Střítecký, Jaroslav

The Czech Question a century later

In: Střítecký, Jaroslav. *Studie a stati. 1.* Karafiát, Jan (editor). Vydání první Brno: Filozofická fakulta, Masarykova univerzita, 2017, pp. 66-81

ISBN 978-80-210-8879-5; ISBN 978-80-210-8880-1 (online : pdf)

Stable URL (handle): https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/137795
Access Date: 16. 02. 2024
Version: 20220831

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THE CZECH QUESTION A CENTURY LATER

Masaryk's *Česká otázka* (*The Czech Question*) is the foremost work within Czech national mythology. Even though its author was influenced by the critical spirit of the positivist branch of science,[1] he focused his interest on the Czech national revival which, in 1894, could already be accepted as a historical fact in need of interpretation. That is also why the work represents a kind of inventory summarising all that had already been achieved.

Czech national society existed then not merely as some kind of revivalist dream and programme, but was already fully developed in all its components, and an internally characteristically differentiated civil society. During the second half of the 19th century, the Czechs succeeded in performing an economic miracle: while in 1850 there was no such thing as a purely Czech stock capital, by the end of the century it had already outdone the capital of the German banks[2] in Bohemia. Of course, this occurred within the framework of a rapid transformation of an agrarian society into an industrial one, a change which was not specifically Czech. Nonetheless, they constituted a relatively strong and consolidated group in the area which ultimately contributed about 80% of the industrial production of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.[3] Thus, although in contemporary European dimensions, the Czech problem might seem a marginal one, at that time, it was definitely another story. Czechs were forming the third most numerous community

1 STŘÍTECKÝ, Jaroslav. *Hätte Masaryk zum österreichischen Durkheim werden können?* See p. 35–43.

2 GALANDAUER, Jan. Doslov. In MASARYK, Tomáš Garrigue. *Česká otázka: snahy a tužby národního obrození; Naše nynější krize: pád strany staročeské a počátkové směrů nových*. Praha: Svoboda, 1990, p. 347–352.

3 URBAN, Otto. *Kapitalismus a česká společnost. K otázkám formování české společnosti v 19. století.* Praha: Svoboda, 1978.

within a gigantic empire, such that settlement of the legal and constitutional relations with them therefore became one of the most pressing questions for Austrian internal policy since 1848.

This has mislead Marxist writers into stating that the whole Czech national revival movement was a reflection of the creation and rise of Czech bourgeois society. If that were true, then the whole Czech national revival would have had to happen no earlier than the 1880s, and not almost a century before! In addition: where are the economic and social causes for the formation of two national civil societies rather than a single one in the lands of the Bohemian crown?

The ethnic explanation has simply been a construed later instrumental fiction. For sure: German and Czech speaking people have been living here for centuries. The Josephinist delatinisation had replaced a dead and originally liturgical language with a spoken one – German. In addition to the germanisation, which had no nationalistic intentions, this brought significant confusion to the linguo-ethnic situation. All of those who had higher than basic education were educated in the German language. And so it was with the Austrian Slavs.

In addition, there was the Czech territorial anti-Josephinist opposition here: a conservatively aristocratic one. Against Viennese centralism, it emphasised the dignity of the long historical tradition of the Kingdom of Bohemia. They began to support patriotism directed towards the land and the local independence of culture, out of which was to grow, for example, the Prague cult of Mozart, and even the cult of the Czech language, which had once been prevalent in the land.[4] The consequence, when in 1775 Pelcl published Balbín's *Obrana jazyka českého* written one hundred years earlier, was a revival of the baroque tradition of the cult of Saint Wenceslas, which was conceived as a programme.

The modern Czech self-image rests on three things: 1) We suffered for three hundred years (counting, of course, up until 1918); 2) Hussitism was the peak of Czech history and an expression of the Czech national character; 3) The cultural language was codified and the Czech cultural world was built.

The first two theses have facilitated the transition from the patriotism directed towards the land, as opposed to the nation, (land-patriotism) to Czech nationalism. The third has united all the various national cultural activities. It worked in two directions: on the one hand, enabling the integration of world cultural treasures

4 Czech was often used in the Czech parliament, both as means of protest and applying pressure against the first Hapsburg monarchs: cavaliers who spoke not only Latin and German, but frequently also Spanish and other languages, addressed them on official occasions in Czech, therefore requiring interpreters. The estates thus symbolically demonstrated who was the master of the country and out of whose will the Hapsburg monarchs ruled, viz JANÁČEK, Josef. *Rudolf II. a jeho doba*. Praha: Svoboda, 1987, p. 77ff.; STŘÍTECKÝ, Jaroslav. *Die tschechische nationale Wiedergeburt: Mythen und Denkanstösse*. See p. 96–114.

