" Parisians, but so are the left-bank intellectual and the midinette from the Faubourg St. Honoré.

It is easy to define the difference between a Viennese and a *Pražan* (the sound "z" is a softly pronounced "sh," somewhat as the "j" in "jazz"), but difficult to define *the* citizen of Prague. Until the Second World War, a *Pražan* was the lower-class, ordinary, little fellow, Prague's common man

whom the comic Vlasta Burian addressed, for want of a more impressive title, "*pane kolemdouci*," Mr. Passer-by. There was also the educated middle-class Czech who was "from Prague," but not a *Pražan*. A more obvious distinction existed between the "Prague Czechs," the "Prague Germans" and the "Prague Jews." The "Prague Jews," in turn, were either Czech-speaking or German-speaking Prague Jews, and between the two groups there was surprisingly little contact.

Today the problem no longer exists. Prague is a Czech city. (Many middle-aged people speak German and some speak French, and many young people speak English, "the language of the Western world." They also speak Russian, the language of the Eastern world, which they learned in school. In the 1930s, when Prague had half a million Czech inhabitants, we were told that the largest Czech-speaking city on earth was Chicago, Illinois. Now Prague has a million people, less than half of them natives of Prague. It is a young city—the average age of the people is thirty-five years. And for 1000 men there are now 1135 women.

There are still, or rather, again, class distinctions. Prague used to be a middle-class city. The First Republic had dispossessed the aristocrats, whose estates were expropriated and divided by the land reform. The working-class population was concentrated in the factory suburbs. Now the former upper-middle class (many of them German and Jewish bankers, industrialists, big businessmen) has disappeared. The middle class has been submerged with the lower-middle class into faceless "people." A small, new super-class of Party bosses, top bureaucrats, technological managers and successful artists has emerged, leading their own lives, more or less separated from the rest of the population. Since many members of the new super-class were once merely "people," they are trying hard to establish their new status by specifi-

cally Western-style symbols (a Mercedes or Peugeot, not a Škoda or Wartburg; a passport valid for a whole year, not just for one trip to the West; a house or apartment next to the residence of an "important" ambassador, not just His Excellency from Mali or Mauritania).

Yet the curious thing is that after twenty years of communism with all its revolutions (political, national, social, financial, cultural and so on) the "typical" *Pražan* is not basically different from the *Pražan* during the Masaryk Republic or, for that matter, from the *Pražan* around the turn of the century. He speaks the same slang, and is the same petit bourgeois he used to be. Political education has not turned him into a revolutionary fighter. Of course, he marches in the First-of-May parade—because he has to; otherwise there may be trouble at the factory or office where he works. But he doesn't like it, and at night he will say so while he has his glass of beer in the little *pivnice* (beer house) or the shabby *výčep* (dive) among congenial fellow beer-drinkers. Gripping is the *Pražan's* favorite pastime—gripping about the "system," the shortages, the latest changes (there are always some changes, for no apparent reason), the high cost of living, low salaries, and "those fellows up there," the new rulers at the Castle.

The *Pražan* is fed up with politics, and no wonder, for he is a burned child. But he cannot afford to ignore national politics; he must know what goes on, out of a sense of self-preservation, because politics may concern his very life and his family—the tiny plot of privacy he has staked out for himself, his job, his future. He is always on the defensive waiting for something to happen that might further complicate life, which is already complicated enough. Look at the new economic reform; Heaven knows what it's going to do to him. He loves to gossip. In 1891, Jan Neruda wrote, "What

Paris is for civilization and Birmingham for industry, Prague is for *klep* (scandal-mongering)."

Prague—or rather the small neighborhood district where he lives—is his world. Once in a while he may walk across Charles Bridge to Malá Strana, and up to Hradčany, which gives him the feeling of being a tourist in his own city. Sometimes he goes *na Václavák*, to Wenceslas Square to see a movie, or to the theater. He loves the movies and the theater. But for the rest of the year he sticks to his dearly familiar neighborhood, with its small corners, quiet nooks, St. John Nepomuk statues and the small *výčep* where he hears all the dope.

