
A Hundred Years of the „Czech Question“ and *The Czech Question* a Hundred Years On

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Abstract: In general, it can be stated that Czech political culture circles around certain semantic centres (national identity, political orientation, cultural self-consciousness, moral self-reflection, historical self-perception etc.), whose varying conception presents a theoretical foil at different points in time which makes the understanding of the most concrete socio-political phenomena possible. Masaryk's work, *The Czech Question*, represents one of the first and most influential attempts to structure these 'centres' within the framework provided by the philosophy of history. The analysis of Masaryk's conception in this article is linked with concrete socio-historical events (the quarrel over the authenticity of ancient Slavic manuscripts, the so-called civilisation crisis at the end of the last century, concrete national, political and social tensions, the asymmetry between the precapitalist and capitalist throughout Austro-Hungary etc.). In such a way, it is demonstrated how Masaryk's religious-humanistic conception of the meaning of Czech history would necessarily be subject to liberal-economic critique. Masaryk's interpretation of Czech history can be understood as a search for an alternative to political liberalism. It was the Czech politician, Josef Kaizl (Minister of Finance of Austria-Hungary, 1888-1889) who rejected both Masaryk's extremely one-sided view of the political economy and his highly compensatory conception of politics (which Masaryk called „apolitical politics“). The author presents the debate between Masaryk and Kaizl as the problematic relationship between pragmatics and principles in politics.

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Every formula by which we express the sense of history is only a reflection of our revived inward nature.

Wilhelm Dilthey

Wouldn't it be wonderful if philosophy resurrected a nation, a nation which shed its blood first of all for the freedom of thought?

T. G. Masaryk 24. 3. 1879 to Leandr Čech

It would be difficult to find another nation in Europe other than the Czech nation which would devote so much intellectual endeavour to philosophical and historical self-reflection, which would, after so long a time, in fact, more than one hundred and fifty years, attempt to formulate the supranational and extra-national foundations of its national existence in order to seek a more profound justification of its being. The modern Czech national identity, risen from the Revival and reworked *ex nihilo*, was still not deemed a matter of course well into the 19th century. The intrinsic side to the endeavours to find the spiritual foundations of national existence, however, is not only an attempt to anchor

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it in philosophical-theological and generally humanist conceptions. What must be part of this is a constant renewal of self-reflection, a constant – often exalted – return to similar considerations from the point of view of form and content. Czech self-reflection, whether anew of the most critical or mythogenic nature, returns from the period of the high Revival to our contemporary lives, with certain interludes but always with a similar urgency and with inner ideological contexts. Accompanying this, naturally, are the stereotypes, „catching up with the West“, „opening the doors to Europe“ and the „return to history“. If we disregard the specific aims and arguments of Baroque and early revivalist linguistic „defences“, considerations of this type have been put before us in varying forms, contexts and dimensions (from scattered notes, feuilletons and treatises to independent books) and, above all, in varying depths: once, for example, as a reflection on „the vocation of our Czech lands... the inhabitant of Slav and Germanic origins... from the point of general development“ [Smetana 1960, I: 148], at another time as the question of „a small nation“ [Kollár 1831] and sometimes in the form of the problems of the Czech mentality, national psychology and character [Chalupný 1910, Fischer 1926, Peroutka 1924]. We have encountered them in the form of questions relating to the sense and possibilities of the Czech language and Czech culture, the sense of the existence of the independent Czech nation alongside other larger, stronger and more productive cultures in Europe, and relating to the sense of the National Revival in general [Schauer 1886a, b]. These issues became apparent to varying degrees through the reflections on the Czechs' relationship towards neighbouring states – for example, the attempt at linking the philosophy of Czech and Austrian history – [Tomek 1854], they stood in the background while attempts to seek the roots of our political and cultural orientation were being made; they are similarly important for an understanding of the thematisation of the cultural individuality of central Europe [Kundera 1984] and, after him, a number of others). One could not overlook the remarkable *Otázka židovská ve světle české otázky* [The Jewish Question in the Light of the Czech Question] by Jindřich Kohn [1936, I], nor F. V. Krejčí with his „Czech and European moral issue“ [Krejčí 1894] and František Götz [1936]. The prospects of the „Czech question“ in the broadest sense of the word, i.e. as the question of the sense, identity and prospects of Czech national sentiment or even the long-felt unease or indeed, the risk related to political, national and cultural „being“ in central Europe could certainly be used to explain certain later historical, political and moral thinking (and the polemics often relating to them). Here we could include the discussions on *Czech destiny* by Václav Havel, Milan Kundera, Jaroslav Střítecký and Lubomír Nový at the end of 1968 and the beginning of 1969 in *Literární noviny*, *Zitřek* and collected in *Host do domu* [*Host do domu* 1968, 1969a, 1969b], then the debates in samizdat literature and texts printed in exile for Charter 77 *Právo na dějiny* (A Right to History) [see, e.g. *Právo...* 1984 and *Dokumentace...* 1985] and finally the debates surrounding Podiven's work *Češi v dějinách nové doby* (Czechs in the History of a New Age) [Podiven 1992]. No can one fail to mention Patočka's comprehensive essay *Co jsou Češi?* (What are the Czechs?) [Patočka 1993], *Naše nynější krize* (Our Present Crisis) (and other works) by Karel Kosík [1993] and also *O češství a evropanství* (On Czech National Sentiment and Europeanism) by Jaroslav Krejčí [1993] if we are to name works which were made available to a wider readership during the past era. The comprehensive, synthetic attempt by Jan Křen, *Historické proměny češství* (Historical Changes of Czech National Sentiment) [Křen 1992], occupies an exceptional position in the current