into the Czech milieu, while on the other, separating this milieu from others, for example from the German one.[5]

Ad 1. The interpretation of the Bohemian uprising of the estates 1618–1620 was at first dominated by the spirit of land-patriotism, which was soon replaced by the national spirit. The repressions after the battle at the White Mountain were thus explicated as a national catastrophe, even though it was a catastrophe in quite a different sense of the word: within the framework of the harsh recatholisation of the land, the attempt to establish a system of democracy of the estates was crushed. The Jesuits, who, in their attempt at the creation and formation of local Catholic elites, developed a modem school system in the country and did not hesitate to give education even to young men of lower origin, have, in the Czech self-image, become a symbol of anti-Czech hatred exercised not only at the denominational, but also on the national level.[6]

Ad 2. The high regard for Hussitism was at first connected – as a contrasting background – to the constitutionally interpreted version of the battle at the White Mountain and to the revivalist attempts. Although today, it is mainly known from Palacký's presentation, its prehistory extends to the Josephinist times, when it harmonised with attempts to commemorate the past grandeur of Bohemian history. Surprisingly, the first great enlighteners were Catholic.[7] The focus of their interest

5 Separation from German cultural patterns was the primary, but not the only function here. Even in Jungmann's generation, the independence of the Czech linguistic culture was proved, for example, by vcrsalogical comparison with French or English poetry. Independence from West European cultures was often philologically proved through demonstration of the Czech phonetic system's resemblance to the ancient Greek Attic; the opinion that Slavic languages arc closer to the ancient Indo-European foundations than the other languages of Europe was also frequently expressed. Karel Havlíček Borovský's polemics of the 1840s were at the forefront of the separation of the Czech world from pan-Slavism. See MACURA, Vladimír. *Znamení zrodu. České obrození jako kulturní typ*. Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1983.

6 A picture of the Dark Times became commonly known thanks to a novel by Alois Jirásek of the same name. Alois Jirásek was a rightist conservative nationalist writer of historical novels which enjoyed such popularity that even the Czech communists adopted them (through Zdeněk Nejedlý's mediation) as an interpretation of the progressive national traditions. Thus far there is a lack of analysis which would show to what extent Jirásek simply popularised the individual schemes of the Czech self-image and how much he actually created them.

7 Over the period 1780–1785, Kašpar Royko (1744–1819) published *Geschichte der großen allgemeinen Kirchenversammlung zu Kostnitz*. This work was the first attempt to rehabilitate Jan Hus. It was translated into Czech by a professor of pastoral theology, Václav Stach (1754–1831). To this very day, the question of Jan Hus has remained a sore point for Czech Catholics. At the Second Vatican Council, the Prague archbishop Beran sought Hus's rehabilitation. In 1990, on the occasion of his first visit to Prague, (the first time a pope ever visited Prague!), Pope John Paul II considered it important to state in his address to the leading representatives of Czech public life that he saw Jan Hus as a priest of high moral integrity. Contemporary Czech Catholic historiography tends to appreciate the pre-Hussite and early Hussite socio-critical preachers as envisaging a necessary reform of the Church which was consequently ruined by the Hussite wars and the split of the Church during the Reformation.

was certainly not so much the interdenominational controversies, but a rehabilitation of the time when Bohemian affairs stood at the centre of European attention.

František Palacký accomplished two things: he restylised the history of the countries of the Bohemian crown into a history of the Czech nation in Bohemia and Moravia; he transformed Thierry's theory of conquest *(Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands),* which was commonly used by even liberal German historiography, (Georg Gottfried Gervinus) into a vision of the historical struggle of the free-thinking Slavic mentality with the authoritative German one.

Hussitism was treated by Palacký as the highest expression of the Czech democratic mentality. According to his interpretation, the Hussites sought to accomplish what was successfully carried out many centuries later by the large nations of Western Europe and North America. Thus he connected the Czech self-image with the world of liberalist ideas in Western Europe. In this respect, the Czech grand récit differs from other Slavic nationalisms.

Thanks to this connection, Palacký's history of the Czech nation, written according to the Protestant view, could become the modernisation ideology of an already recatholised or secularised nation and thus be shared by the lower Catholic clergy, which played an important role in the first phases of national agitation and propaganda.

Ad. 3. Dobrovský's codification of the modem cultural Czech language derived from the language of the 16th century, which had been the golden age of the elder Czech literature. Here, already, we can see the influence of the first thesis (concerning the post- White Mountain catastrophe): the Czech of post-White Mountain times, that is the spoken language, was seen by Dobrovský as a language in decline. Yet Dobrovský had no practical intentions : in the spirit of enlightenment, he sought the purest language system possible. It was only his pupil, Josef Jungmann, who made the revival of the Czech language a national programme.