His tastes in food, drink, girls, are healthy and robust. A pork roast with dumplings and sauerkraut. A glass of cold beer—he prefers beer, the national beverage, to wine. There are endless arguments about which beer is the best. Smíchov? Pilsen? Budějovice? And a girl that "has everything." Today the girls of Prague reflect their predilection for dumplings and sweets; the ethereal type is not too popular. Such a girl is all right to look at in a movie but what would you do with her on a Sunday afternoon? The girls of Prague were once among the prettiest in Europe, if you liked the type—high cheekbones, knowing eyes, husky voices. "The eyes of the women of Prague, no matter what color, show their deep soul," wrote Rudolf Gerlein in 1838. "I saw eyes of sky-blue and of deep black that showed the same expression, sweet and romantic and mysterious." In 1902, Auguste Rodin said that "the aristocratic beauty of the women of Prague, their exclusive gait, their attractive, elegant dresses reminded me of Dante's Paradise."

The average *Pražan* comes from peasant stock. The grandparents probably still lived *na vesnici*, out there in the village. He has a peasant's realistic attitude toward life, and is always

watching out for disaster as a peasant is always worried about bad weather. Temperamentally, the Czechs are the most sober among the Slavs, quite different from the imaginative Slovaks, the romantic Poles, the often melancholy Russians. The *Pražan* likes to live and let live. He hated the Nazis less for their racist nonsense than for their rigorous attitudes, their brutality, their mania for orderliness. One of the underlying reasons of his dislike for today's regime is that it has no understanding for live and let live. But having gone through so much, the *Pražan* is mainly concerned with survival. He has learned not to take life too seriously.

His peasant's shrewdness makes him a first cousin of Švejk, that lovable character whom nothing shakes out of his composure. Instead of fighting his problems, the Švejk in the *Pražan* has a way of getting around them. He has a sense of joke rather than a sense of humor. Even the most humorless, most disgraceful situation is turned into a joke, often a painful one. The popularity of a politician can be assessed by the jokes told about him. If he is no longer the butt of popular, though not always printable jokes, he may be in trouble. The *Pražan's* cunning smile, his pretense not to understand what it's all about though he knows damn well, his virtuosity at playing dumb when he is attacked, upsets the bureaucratic *apparatchiks* of the hammer-and-sickle regime as much as Švejk upset the bureaucrats and generals of k. & k. (Imperial & Royal) Austria.

But now there is something else in the *Pražan* that wasn't there before. Like Kafka's Joseph K., he now feels helpless and frustrated by the ubiquitous bureaucrats; he is a mere number, an unperson, and there is nothing he can do about it. Josef Švejk and Joseph K. have become the two antipoles in the soul of the citizen of Prague. It can be no accident that Jaroslav Hašek who wrote *Švejk* was born in Prague on

April 30, 1883, exactly sixty-four days before Kafka, the creator of Joseph K., was born there, on July 3. Their early photographs show boyish faces that soon matured, through sickness. Both had to do things they disliked, in order to write, the only thing they loved to do. Both were ignored as "dilettantes" by their contemporaries, when they were great masters of the art of the grotesque. Both died within the same year, at the age of forty-one. The Joseph K. complex of today's *Pražan* is getting stronger because the "system" is getting stronger. "The farther an inundation reaches, the shallower and dirtier the water is getting," Kafka is quoted as saying in Janouch's *Conversations*. "The revolution evaporates, and only the mud of a new bureaucracy remains. The handcuffs of a tortured mankind are made of red tape."