perspective of the Czech question. And we could go on to name many more works and writers devoted to this theme...

From the time Masaryk gave his speech in the spring of 1895, the formulation of the *sense of Czech history* stood at the centre of attention surrounding the „Czech question“, both in the context of world history and, in particular, with regard to its internal sources. Thus possibilities were introduced for reflection upon the Czech contribution to humanity and progress upon the interconnection between this contribution and the extra-historical moral principles as well as for reflections on the historical shift of Czech history. Masaryk thus found himself above and beyond his earlier geopolitical and cultural-political formulations, although his politically legitimising intentions were preserved. In 1888, the „Czech question“ was for him a „Slav-West question“ and „...a German question at the same time...: if it is our fate, that we, the Czechs, are surrounded by the German element, it is less crucial for the Germans that the Slav wedge is thrust into their body and that it is a much shorter distance from the last Czech region to their capital city than from their furthestmost region to the centre of the Slav lands...“ [Masaryk 1888]. Five years later „...we are all posing a fundamental question: what is the position of our nation and what are its characteristics in amongst other European nations, what is our position in the development of humanity... we want to know our individuality, we want to define what is ours, we want to determine what we have given others and what we have received from others... for we must know how to continue in our development, what we have, what we must do, in what direction we must go.“ [Masaryk 1893: 2]. The philosophical emphasis uniting the *inner* components of the „Czech question,“ that *theory of continuity* [Patočka 1969: 463] of Czech history, of course, was not received without intense intellectual debate [see, e.g. Kaizl 1896]. Out of almost a half-century of *disputes concerning the sense of Czech history*, in which, apart from T. G. Masaryk and Josef Pekař, historians (Kamil Krofta, Jindřich Vančura, Zdeněk Nejedlý, Jan Slavík, Jaroslav Werstadt, Karel Stloukal and philosophers Emanuel Rádl, F. M. Bartoš, Josef Ludvík Fischer, Karel Kupka, theologians Konstantin Miklík, literary scientists and publicists such as F. X. Šalda, J. B. Čapek, Jiří Jareš, Jaroslav Prokeš and others) repeatedly participated, an almost idiosyncratic Czech philosophical discipline accompanied by a richly elaborated literature arose. In this context, one should mention, in particular, the philosophical- methodological discussions (Pekař – Slavík) of the 1930s, which brought the *debate on the sense of Czech history* back to the Weberian problems of the constitution of historical knowledge (Wertbeziehung) and its objectivity (Wertfreiheit). The fundamental texts on the *debates on the sense of Czech history* from the years 1895-1938 were published in the spring of this year by the author of this essay [Havelka 1995].