Dobrovský's codification gave the impression that the Czech language was in decline, indeed it had already perished. In the works of Jungmann's generation, that is of the generation which successfully transformed Dobrovský's more or less theoretical codification into common use, laments as to the awful fate of the Czech language repeatedly occur. This constellation is very interesting from a sociological perspective. The anxiety over the apparently jeopardised mother-tongue[8] can actually be traced to an anxiety of social origin: anxiety connected with the traditional

8 In reality, Czech was spoken by a large part of the population and was not threatened by germanisation at all. The problem lay in the dominant position of cultural German as well as in the fact that the Czech spoken was not the language codified by Dobrovský, so that even the Jungmannite patriots whose mother-tongue was the commonly spoken Czech had to learn it anew. This situation is documented by one contemporary anecdote, according to which a Czech student, after having heard the poems of Čelakovský, claimed in confusion: „*I almost understood it, it is as if written in Czech!*" Cited from MACURA, Vladimír. *Znamení zrodu. České obrození jako kulturní typ*, op. cit.

social structures[9] which felt rightfully threatened by the Josephine attempts at modernisation. And it was within these very structures that Czech was often, if not always, spoken. A substantial part of the German population of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia was in the same situation – except for the fact that they lacked a reason as to why the problem of systematic social change should be spelled out in terms of a language problem, since cultural German commonly existed, indeed was socially dominant.

If we see the whole problem without prejudice then we can see it as issuing from a delatinisation that got out of control. The lack of control consisted in provoking unintended consequences. In general everything went according to the rules already set for the rise of modem nations by Benedict Anderson[10] – if it were not for the fact that instead of the creation of one national society two gradually arose: the Czech and the German. All other national concepts functioned as they did anywhere else, forming the basis for an intended horizontal national society. Its homogenising element can be found above all in the requirement of general participation, not just the participation of a narrow national elite: 1) in the replacement of the old liturgie language which was originally prevalent in the cultural world, in diplomacy, administration and schools with a living, spoken, lay language; 2) in the end of the social order's orientation to the hierarchy of lordship, based in the transcendent sphere; 3) in the gradual elimination of time and history from the process of secularisation, the void thus generated being filled by new meanings of the concepts of time, rule and society. History was no longer the history of salvation or the history of a political state. It had become the history of nations. It is not necessary to emphasise that this was a replacement of one myth with another, not a demythologisation for the sake of factually correct contents.

The change from a sacral community into a lay one in this region was common to all nations, as was the secularisation of the language. The peculiarity of Czech linguistic nationalism was the fact that it did not and could not focus on overcoming the dominant function of a sacral language. It had focused on a secondary sacralisation of the Czech language as of a sacred thing shared by the Czechs

9 The Czech revivalist movement was long, indeed until the times of Havlíček, characterised by this conservatism, hence the frequent connection made between linguo-national agitation and the conservative criticism of capitalism. See for example Tyl's dramatic tale *Strakonický dudák* or the sharper play (in this respect), *Jiříkovo vidění*: the Czech man should not get seduced by cosmopolitan entrepreneurs (in *Strakonický dudák*, this seducer has features later ascribed to the Jews), but should live in harmony with the spirits of nature and the good fairies of his village home. Later, this conservative tune of solidarity among those who, for all the differences in their fortune, power and state, somehow belong together, sounds in Czech idealism. In Dvořák's *Jakobín*, based on a script by the daughter of an important Czech politician, Rieger, Czechs possess what few have: their own, clearly, openly and consciously counter-revolutionary opera of the highest musical standards!

10 ANDERSON, Benedict. *Imagined Communities. Refections on the Origin und Soread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

alone,[11] since spoken German had in fact replaced Latin before the beginning of the Czech revivalist attempts.

The transcendent foundation of the structures of lordship was attacked much later in the Czech movement and with far weaker emphasis. It became more energetic later in Havlíček's utilitarism, in the politics of the Young Czechs party[12] – and with Masaryk, who made democracy's victory over theocracy one of the key points of his philosophy of history. Masaryk has typically restylised the well-known scheme of positivism: he replaced Comte's vision of industrial society – which comes from Saint-Simon – with the concept of democracy. That is why Masaryk's concept of democracy is so broad and is not exhausted by any political definitions. Its connection with the concept of humanity (whether inspired by Comte, Plato or Herder it is difficult to decide), enables Masaryk to base it in religion. This occurs in a strange mixture of sociologisms which hold religion in high esteem, but only because of its socially cementing function – a wholly non-religious aspect and attempt to delineate and include in general education the contents of religious values. This connection of inconnectibles, unimaginable in a modern discussion, is presented by Masaryk as a given. The authority of science then allows a cover-up, not only of a renaissance of pre-scientific transcendental prejudice, but also of their most strange synthesis. Masaryk, who was in his heart an inherently conservative critic of the democratisation of culture,[13] has learned how to talk the progressivist civil jargon; whatever he feels or wants, the only way he can formulate it is to phrase it as if it were either an unavoidable historical necessity or a truth from which there is no escape and where no charity applies.