In a remarkable Czech film, *Concerning the Feast and the Guests*, by Jan Němec, there is a mysterious unseen power that threatens the guests at a feast in the forest—separating men from women, forbidding them to speak, accusing them of crimes they don't remember having committed; Kafka's terror, and they are helpless against it. The sensitive artists who make the fine, modern Czech films are well aware of the nationwide Švejk-and-Joseph K. complex, man's growing isolation in a dark, hostile world, the terrifying sense of unreality, man's hopeless search for his own existence—and also his Švejkian, grotesque ways of trying to obstruct the unseen, ubiquitous forces. The gifted, courageous writers and artists of Czechoslovakia (a unique phenomenon in the Communist world) are concerned about, and often critical of, the regime. This haunting feeling that never seems to leave them is stronger among educated people than among the simple fellows who don't think too much, letting others do their thinking, but it's there just the same. People feel they are no longer masters of their own fate, suspended like

puppets from millions of invisible threads. Kafka's horrifying predictions have come true.

Two years ago, a friend of mine came from a country in Western Europe to Prague to work there for his firm. He hadn't been in town for over a week when he was approached by people drifting out of the darkness who came to whisper in his ears that what he saw and heard wasn't real—whereupon they proceeded to tell him "how it really was." His own sense of unreality increased when he discovered that on the same corridor of his apartment house there lived: (1) a retired lion tamer with a colored woman and a child that wasn't theirs; (2) a young man with his mother who kept a picture of Lenin decorated with fresh flowers; (3) a gypsy musician with his family, ranging from five to fifteen members, some of whom had no key and entered their apartment through a small window in the corridor on a ladder which they borrowed from my friend. The gypsy's wife, very pretty, often used the ladder when she came home late and was afraid of being beaten up by her jealous husband.

Prior to the Second World War, people in Prague used to say that when life in the big city became too difficult, one could always move out and live *no venkově*, in the countryside, or *na vesnici*, in the village, where one had relatives and in-laws. Now many relatives and in-laws have become state-farm or co-operative workers—Kafka's anonymous serfs, laboring under an unseen, cruel Master. No one from Prague wants to go there today.

I've heard it said in Prague that "every fifth person in town is an informer." I hope it's an exaggeration. But one doesn't have to be there very long to sense that a great many people are always a little worried about being spied on. There seems to be an invisible network of informers everywhere. These days one isn't taken to Pankrác Prison for making "danger-

ous" statements. Drunks loudly curse the government, and nothing happens. In a *výčep* I heard a man shout, "Damn fool that I was, I voted for the Communists in '48." Everybody nodded silently, and the man who ran the (State-owned) pub gave the fellow a glass of beer, on the house; nothing happened. Another time a man in a long, silent, suffering queue suddenly exploded: "This is what we've come to after twenty years!" Again nothing happened to the man, though I could feel how the people froze up inside. Still—today a man may open his mouth but who knows what's going to happen tomorrow? You've heard about those writers who dared open their mouths. Brave men, and everybody secretly admires them. But now the writers are waiting for the tomorrow, and God knows whether they can sleep quietly. Some people are said to inform for money, and others out of "patriotism" or "social discipline." And some have to do it because they are blackmailed. The police have something on them.

Feeling surrounded by an invisible network, the people seem to stick to each other instinctively. "In bad times the people of Prague are always nicer to each other," an elderly man says who has seen many bad times and a few good times here. Everybody is trying to be a little more helpful, to carry the neighbor's load. (The opposite is true in the prosperous society of other countries where people never had it so good.) So many old women are working—as streetcar conductors, in stores, as charwomen. Doesn't the socialist state take care of its old people? It does, but not always sufficiently. Some people's pension is too small to keep body and soul together; they have to work. When the streetcar is empty, in the late evening hours, the old woman conductor furtively sits down, which is forbidden to her. People pretend not to notice; it's exhausting to be up on one's feet so

many hours since "the earthless, weeping dream light of the early day." Yes, if Franz Werfel were around, he could write another strophe about "the old Czech women."

There is a deep malaise among the young people that often leads to long spells of depression. The number of suicides among younger people has gone up to such an extent that it worries the government. No statistical figures are available but doctors and social workers believe Prague to be the city with Europe's largest numbers of suicides, worse even than Berlin, the record holder after the city's split. The experts agree on nothing except the cause: the young people (they say) see the future realistically and are unable to cope with it. They can't find another way out. Some drift into a sort of existentialist nihilism. Others try to find consolation in religion, in "the mystical St. Wenceslas cult."