The all-embracing term, the „Czech question“, according to which reflections of this type are generally classified or under which they appear together of themselves, denotes nothing individual nor something which could be categorically overlooked. It is stratified not only from an interpretative and thematic point of view but also from one of inner development: the history of the problem of contemporary Czech national sentiment, the justification and building of a national, cultural and civilised identity is older and, on the whole, less clear-cut than the history of the unified identification of this problem. From this perspective the problem of the „Czech question“ (with a small „q“) should not be interchangeable with Masaryk's solution of it in his work *The Czech Question* (with a large „Q“) nor with its definitions and appendices, in particular,

included in *Naše nynější krise* (Our Present Crisis) and in *Jan Hus*, the first publication of which took place one hundred years hence.

In the general context of the „Czech question“ and, particularly, regarding its form within the debate on the sense of Czech history – which is genetically and structurally a part of its formulation and its solution – what should not be overlooked is the fact that we are dealing with a special, in many respects, unique manner of thematising history as well as with its special reflections which have not been completely accounted for in accepted views of history. Here, one cannot speak only of specialist historiography in the full sense of the word, nor of the traditional philosophy of history: this is not exclusively a matter of diagnosing the present, nor of cultural criticism or a critical theory of history and society. This view cannot be presented as the theory of history, nor the theory of historical knowledge, nor even the theory of politics.

In this context, we encounter elements and motifs from all the above-mentioned approaches simultaneously (the German historian Ernst Nolte, at the end of the 1980s, attempted a similar approach with the analysis of the term *reflections on history*) [Nolte 1990: 5]. What ultimately unites these various authors, despite their differing methods, is the motivating character of their perspective and its *programmatic nature*. Their ideas on what constitutes Czech history is thus motivated in that its justification and purpose is an interest in Czech contemporary life to be understood from a perspective which embraces the Czech past. From this past, then, the Czech future should also be oriented. The past and the reflections there upon should assume, to a certain extent, the function of the theory of society; they become not only the basis for the clarification of national identity, but also serve as the legitimising base for political negotiation as well as, in certain cases, as the theory on the special integration of the individual into society, the creation of the Czech „mentality“.

The thinkers of the „Czech question“ are, then, those philosophers and historians, politicians and theologians who expressly formulate the question of understanding and the programme of Czech contemporary life in such way that uncertainty stands against certainty, problem-creation against apodictic reasoning, activity against contemplation, subjective political awareness against distanced objectivity.

Every attempt at reformulating the present form of the „Czech question“ must necessarily mean the historicising of its Masarykian concept. This is historicising in both senses of the word: both from the point of view of the obsolescence of its solution in the *religious concept of Czech history* and of the period and personal contingency of its formulation in general. The historical background on which Masaryk's solution becomes visible, i.e. the historical tangibility of the problems, the unique character of the events and the period backdrop of evaluation have a stratification similar to the theme itself:

1) Let us consider the spiritual context with the specialist and, at the same time, generational *debate on the authenticity of the so-called Královédvorský and Zelenohorský manuscripts*, forged during the Romantic period of the National Revival, proclaimed the oldest Czech literary monuments. The *battle of the manuscripts*, which flared up in 1886, became, for a considerable period of time, the actual and symbolic spiritual centre which led to the refinement of political and scientific standpoints, to the conceptional and personal division of those participating in the argument and finally to the change in perspective. Apart from its realistic, demythologising and cultural cleansing function, as opposed to the „noble“ beginnings and the dignity of the tradition on which the majesty

of truth is built, the manuscript debate, ultimately enabled a transition to another, new situation for the nation, corresponding more to forms of self-esteem. It did not, however, lead to the failure of the historical methods of legitimisation of political endeavour, but did devalue the extreme forms of pseudo-historical self-stylisation and non-critical traditionalism for the future. Masaryk's frequent critiques on *historicism* were also critiques of these concepts.

On the other hand, of course, one of the symbols of national self-esteem no longer held any significance. The empty space it left, then, could have been filled by „less controversial“ values, for example, the „scientific“ construction of the religious sense of history.