It is necessary to analyse the above-discussed role of modernisation in relation to the connection between the pre-modern traditionalism and progressivist jargon. The Theresian and Josephinist state intentionally strengthened itself through the secularisation process. Since the Austrian radical modernisation did not come from below, it could not initially be supported by national concepts engendering a sense of belonging and national identity in people. This developmental tendency was, however, interrupted by the paradoxical influence of the French revolution, which had mobilised local reaction instead of the oppressed masses. The Enlightenment inspiration survived for quite some time in the realms of culture and science – in the Czech world as well (Jungmann), – but expired rather quickly in social and political spheres. An exception and a late blossoming of this Enlightenment

11 MACURA, Vladimír. *Znamení zrodu. České obrození jako kulturní typ*, op. cit.

12 Julius Grégr characteristically argued with the political consequences of Palacký's refined Kantianism: „*I prefer 200.000 guns to the categorical moral imperative!*"

13 STŘÍTECKÝ, Jaroslav. *Hätte Masaryk zum österreichischen Durkheim werden können?* See p. 35–43. Masaryk's conservatism manifested itself sustainingly in, for example, his dislike of modern art.

tradition was Bolzanism.[14] Although quite influential in the Bohemian intellectual environment, it was never fully appreciated as an alternative, and was fully extinguished by the events of 1848–49. Still, in the 60s of the 20th century, during the time of political amelioration which encouraged intellectuals to reflect once again upon the debate as to the meaning of Czech history, it was Jan Patočka who sought to emphasise Bolzanism as an alternative.[15] He received little support, however, because the other participants of the discussion were too well educated in the Czech self-image to question its basis. All they wanted was to be acknowledged by the governing power as the sole heirs of the Czech national tradition.

Bolzano's alternative was lost in the happenings of 1848–49. The revolution was welcomed both by the Czech and the German speaking public. Together with the Czechs, the German intellectuals signed the petitions for the equal status of both languages as well as for the legal independence of the lands of the Bohemian crown within the context of the Austrian state. The growth of the Czech element was seen by them as a natural expression of the generally desirable relaxation of that situation. Soon after the so-called fight for Frankfurt began, however, these two national societies inevitable drift apart. Until that time, all nationalist activities occurred on lingually neutral ground, despite potential animosities.

František Palacký made it known in his *Dopis do Frankfurtu* of April 11, 1848 that from the Czech point of view,[16] the possibility of unification with Germany, even though liberated at that time, was out of the question. The nationalist motivation lead him not only to defend Czech independence, but also to defend the Austrian state, which would, according to him, have to be transformed in accordance with the spirit of modern times. The German liberals read with slight disbelief that the Danube was „*unser aller wahre Lebensader*", that it was unacceptable for Vienna to become a mere regional centre and that if there were no Austria, we would have to invent one. The Bohemian kingdom indeed used to belong to the Roman Empire of the German Nation,[17] but according to František Palacký,

14 Bolzano advocated the perception of the population of the Bohemian lands as a historical and political nation of two tribes – one Czech-speaking and the other German-speaking. This nation should emancipate itself on a civil basis, whereupon the language problems could be solved and good Will granted pragmatically.

15 PATOČKA, Jan. Dilema v našem národním programu. *Divadlo*, 1969, no. 1, p. 1–8.

16 Palacký's authority gave his point of view the character of a norm. Nonetheless, there were tendencies among Czechs to demand a union with the free Germany. Hence, František Matouš Klácel was inspired by a fellow brother in the Augustinian monastery in Brno, Franz Thomas Bratranek, to propagate this position in Prague (See LOUŽIL, Jaromír. Neznámý filosofický rukopis Fr. Th. Bratránka "Des Lebens Urworte" In BRATRÁNEK, Franz Thomas. *Des Lebens Urworte*. Praha: ČSAV, 1971, p. 13.) The circle around Frič thought along similar lines.

17 This concept is frequently nationally misinterpreted. It arose as a designatory name of the Empire in deep Middle Ages, in times when the dream of the universal Christian state proved impossible and when the Empire, with a few exceptions – like the Czech one – was uniting the German speaking population.

that was not a union of nations, but of rulers. Later, events proved Palacký right in the sense that the Frankfurt parliament did not dare accept the radical solution, while the compromising idea of the union of semi-autonomous dukes with fully autonomous people proved practically impossible.