I think of the N.s, a young couple that got married a few years ago. Economically, they are doing well. Both are employed. They live in a modern, co-operative apartment in a suburb, about an hour's streetcar ride from their respective working place. They have a small car which they use only on weekends. They can't really afford it, and know it, and it goes against their very way of life; but "everybody" in the building has a car, you would be a "nobody" without the car. They save where it hurts to be able to buy a new gadget for the car. Mrs. N. begs the mothers of other children in their house for worn clothes for her child, since she can't afford to buy them. They wanted a second child but decided against it; "there was no money for that."

"Perhaps the worst is that no one here considers it strange to beg for children's clothes and then buy new seat covers for the car," a friend says, with a meaningful shrug.

When the N.s come home from work—the child has spent

the day in a State kindergarten—they have a hurried, cold supper. All of them had an inexpensive, hot lunch—the parents at their working place canteens, the child in kindergarten. After the child has been brought to bed, the N.s sit down in front of the *televisor*, today's opium for the people. You don't have to talk or think; you just look. Thinking or talking will inevitably lead to depression. Better look and drug yourself.

But sometimes one can't help thinking, and then one remembers that one was twenty years old in 1945, full of youthful enthusiasm and hope; and now one is forty-five, and the only hope that remains is that the Old-Guard Communists will die out and that modern, young, more pragmatic Communists will take over. After twenty-two years of the system that began in 1948, life is almost as gray as at the end of the last war. Everybody wears the same dark-blue raincoat, eats the same canteen meal. If you want to buy a jar of skin cream, good stockings, a bottle of Scotch, a piece of Swiss chocolate, a pack of American cigarettes, you must shop at the State-run Tuzex stores, where only hard currencies or Tuzex bonds are taken for payment; if you don't have friends or relatives in the West (or take a chance and buy Tuzex bonds in the black market, which is a criminal offense), you are just out of luck.

In front of a bakery in Wenceslas Square people always queue up; a fine smell drifts out of the shop; the bakery is known for the quality of its bread, rolls and poppy-seed croissants. Across from the bakery people queue up in front of a handcart on which a man has some oranges or grapes. Twenty-two years after "they" took over this former country of milk-and-honey!

There are more bookstores than before the war, and books are commendably cheap. But often it is strange that

one cannot buy the books one wants. I tried to find a Czech-English dictionary, but there was none for sale in all Prague; a sudden shortage, no doubt. Would I want to take a Czech-Portuguese dictionary instead? Or a Czech-Russian dictionary of technical terms? A West-German newspaper, an American magazine thrown into the wastebasket in a hotel room, are carefully retrieved and start a secret, new life, being read by many people until the pages are torn. The baggage porter expecting the "Vindobona" Express from Vienna asks the passengers, "Haven't you got any newspapers?" People who feel themselves closely tied to the West, are starved for unbiased news from the West.

Today, over two decades after the Communist regime took over, promising the people a glorious, new life, the citizens of this highly industrialized country are able to buy only "second-quality" goods because all "first-quality" goods are marked for export. "After all these years you're getting tired—tired of shoddy products, of unfulfilled promises, of being told to wait and be patient. Many educated Czechs today know that Prague, where the Germans first drove out the Jews and the Czechs later drove out the Germans, and where many Czechs were driven out by other Czechs, has lost much of its inner tension and intellectual stimulation."

Years ago, Johannes Urzidil wrote, "The common destiny created not only a history of struggle and contention but also fruitful competition and mutual impregnation." The fruitful competition no longer exists. Prague has become a one-color city, intellectually and culturally. The polychromy of languages, ideas, cultures, is gone that quickened its pulse beat and was felt over Europe. The members of the family are among each other at last—and they are bored to death with one another. They feel (and sometimes admit it, reluctantly) that Prague lost something which was very important—the

mutual reactions and cross-reactions between the various national and cultural groups that created the peculiarly tense, cultural atmosphere of Prague which was always a give-and-take, a crossroads where people from various cultures met, talked, argued, fought and even made up occasionally.