2) From the *point of view of civilisation*, this was a situation whose moments of crisis were manifested in Europe at the end of the century in various areas during certain periods with varying degrees of intensity and consequences. They arose from classical liberalism and related to the processes of economic, political, administrative, social and cultural modernisation which liberalism triggered in a similar way to that in which it helped promote „trends in the rationalisation of life and the world“ [Weber 1920: 5] and displayed a certain demythologising and secularising force. In consequence, they led to the emancipation of the individual, both from confinement within the church and dependence on the state. These processes were revealed amidst the chaos of cultural and moral values and with a relativist current between ideas, the disintegration of tradition, the shift of political and power interests, the imperial ambitions of states, the rise of new groups and classes and the intensification of social and political conflict. With this came growing anti-Semitism and reactionary anti-enlightenment linked with traditionalist and conservative trends. Apart from the processes of modernisation and secularisation of life, one may also speak of the radicalisation of group, national and state interests and needs and the „ideologisation of ideas“ associated with them [Bracher 1982: 15].

Masaryk wished to react to this situation in his *Czech Question*, a situation which was deemed to be an acute crisis of life and orientation, with particular regard to the needs of national society. The work of the same name, however, was merely meant to form part of a more philanthropic concept which was only partially fulfilled. As Masaryk's publisher, Vasil K. Škrach, points out [Škrach 1948: 621], the prerequisite for overcoming the crisis was to take the form of the formulation and analysis of two further *questions* which were broader in content and complementary to each other, namely *religious* and *social* questions. It would seem that this accommodated Masaryk's fundamentally conservative vision of the general crisis of the time: he could not (and did not wish to) understand the crisis as a problem of progress, i.e. according to Hegel, as an „energy“ of the self-propelled historical changes or from the Marxist point of view, as the eve of revolution, nor „existentially“, as the continually reproductive and fundamentally fatal situation of man and his culture. Masaryk understood crisis chiefly as a „challenge“ for renewal, i.e. as something which can essentially be resolved and eliminated with intellectual and moral endeavour. That is also why he placed reformation, legal opposition and minor tasks against revolution, violent revolution against spiritual revolution and, against armed revolution, the revolution of heads and hearts.

3) With the concept in which „reality demands the real value of possibility“ [Škrach 1936: 631], Masaryk wanted to address the *issues of Czech national society* of his time as well as their *general* political and cultural orientation. It seems that the decisive trait of this period was the fundamental debate between, on the one hand, the actual

economic position of the Czech Lands, the increasingly settled if then incomplete Czech national society, between cultural, educational and democratising and the chiefly economic productivity of the civil-bourgeois elements of this society and, on the other hand, their tangible political opportunities, political influence and the general political task of the Czech nation within the framework of multi-national and – if a matter of the political elite – principally pre-capitalist, namely feudal, monarchy. From here, from this asymmetry between the actual position and the incomplete political prospects, grew the need for the reformulation of political interests and orientation.

The symbolic moments in this rise of the Czech national society which occurred during the whole of the 19th century were the division of the Prague university into Czech and German branches (1882), the founding of the first scientific-critical periodical (*Athenaeum*, 1883), the attainment of a majority in the Czech assembly (1883), the granting of equal status of the Czech language with German internal official spheres, i.e. in relation to the parties and self-governing offices, this took the form of the publication of the so-called Stremayer provision (1880) and the change of the election procedure to the commercial chambers (1884). The most telling phenomenon, however, was undoubtedly the defeat of the Old Czech Party in the 1881 elections. This could be understood as a political symbol of departure from the old, traditionalist concept of national life and its duties.

Only scepticism towards what had occurred until then and criticism of what was outdated could introduce a new perspective in a situation of change: from a cultural solidarity dependent on civilisation. The Czechs developed into a self-reliant national society whose democratism and liberalism – as Jan Křen recently emphasised [Křen 1992: 79] – were ahead of the other Central European nations. Czech development and national change naturally had to influence the manner and content of further questioning.