The fight for Frankfurt broke out. The Czechs developed a massive propaganda campaign against the elections to the „German" parliament. A German liberal newspaper made the following comment on this on May 2, 1848: „*Böhmen aus dem deutschen Staatenbund zu lösen würde bedeuten, sie dem russischen Einfluss und der panslawistischen Propaganda zu überlassen. Es wäre einem Selbstmord Deutschlands gleich. Die Tschechen in Böhmen haben keine andere Wahl, als Deutsche zu werden – oder nicht mehr zu existieren. Das selbständige slawische Staatsleben in Böhmen zu zulassen würde bedeuten giftigen Schwert in Brust Deutschlands einzuschlagen.* [...] *Den Tschechen wünschen wir ihre Sitten, ihre Sprache und Erinnerungen, sie müssen sich aber von allen Versuchen lossagen, sich von der deutschen Geschichte zu lösen. Sie müssen das deutsche Gesetz für das ihrige annehmen und einhalten.*"[18] The government in Vienna, under siege from the German and Hungarian speaking revolution, had no other choice but to allow elections for the Frankfurt parliament. In Bohemia, there were elections in a mere 19 of the total 80 electoral regions, i.e. only in the German speaking ones. The Czechs boycotted the elections altogether.

It was the Moravian parliament which, on April 14, 1848, was the first to revolt against the Czech position. They sent an address to the emperor which was motivated more by patriotism than pro-German feelings and in which they protested against the requirement of the legal independence of the lands of the Bohemian crown!

The Germans founded the *Constitutioneller Verein* in May 1848 which strategised the propagation of the elections in Frankfurt. They held conventions of the secretariats of German towns, communities and constitutional unions. The reason for this was not on the whole national, but it was easy to make it a national issue. The main issue was the Frankfurt elections, but within the same framework we also find the requirement for the abolition of regional borders and the dissolution of constitutional arrangements, as well as a will to implement the regional arrangement on the basis of national principles. Such an arrangement could only be achieved at the expense of a massive transfer of people or the change of nationality of a substantial part of the population; moreover, it would mean the annexation by Germany of a considerable part of the historical whole of the Bohemian

18 „*To release Bohemia from the German confederation would mean abandoning it to Russian influence and panslavic propaganda. It would amount to suicide for Germany. The Czechs of Bohemia have the choice of becoming German, or ceasing to exist. To permit the existence of an independent Slavic state in Bohemia would mean plunging a poisoned sword in Germany's breast.* [...] *We wish the Czechs to have their own customs, language and memories, but they must renounce all attempts to disengage themselves from German history. They must accept and observe German law as their own.*"

lands. Here we can also trace the first hysterically protectionist attitudes: in April 1848, a *Verein der Deutschen aus Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien zur Aufrechterhaltung ihrer Nationalität* was founded in Vienna.

It was and is sad that the cause of this turmoil, which was bound to have fateful consequences, was the first elections to a real parliament. These were not the only elections, however: there were also the elections in the Austrian parliament which stimulated ardent Czech participation. In the end, the Austrian parliament met in Kroměříž and in Vienna, making decisions of an importance which should not be underestimated simply because they were ultimately dispersed by governmental power! This paradox could have shown the German liberals in Bohemia the instability and uncertainty of their situation. Yet it was the subsequent era of Bach's absolutism that confronted them, as well as everyone else, with completely different questions. And by then it was too late: identity, however unstable, was already considered a clear and indubitable matter – it was a national identity.

Masaryk was well aware of all this. It is therefore puzzling that he adopted the Czech nationalist metanarrative, completed it, and made it into a programme which he claimed to be the philosophy of Czech history.

Of course, our main intention is not to show in what details Masaryk erred and was inaccurate. The matter is not even that the slavophilic Masaryk ignores, for example, the existence of the Ukrainian nation or that in the Polish issue, he clearly takes the Russian side[19] – he also chooses or disregards parts of the historical material for a given purpose and, with the solemn countenance of a positivist, ponders the Slavic character, as if something like it existed. Masaryk perceives, classifies and, without the slightest trace of artistic insight, comments on works of art solely from the point of view of their real or alleged cognitive content or from the point of view of their moral utility.[20] A number of arrogantly unfounded attacks – irrespective of the weakness of his argumentation regarding historical facts – proves the Christian stylisation of his philosophy of Czech history to be dishonest. In positivism, which, in spite of partial criticism is a significant aspect of science for Masaryk, there are only hard facts and the method of their organisation.