A young Czech writer who knows his history spoke to me about the terrible emotional vacuum in which so many people now live. The "little man," whose parents were peasants somewhere in Bohemia, a first-generation *Pražan*, who feels "one hundred and ten per cent" Prague, doesn't feel it so much. His intellectual horizon is limited. But people who have learned more and know more are bothered by spells of melancholy:

One tries to fight it but one feels caught in a current of sorrow. Alexej Kusak, the Marxist interpreter of Kafka, calls it "the prototyping of a feeling of absurdity about the human condition." Some of us read the new atheistic literature but this is no way out either. It only destroys old values without building new values on the site of destruction. I honestly believe that our nation is in greater despair now than in the dark age of the seventeenth century when the Jesuit Counter-Reformation during the Germanizing Habsburg regime was trying to systematically destroy people's will to live.

There is growing apathy—people are no longer interested in anything but the dreadful routine of going on and on. Some live in a mystical dream world that becomes more real to them than the real world. Others resort to the tried-and-proven methods of Švejk. I heard the story of the little fellow in Prague who rides on the platform of a streetcar. A big, strong man gets on and ruthlessly steps on the little fellow's toe. Everybody notices it but no one dares to open his mouth; the big man is too strong. He keeps his heavy foot there until he gets off.

Then another passenger says to the little fellow, "Goodness, how could you stand it? You didn't even ask him to take his foot off your toe."

The little fellow keeps massaging his toe that hurts him so much but he smiles. "No, I didn't. But I quietly burned a big hole in his new jacket with my cigarette."

Too Many Wrongs

THE HISTORY OF Prague, from its beginning a thousand years ago to this day, repeats the truism that wrong always begets wrong. Assassinations among the early Přemyslid rulers were followed by much bloodshed under the Luxemburgers when social conflicts erupted between rulers and the Estates, between the Estates and the burghers, between wealthy German and impoverished Czech people, between rich and poor clerics. In 1464, George of Poděbrady, the Hussite noble who became King of Bohemia, submitted his proposals for a community of free nations that should renounce the settlement of conflicts by force of arms, render mutual aid against the Turkish aggressors and submit disputes to an international court. It read like a fifteenth-century United Nations Charter but was never accepted.

The nineteenth century in Prague was one long chain reaction of political, social, national, conflict. The first part of the century is called by Czech historians "the national revival." After the battle of the White Mountain, the country

had been radically Germanized by the Habsburgs, and Czech was spoken only among the peasantry. In 1817, the Czechs demanded, and obtained, a professorship of Czech language at the Prague University; in Prague, "language" has always been synonymous with "nationality." The mathematician Stanislav Vryda and the encyclopedist Josef Dobrovský were among the first lecturers. (Czech historians now call Dobrovský "the founder of modern Czech grammar," while German nationalists, such as Schürer, have tried to prove that "Dobrovský felt he belonged to the German cultural circle," *Kulturkreis*. It isn't only Wallenstein's image that "fluctuates in History.")

The Czech bourgeoisie remained rather indifferent to the national awakening but the students were always close to the people. There was great curiosity in Czech language and literature. Joseph Jungmann recorded the vocabulary of ancient and modern Czech in his Czech-German dictionary. František Palacký, the greatest Czech historian and author of *History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia*, became the intellectual leader of the Czech Renaissance. A Moravian Protestant, he continued the humanist traditions that began with Comenius and—so far—have ended with Tomáš G. Masaryk. (Curiously, all great Czech humanists come from Moravia.) Palacký once said, "With all my holy love for my nation I consider the interests of humanity and science more important than nationality." And it took courage to say, "If the Austrian Monarchy didn't exist, one would have to create it in the interest of Europe and humanity." (Today, there is subdued but persistent talk in Prague, Belgrade, Bucharest and Vienna—yes, Vienna—of a future "Danube Federation" that strangely resembles the broken-up Habsburg Monarchy.) The idea of humanity dominated the Czech Renaissance for a long time, until humanity capitula-

ted under the impact of chauvinism. In 1786, the poet Herder, a great German humanist, had praised the Slavs in his *Ideas Concerning the Philosophy and History of Humanity*, calling the language "their true homeland." But 1786 was also the year when the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague, where Hus had preached in Czech, was destroyed by order of the Jesuits.