At this time, it acquired its most radical form in the writings of Hubert Gordon Schauer. His famous treatise „Naše dvě otázky“ (Our two questions) were: „What is the task of our nation?“ and „What is our national existence?“, appearing in the first edition of the realist *Čas* publication [Schauer 1886a] The answer given is sceptical, extremely emotive and, to this day, still cause for concern. The results of the revival of the nation, its situation and prospects which the majority of Schauer's contemporaries considered matter-of-fact, are here seen as problematic from the points of view of culture and civilisation: „...if our national existence is worthy of this endeavour, is its cultural worth so much? (...) Is our national fund such“ that it would convince the national revivalist and awakener that „...if they preserve the language for the people, they also preserve it for their own thinking world, that the elimination of the language would be a real ethical shame, that they would thus be preserving a type which, in the pantheon of humanity, holds a sturdy, valid and independent place? If the answer to the question is affirmative, we are given an assurance: our intelligence will have a sufficient domestic source of inspiration and a people, a nation befitting itself and, at the same time, which finds itself in complete accordance with the ideal world order. Then all external endeavour will be futile, at least, very exacting and Europe, learning to value our being, will not consent so easily to its destruction.“ [Schauer 1886a: 2-3]

Here was the formulation of the concept of nationhood which diverged from established forms of contemporary understanding thereof. The mass criticism at that time did not acknowledge Schauer; his scepticism turned chiefly against empty, purely revivalist forms of linguistic identity surviving from the National Revival and his questions

were, to a considerable extent, issues of a constituted, modern, civil, clearly structured and politically and nationally chiefly self-confident Czech society. The demand that the Czech intelligentsia assume the leading roles in political life was, in Schauer's viewpoint, in fact directed against both certain Germanising and Russophilic trends. Most of all it reflected the new situation of national society for it was, at the same time, a question concerning the function of its political and cultural elites. One could also consider symbolic the fact that Schauer, in later discussions on the sense of Czech history, was ignored and misunderstood, just as the possibility of a more sociological formulation of the „Czech question“ as emphasised by him was disregarded. (The only attempt to recognise it was contained in the „Česká krise – česká otázka“ (The Czech crisis – the Czech question) by O. Jozífek (i.e. Jaroslav Dyrhon) from 1902.)

It was Masaryk who enlarged not only upon Schauer's criticism of Czech politics which „does not look further than from one case to the next“, but also on his conception of the nation as a task and the parallel of „preserving one's own thinking world“ in connection with „the ideal world order“ [Schauer 1886a: 3]. He also stressed „our participation in the world's struggle for truth, rights and humanity, our initiative participation in European affairs“ [Schauer 1886a: 3]. We find a further parallel in both writers, in particular, is the general emphasis of the supranational ideals, the „consciousness of moral vocation“ [Schauer 1886a: 2] through which national existence assumes its sense and objective. It will probably be necessary to point out in greater detail to what extent Ernest Renan (1882), in his concept of the nation as a „choice“, stood for Schauer's „existentialised“ concept of the nation as a conscious „responsibility“ and „choice“ and to what extent he influenced Masaryk [Renan 1993].

While for Schauer, the „consciousness of the moral calling“ of the nation was a product of history, a „solid and continual context between the past, present and the future“ [Schauer 1886a: 2], Masaryk's realistic viewpoint had an anti-historicist edge: „Things, not history, things, not development (...) learn to recognise them everywhere, things that are everywhere and their core! The development of things is not of real importance for the spirit...“ [Masaryk 1948a: 150,161]. Thus, for him, the task of knowledge could not be a mere accumulation of facts or their causal interpretation, but the comprehension of their sense which points behind reality and above it. It was remarked more than once that Masaryk's own „...enduring, typical fondness (...) for the description of the historical development of ideas and trends“ [Chalupný 1948: 422] did not correspond with his criticism of historicism.