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19 MASARYK, Tomáš Garrigue. *Česká otázka: snahy a tužby národního obrození*; *Naše nynější krize: pád strany staročeské a počátkové směrů nových*, op. cit., p. 50.

20 We learn in the *Česká otázka* that in *Babička* (*Grandmother*) by Božena Němcová, a Czech inhabitant of a village was found and that in Baruška, the social question of women, domestics and prostitution is touched upon. See MASARYK, Tomáš Garrigue. *Česká otázka: snahy a tužby národního obrození*; *Naše nynější krize: pád strany staročeské a počátkové směrů nových*, op. cit., p. 115. Disgusted by the Parisian decadence, Masaryk reproaches the younger Czech literati for imitating daringly cosmopolitan models instead of describing the dramas of the Czech soul (Ibidem). Masaryk shares the conservative nationalist illusion that the Czech folk song provided the model for Czech national music to be adopted by our gifted composers, from which we can see that not only did he misunderstand music, but he also misunderstood Smetana's programme, even though he commented with confidence on both (Ibidem, p. 116).

In the 1890s, a developed Czech society was already a fact. Of course, we can question the method...

If the philosophical and political direction of realism were to lie in the criticism of historicism, as its founder Masaryk was fond of saying, we should not be surprised by its poverty and sterility. Masaryk's criticism is not actually a methodological criticism of real historicism, (developed in the German historiography), a modified version in our milieu being represented by Goll's school, it is a criticism of the early revivalist attempt to legitimise the national movement through the vision of the glorious Czech past. Masaryk's generation did not feel comfortable with this element of the former territorial patriotism: it did not separate Czech from Gentian society clearly enough. In political practice, this meant a reduction of the Czech problem to a legal programme. For Masaryk too, political independence was a desirable goal, although insufficient on its own. He calls for a complex completion of the national revival, an embracement of the natural sciences, technology, enterprise, a real and yet moral politics. Above all, however, he calls for a revolution of the spirit, a practical and socially broad realisation of morality and education. Only in this way, and not by some historicising patriotism[21] could the Czechs become a truly modem nation. In Masaryk's argumentation, we can already hear the proud spirit and real political demands of an already formed Czech civil society.

Masaryk connects national with social emancipation. The collective function of nationalist concepts dominates in the classical West-European sense: everybody, not only elites, is a part of a nation. Masaryk says we are giving the workers stones instead of bread – even though they too are Czech. Social democracy has to be taken seriously – it has to become an organic part of national unity. The modem national movement is politically and socially democratic.[22] The struggle for language is also a class struggle.[23]

It is indeed strange that while arguing thus, Masaryk constantly draws upon the charismatic powers of the names Palacký, Havlíček and Kollár. New social groups, above all the working class, should be incorporated into the national community through a vast realisation of humanity – humanity being in fact the uttermost core of the Czech programme, the meaning of Czech history, the most

21 MASARYK, Tomáš Garrigue. *Česká otázka: snahy a tužby národního obrození*; *Naše nynější krize: pád strany staročeské a počátkové směrů nových*, op. cit., p. 155, 277.

22 Ibidem, p. 159.

23 Masaryk notes with sympathy the development towards a full appreciation of the national side of the socially emancipatory attempts of the social democratic movement: social democrats are no longer anationally cosmopolitan, but stand both for the freedom of a nation and for its international status (Ibidem, p. 149).

precious disposition of the Slavic and, above all, the Czech character.[24] Humanity directs the Czech myth towards the social question, which conversely means the inclination of the social question to the Czech myth. In *Otázka sociální*, Masaryk even feels related to the original motivation of the socialist theories, including Marxist theory: the goal of modernisation should not lie in the accomplishment of capitalism and the resulting system of ownership, but in the realisation of humanity.[25] The only point of divergence lies in the fact that Masaryk sees the ideal of humanity as an idea arising from reformation, and not in the materialist way. He draws upon anticipation of the Czech reformation,[26] in one breath connecting the concept of humanity with being Czech-Slavic, to natural rights and enlightenment inspirations. According to him, humanism is work, work, and more work:[27] that is, the liberated work of free people, versatile social work, work in building a humanely dignified world. In such a light, work would unite us with other Slavs, but also with other nations, in accordance with the Herderian spirit.[28]

Already in Masaryk's doctoral work examining suicide as a widespread social phenomenon of the modem times, we can clearly see the element of conservative criticism of modernism, with its hateful, quasi-Nietzschian farsightedness which is seen to annihilate the culture of the heart.[29] Religion plays an extraordinarily important role as it does later in Durkheim's sociology: it is understood in the purely Comtean spirit as an important factor in social integration, i. e. for its function, not its contents. While this feature is still present in the *Česká otázka*, there is also a new tune, appreciating real, positive religiosity regardless of denomination.