The idea of humanity dominated the first Slav Congress, held in Prague in early June, 1848, which was attended by representatives of all Slav nations. The Congress did not oppose Austria's sovereignty but demanded liberty, equality and fraternity of all peoples in Europe, as the Polish Prince Lubomirski stated it. Palacký said the Slavs wanted to acknowledge membership of their great family. But the motto of the Congress, and of the entire national Renaissance movement, was expressed by the Slovak Protestant, J. J. Šafařík, "Either we shall realize that we can say proudly, 'I am a Slav,' or we stop being Slavs."

The spirit of humanity ended abruptly a few days later, at Whitsuntide, when the Austrian general, Alfred Prince Windischgraetz ("his iron slogan was 'Alles für Österreich,' Everything for Austria," writes Schürer) was named supreme commander of the Prague garrison. Immediately, riots started in Prague, barricades went up all over town, and after a while the riots escalated into revolt, and the revolt into revolution; Windischgraetz occupied Charles Bridge and used its strategic position to turn his guns from the western bridgehead against the Old Town. That was too much, even for the hawks in Vienna: Windischgraetz was suddenly replaced by General Count Mensdorff, a more moderate military man. But the fighting continued for days, and once again the pavement of Prague "drank blood." In the end, the revolutionaries were beaten, and a state of siege

was declared in Prague. (Three months later, in October, 1848, the Revolution broke out in Vienna, and was crushed by Windischgrätz. The Czech liberals opposed the Viennese revolutionaries, which today's Communist historians consider a terrible mistake. "The treachery of the Czech liberal bourgeoisie brought them no reward," writes Miloš Kratochvíl.)

Emperor Ferdinand V, "the Good One," abdicated in favor of his eighteen-year-old nephew, Franz Joseph I, and came to Prague where he spent the last years of his life in Hradčany Castle as an Imperial pensioner. He was often seen walking in Ferdinand Street, named after him (today Národní Třída), or driving his carriage "to collect in person the rents of houses which belonged to the Crown." Bedřich Smetana was named his Court Director of Music, and was occasionally summoned to the Castle to play for the ex-Kaiser his favorite military marches on the piano. Franz Joseph I was never crowned in Prague as King of Bohemia. In the early 1860s, there was some talk of a coronation and the Spanish Hall and the Rudolphian Gallery at the Castle were given new pseudo-Baroque stucco decorations. Then the workers moved over to St. Vitus Cathedral to continue their never-ending job there.

The forces of nationalism which eventually led to the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy could no longer be stopped. The second half of the nineteenth century is a continuous struggle between Czechs and Germans in Prague. The Jews were no longer able to play the traditional role of mediators. The Czech revival created German chauvinism, which in turn created Czech chauvinism. After the Austro-Hungarian "dual" Monarchy was established in 1867, the Czechs wanted their independence too, but were opposed by the

German and Hungarian members of the Reichsrat (Diet) in Vienna. The first Czech political parties were founded: the Social Democrats, in 1878; the nationalist Young Czechs and the National-Socialists, in 1897; and the Agrarian Party and Masaryk's ("Realist") Party in 1900. The first ugly racist sounds were heard among the "Sudetan Germans" in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia when Georg Ritter von Schönerer expounded his theories of "the German master race."