Like the majority of critics at that time, Masaryk also distanced himself considerably from Schauer, albeit for rather non-theoretical reasons. On the one hand, probably because he himself was considered by certain groups and for a certain period of time to be an author or, at least, an instigator and spiritual father of a treatise so greatly criticised, on the other hand because Schauer seemed too radical to him (i.e. revolutionary). Pragmatic reasons also certainly played a role. Masaryk admitted to Karel Čapek much later: „...I think that they put it in because they didn't have enough contributions. It was an impossible situation... The very next day I took myself off to reprimand Herben...“ [Čapek 1946: 71]

4) Seven years after Schauer, after his conceptual formulation of the „Czech question“, and five years after Masaryk's „geopolitical“ *Západní slovanská otázka* (The Western Slav Question) [Masaryk 1888], the *political situation* also began to take shape - after the fall of the Taaffe cabinet and the creation of a government led by Alfred

Windischgrätz, whose declaration in November of 1893 and approval of a state of emergency in Prague and the surrounding areas led to the further, already tangible radicalisation of the Young Czech opposition. One of its leaders, deputy Josef Herold, seized the first opportunity which arose and, at the spring session of parliament, turned to the ministerial chairman with the inquiry as to how the government intended to resolve the „Czech question“.

The idiom which was to express the dissatisfaction of the Czech party with the existing resolution of constitutional, political and nationality issues, after Windischgrätz's refusal that, from his position as chairman of a coalition government, he could not accede to the „Czech question“, began to circulate and structure various positions more strongly around itself, to steer negotiations and, above all, emphasise various values. As Otto Urban pointed out, its contents were enlarged to the spheres concentrating on society, culture, economics, feminism, Jewish-assimilation: „the ‚Czech question‘ (...) became the complex of all problems whose common denominator was the reformistically conceived endeavour to democratise (...) society“ [Urban 1982: 438].

The non-productive nature and, chiefly, the lack of prospects of the policies of the Young Czech party whose opposing stance (from the first third of the 1890s) continued to be contained in the mere negation of the government by means of technical obstructions in parliament and went so far as to generate the irresponsible radicalisation of public opinion (for example Josef Kaizl privately spoke of anarchy, disorder, foolishness and knavery [Kaizl 1909, III]), finally resulted in the mutual political and conceptual division of the realist politicians – T. G. Masaryk, Josef Kaizl and Karel Kramář – who had joined the Young Czech deputy club during the elections of 1891 with great intellectual and moral ambitions, perhaps with a feeling of superiority, but chiefly with certain claims to relative independence.

Masaryk, in this new situation, urged his two colleagues to recognise the need for the realists to jointly abandon the Young Czech ranks; when he could not convince them, he set out a mandate himself in October 1893. He tried to orient his critical stance on Czech politics of that decade towards a theoretical- philosophical point of view.

The result was three books, published in 1895-1896, *Česká otázka* (The Czech Question), *Naše nynější krise* (Our Present Crisis) and *Jan Hus*, of which the first was the most important. The *Question* of the title, a phrase which Masaryk used frequently, was used astutely here – not in its ordinary, more or less merely propagandist sense. For Masaryk it was always a synonym for a problem which had, in some way, already been identified, namely – in the broadest sense – to discover that, in our knowledge of things, there is something not quite right and this something must be examined. Unlike today's concept of political and social *questions*, whose symbols are a questionnaire and, perhaps, an electoral card, Masaryk always wanted to probe ever more deeply. His formulation of the *question* was always contingent on the basic possibility of the kind of *answer*, which remains timeless. Its final justification is, then, metaphysical; it cannot be merged with the contemporary, sceptically based concept of knowledge as a process of never-ending questioning (and the process of imperfect, incomplete, processive and „only“ falsifiable answers associated with it). Masaryk was convinced of the chance for a more valid possibility of answering, set „beyond“ or directly „above“ (from a Platonic viewpoint) the concrete nature of history and reality. Thus it could not merely have been a question of some constructivist communication of sense for the „senseless“, nor the sense of history – generally at best arguable – hidden within the individual dramas of history.