All of this occurs within the criticism of Czech liberalism, which Masaryk finds devoid of and indifferent to values. We have to realise that this criticism is intended as a timely move to distance himself from the Young and Old Czech party movements which, in Masaryk's opinion, constituted an insurmountable crisis at that time. Masaryk had already had problems with integration in the Czech political spectrum, and when he realised that a new structure of political parties and movements was growing, he sought to draw the consequences in time. It is rather

24 In addition to this positive feature, Czech nature also has negative features which should be overcome. (Ibidem, §§ 79–86).

25 MASARYK, Tomáš Garrigue. *Otázka sociální. Základy marxismu filosofické a sociologické*. Vol. 1. Praha: Čin, 1948, p. 156.

26 He rightly criticises (albeit with a somewhat nationalist political tendency) the fact that Czechs were incapable of throwing out Matěj z Janova and other pre-Hussite and early Hussite preachers: it would have shown the world right away the whole meaning of the Czech struggle! For this reason, he ignores similar older phenomena such as the Waldenses, the heresies of the socially critical, the Franciscan attempt at regeneration through poverty and the inclination to an almost Buddhist felt nature, etc.

27 MASARYK, Tomáš Garrigue. *Česká otázka: snahy a tužby národního obrození*; *Naše nynější krize: pád strany staročeské a počátkové směrů nových*, op. cit., p. 156.

28 Ibidem, p. 179.

29 STŘÍTECKÝ, Jaroslav. *Hätte Masaryk zum österreichischen Durkheim werden können?* See p. 35–43.

surprising that exactly at this moment he focused anachronically on nation – an entity which, like a person, undergoes historical trials. He sees those as trials of the Czech national character.

It was then that he tried to revive the tradition of the Czech metanarration and reform it in such a way that he could claim himself the only rightful heir. No wonder the first serious critic of this turn was his former colleague, Josef Kaizl (1854–1901): against Masaryk's abstractly superficial criticism, the latter defended the concrete liberal democratic positions. He clearly saw the factual indefensibility of Masaryk's manoeuvre, in which Masaryk searched the 19th century Czech movement both for something that was not there as well as for its political goals.[30] Under the pretext of criticising national conservatism, Masaryk, the man who would later be revered as the paradigm of a democrat, launched a harsh attack (and there Kaizl would agree) on the democratic wing of the Young-Czech politics and the so-called progressivist movement of the Czech youth[31] from clearly conservative positions.

For this, he mobilised his lofty explicated tradition of Czech Protestantism, revised Palacký's philosophy of Czech history which was based on a liberal reading of Hussitism in the moralist and religious sense, and set forward the task of completion of a purely Czech reformation, the only adequate expression of the Czech character, as the immediate national goal. In this way, the national stream would be joined by real emancipatory attempts at democracy, by the progressivist attempts of the youth as well as by the new class conflicts.[32] This would be a unified stream governed by the patriarchal authority of one of the nation's fathers. For all the religious pathos, Masaryk wrote quite clearly: the issue is not a protestantisation of the recatholicised or already largely secular nation, the issue is the struggle for the people.[33] It is here that the emphatic Us and They took hold. The Germans actually only secondarily bccome the paradigm of an enemy, a point on which Masaryk repeatedly corrects Palacký and Havlíček. Against this background which is presented as natural, we see features of a new, more present enemy which embraces all those who do not listen to Masaryk and his wife Charlotte: the Catholic clergy are now just a symbol of adversaries of the new times; in many details Masaryk understands them well, demonstrating this knowledge openly.

More dangerous by far are the realistic liberal politicians, eventually the revolution-minded socialists. Socialists can be nationalised, integrated into the national

30 URBAN, Otto. *Česká společnost 1848–1918*. Praha: Svoboda, 1982, p. 44ff; KAIZL, Josef. *České myšlénky*. Praha: Ed. Beaufort, 1896.

31 MASARYK, Tomáš Garrigue. *Česká otázka: snahy a tužby národního obrození*; *Naše nynější krize: pád strany staročeské a počátkové směrů nových*, op. cit., p. 193–345.