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (he took the middle name from his mother, an American woman from Brooklyn) won the fight for self-determination and political independence of his nation, but he couldn't win the bigger fight to make the Republic of Czechoslovakia a sort of Central-European Switzerland where Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Jews, Hungarians and other minorities would live together in peace. Looking back, one cannot fail to see the short interlude between the world wars in Czechoslovakia as a time of Western-style democracy and Western-style prosperity, at least up to the economic world crisis after 1929. In those years, "Made in Czechoslovakia" became an internationally respected trademark of quality, and the Czechoslovaks were called "the Americans of Europe." This is not, however the view now taken by contemporary historians in Prague. As Miloš Kratochvíl writes:

Independence brought Czech capital right to the top in the industrial and financial world. Czech banks sought financial support abroad for big industrial enterprises. As they grew more prosperous, the capitalists became politically influential and won positions in the government. Although they enacted some progressive measures such as the eight-hour day, the socialist parties did not nationalize the key industries. . . . The economic boom of 1923 to 1929 strengthened big business. About 25 con-

cerns controlled 80 per cent of the capital, with three big banks dominating industry. Unemployment declined, pension insurance for workers was introduced together with other reforms, but the full benefits of economic recovery were not felt by workers and employees.

Still, the country's President was a great philosopher and humanist—a luxury few countries ever permitted themselves in history. While social inequities existed, nearly everybody had work and enough to eat. There was freedom of speech and of the press, religious and political freedom. At one time there were seventeen different political parties represented at the Czechoslovak Parliament in Prague. It may have been a "bourgeois" republic, as it is now (officially) called, but it is also (unofficially) remembered as a lost paradise by the majority of the inhabitants of the present Socialist People's Republic—by all the people who are old enough to remember.

Masaryk's Republic didn't last. When the Sudeten-German Party got two thirds of all German votes in Czechoslovakia in 1935, the handwriting was on the wall. The Sudeten-German Führer, Konrad Henlein, took his orders (and considerable secret subsidies) from Hitler in neighboring Germany. He was told to ask always for more than the Czechoslovak Government could possibly give him. On May 28, 1938, Hitler told his Wehrmacht generals, "It is my unshakable will to extinguish Czechoslovakia from the map of Europe." The Czechs mobilized their armed forces but did not fight, which turned out to be a tragic mistake. Instead, they relied on their great friends, the Western powers. The so-called Munich agreement of September 29 prepared the opening for the German invasion. On March 15, 1939—the blackest day in the country's history since King Přemysl Otakar's defeat on the Marchfeld, the suicidal Hussite battle of Lipany and the battle of the White Mountain—the Ger-

man tanks rumbled into Prague. Hitler promised the Czech nation "an autonomous development of its national life."

This was "the autonomous development": at least 300,000 men and women, out of a population of thirteen million, were killed by Nazi executioners. Executions took place nearly every day in all cities. "In the Moravian capital of Brno, the House for University Students was turned into a prison by the Gestapo," writes Traugott Krischke, a German writer:

There 1300 Czechoslovaks, men and women, were hung, shot or tortured to death between September 28, 1941, and April 18, 1945. The Nazis in Brno were permitted to watch the executions as interested spectators; the price of a ticket was three Reichsmark. The Pankrác Prison in Prague was the scene of an uninterrupted chain of executions, and so were the rifle ranges of Ruzyně (near today's Prague Airport) and Kobylisy. Half a million Czech workers were deported to Germany as forced-laborers. After the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, on May 27, 1942, the village of Lidice was "erased" because the Gestapo claimed—falsely—that the assassins had been hiding there. Mass murder also occurred in Ležáky, near Pardubice; in the village of Moravka, near the Slovak border, and in nearby Plostina; in the Bohemian villages of Leskovice and Sedlec. . . . In the first week following the death of Heydrich, 1800 "political prisoners" were executed. It cannot be ascertained whether this figure includes 1300 Jews who were murdered in Prague after the assassination. Of the Jewish pre-war population of 315,000, only 60,000 were still alive after the departure of the Nazis. . . . The losses of human lives can only be estimated. The exact number will never be known, and neither will be the cause of death. . . .

Wrong always begets wrong. "On May 5, the people of Prague rose in arms against the Germans," writes Kratochvil. "The rising was led by the Czech National Council coordinating all resistance groups. Over 30,000 fought in