For him, sense was something tangible. Masaryk believed that the existence of the world and the existence of nations have their final purpose, that *Providence* and its plan exist, a certain enlightening objective setting down the foundation stones of the development of the world and its internal regularity, which is also directed at the conduct and spiritual productivity of both nations and the individual. Thus the history of individual nations cannot be coincidental, „for manifested in it is a definite plan of Providence“ and it is, then, the task of historians and philosophers to intercept this plan, to seek within it and define a place for its nation while the nations should act accordingly, „with the fullest and clearest consciousness (...) in all work, including political occupation“ [Masaryk 1948a: 3].

Masaryk's philosophy of history is realistic in the Platonic sense. The reality of ideas and their metaphysical affinity which, in the end, endure all historical phenomena and phenomenal changes, then afforded a direct link between the Czech reformation and the National Revival, leading Masaryk to emphasise a unified act of the Czech past. The ideal identity of the spiritual sources of national history was set against the historical continuity of Czech national identity as affirmed by Pekař (and against the discontinuity of Czech national identity presented by modern Czech historiography).

It is the clarification of the sense of the historical struggle of the Czech nation – as stressed by Masaryk – which can become a plausible basis for the exposure of the deficiencies of Czech life in the present, as well as the clarification of the sense and criticism of what exists; we then have the prerequisite for the creation of the political will which would exceed the limits of restricted party spirit, superficial nationalism and, finally, national cultural and civilised independence. It should be stated that the implementation of a national programme is possible only as that of a certain morally historical plan, that which makes it impossible for national self-determination to become a mere isolating event, an expression of national defiance and particular interests. Unity with world history, formulated in the demand for the Czech contribution to it and in the projection of a path of world history as a necessary foundation for humanity and democracy (in later formulations) – such are the most fundamental prerequisites for the fulfilment of national life and its political activities.

In his „Czech national philosophy“ – as it was termed by J. S. Machar [1895] in a review of *The Czech Question* at the time – Masaryk probably reconstructed this „plan of Providence“ in the following way: Our revivalists found a firm foundation for their attempts to outline the concept of humanity. From a philosophical point of view, they leaned on Herder's philosophy of history, and naturally supported the Czech reformation, Hus, Hussitism, Chelčický, the Czech Brethren and their humanitarian ideals. Thus the post-White Mountain anti-reformation void was filled. Our National Revival remains logically and eternally linked with the reformation. Dobrovský, Kollár, Šafařík and Palacký are essential bearers of their ennobled traditions, the defenders of freedom of conscience and promoters of the fraternal ideals of humanity. Our national reawakening is, then, a totally organic historical development. The humanitarian ideal, declared by Dobrovský and Kollár, is, according to Masaryk, our national responsibility, a direct expression of the understanding of those plans of Providence. Hus died a martyr's death because of these ideals. The Czech humanitarian ideal, the Czech idea of Brethren, these are leading Czech notions „for the whole of humanity...“. Thus wrote Masaryk in his *Czech Question*, a stance defended by his followers even though it became clear that Dobrovský was not very familiar with the Old Unitas Fratrum. The affair, however, was

not so simple. Masaryk was not a historian. Nevertheless, in his philosophical construction of Czech history, he maintained a rational stance, namely that Czech historical continuity was not renewed on the basis of Baroque patriotic historicism, but rather on the Enlightenment-inspired negation thereof, with perhaps hidden Protestant motifs. For the most part, it was for him a question of the whole context of history, so that beyond the frontiers of empirical historiography, but, at the same time, with its help, he could found and justify a programme for present and future discussion. It is with this positive impetus that the *Czech Question* both begins and is concluded: „if the Czech word were enough for our forefathers, we must work to ensure that the word is created with the Czech spirit...“ [Masaryk 1948a: 229-230].

In spite of all assurances that „the Czech question was not conceived in the sense of political practices“, but in a broad, apparently sociological context, (today we would naturally use the term *socio-philosophical*, or Nolte's abovementioned concept – *reflections on history*), Masaryk's publications from 1895 received great acclaim, a response which could be seen chiefly as party-political in nature. In the end, however, Masaryk was aiming at this domain even when he was „only“ postulating a philosophical view.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that even Masaryk's co-fighter of a short period before, the liberalist economist and politician Josef Kaizl, saw the issue of the *Czech Question* in a similar manner to the majority of his contemporaries, i.e. with emphasis on Masaryk's second publication, the more or less politico-scientific *Our Present Crisis* [Masaryk 1948b] and the perspectives therein. One should be reminded of Kaizl's lengthy polemics with Masaryk, termed *České myšlenky* (Czech thinking) [Kaizl 1896], for two reasons: On the one hand, with its historiographical arguments it anticipated Masaryk's criticism of the extra-historical interpretation of the Czech revival and Czech history in general with which the „Goll school“ later advocated (whether it was a matter of Kaizl's accent on the internal national bond of Czech history) the interpretation of the National Revival or, in particular, the reference to the ambiguity of Masaryk's concept of humanity. As Kaizl pointed out, Masaryk's interpretation leaned on „the previously elaborated notion of origin and contexts“ which he did not abandon „even when the facts went against it unequivocally“ [Kaizl 1896: 12]. The concept of fraternal humanity as the central historical and even political tradition which is apparently directly linked with Czech enlightenment, according to Kaizl, was, in the end, not philosophical but religious. It contained a preconceived idea of the differentiation between reformational humanity, i.e. Christian-fraternal, and humanity which has been „despiritualised“, an enlightened and liberal humanity, while trying to place the first, fraternal humanity before the second concept of enlightened humanity. According to Kaizl, associated with this was Masaryk's criticism of „liberalist indifference“, liberal „non-truth“ and the seemingly inauspicious moral and social effect [Kaizl 1896: 16-18], taken from the heights of Platonic realism. Liberalism, according to Masaryk „supported the work of the counter-reformation with its „imperfections and weaknesses“, „philosophical negations and moral and social patchwork“ with which it was supposed to have „thwarted the endeavours of the revivalists“. The revivalists, on the contrary, in Masaryk's words „revived the nation with their reformist ideals which, despite all counter-reformational endeavours, were not completely forgotten“ [Masaryk 1948a: 118, 1948b: 384-387 etc.].

For Kaizl, however, it was not just a matter of denying Masaryk's reduced, theistic and anti-enlightenment interpretation of the National Revival, but also of Masaryk's explicitly anti-liberalist grasp of Czech philosophy. Masaryk's views on the state –

which, apparently, is not the most important thing for a nation („...we had a state and we lost it“ [Masaryk 1948a: 123]) – could not suit Kaizl’s practical-political background. In particular, he denied Masaryk’s „socialisation“ of the state and inferiority of state and political life in favour of spiritual life, state independence in favour of spiritual independence. Kaizl [1896: 113-137] feared the underestimation of the productive functions and strengths of the state; „freedom“ and „organisation“ were a more practical formulation than „spiritual independence“ and a „sense of history“. He clearly felt that here was the root not only of Masaryk’s very unilateral attitude to national economy but also of his highly ambiguous (regarding its compensatory nature) conception of politics, which Masaryk himself conceived as „apolitical politics“ [Masaryk 1948a: 165,173].

The culturally critical potential of Masaryk’s interpretation of Czech history (which, together with liberalism, in fact also made an issue of the processes of the modernisation of national society, its secularisation and modern emancipation of the individual and his „despiritualisation“ as something critical) was to reassert itself several times, for example, in, the interwar period with Emanuel Rádl [1925] and Konstantin Miklík [1931]. The quest for the extra-historical often ends in the moralisation of the present. *The Czech Question*, which seeks reasons and the sense of a particular Czech national essence, for the continuity of history and a historical place for a nation, the possibilities of the political existence of Czechs and their state, their cultural identity and political orientation, their vocation and special characteristics etc. – was afforded yet another dimension by Masaryk, the dimension of moral responsibility and the critical obligations of intellectuals *sub specie aeternitatis*. Their defence of freedom and individuality against the socialising pressures of modern rationality and the technologisation of the world, is willing to place the pathos of authenticity above „mere“ authority. The problem lies, however, in that our situation is not a metaphysical but a pragmatic one.

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I'M NOT SURE WHETHER IT WAS
MASARYK WHO SAID: . . .



SMALL NATIONS ALSO
HAVE THEIR GREAT DUMBIES . . .