32 Ibidem, p. 277.

33 Ibidem, p. 156ff.

whole, but the cosmopolitan liberals cannot. Their devastating pressure is to be stopped by Chelčický, Komenský, Kollár – and Jesus Christ.[34]

This is Masaryk's rendition of Hussitism. It is nowhere near as sympathetic as Palacký's intepretation or the widely accepted public perception. Masaryk does not completely spare even Jan Hus: unlike Wiklef and Luther, he knew how to die, but not how to live.[35] A Czech reformer – his orthographic reform having survived the longest – was subjected to retrial four hundred eighty years after his death. Masaryk praises him for preaching a reform of morals and of the state and not really touching on the teachings of the Church.[36] Nonetheless, he remains an impersonation of the Czech weakness of innate character. According to Masaryk, Czechs are of a critical, humanist nature, but their positive emotional fervour, in ecstasy reaching up to martyrdom, is not balanced by sufficient strength of reason. They are unable to accept rationally the consequences of their own daring.[37] Taboritism seems unnatural to Masaryk: merely a nice attempt ending in moral chaos.[38] Czech utraquists who in fact attempted to establish Czech democracy, that is the political vision which was highly modern at that time (as we can see from the Dutch example), are judged by Masaryk with even less sympathy: they forgot their national and social task of emancipation, they abandoned Masaryk's and allegedly also Chelčický's ideal of humanity and natio-social solidarity, and even though they won at Lipany in 1434 they voted for the reinforcement of serfdom in 1487. They therefore fully deserved their doom which came in the failure of the uprising of the estates in 1620.[39] Masaryk goes on to state bitterly that we are even now on the stage of Husitism – where we will remain until we undo the happenings of 1487.[40]

Moreover, Masaryk does not hesitate to replay the theme which Havlíček had already so categorically interrupted in the pre-March period in his article *Čech a Slovan*: the Slavic theme. Hence the strong presence of Kollár there! Masaryk belonged to the reconstructors of scientific and practical interest in the Slavic problem. Unlike the generation of Kollár and Jungmann, he did not limit himself to a more or less philological interest. Masaryk knew Russia and analysed it as a sociologist – and a politician. The more obvious is the combination of the practical cognitive interest with the out-dated Kollarian ideology of Slavism. This ideology includes some Herderian and romantic elements out of which it once

34 Ibidem, p. 175ff.

35 Ibidem, p. 174.

36 Ibidem, p. 173.

37 Ibidem, p. 174ff.

38 Ibidem, p. 173.

39 Ibidem, p. 177.

40 Ibidem.

grew, but in Masaryk's writings its meaning is pragmatically political. In the 90s, the split of the Austrian state had occurred to no one, but the Slavic card played an important role in connection with the Balkan policy of Vienna; it was therefore more than natural that it be reflected even in internal Czech politics. This can be seen most clearly in Kramář's case. Even though later he was to move away from Masaryk's political conception, the coercive political motive was and to certain extent remained identical.[41] In the *Světová revoluce*,[42] Masaryk later presented a critique of tsarist Russia from this very point of view: it had entered the war without sufficient consideration, without a true Slavic conception, and as a result, had succumbed to chaos and became the weak spot of democracy in the world, struggling for the new Europe with powers of theocratic origin and nature. It is a sensitive political mind which describes here the weight and strength of the pro-Russian inclinations of the Czech public, and considers it a factor which must be taken seriously, if for no other reason than because the opposing groups – due to a lack of information or an overestimation of the Russian possibilities in the first phase of the war – counted on it politically.

Conversely here, neoslavic fictions incidentally coincided with the paranoically hysterical horror of the lingually and politically German opponents of the mortal jeopardy threatening Europe: the Russian panslavic agency. Masaryk, however, tried to escape this trap by reformulating neoslavism in terms of an accomplishable programme of cultural synthesis: Ex oriente lux, but also ex occidente.[43]

According to Masaryk, the Czech mediating role lies not only on the East-West axis, it not only holds the position of a bridge between the two cultural worlds,[44] but lies in their synthesis. It is of little importance how concretely Masaryk imagined it: of significance is the syncretic focus of the thought. It is present on all different levels: we encountered it in the combination of the positivistically sociological understanding of religion with the pathos of a concrete faith; in the combination of the Herderian and romantic Slavophile fictions with the factual curiosity which makes Masaryk a first-rate expert on Russia; in the combination

41 For the abovementioned reasons among others, Kramář's neo-Slavist line was later censured and banalised. Even if we cannot but agree with Masaryk's political proceduře against the Kramář strain of nationalism after 1918, we should not forget that before World War I, Kramář was not only a russophile, but also a significant critic of the Russian imperialist policy which used pan- Slavism as an excuse; his criticism at this point was far more considerable than that of the pragmatically calculating Masaryk.

42 MASARYK, Tomáš Garrigue. *Die Weltrevolution*. Berlin: Erich Reiss Verlag, 1925.

43 Ibidem, p. 452ff.

44 Even though Masaryk polemised with this favourite Czech idea in *Česká otázka* and elsewhere, it was to find voice again and again in variously modified images up until the 1970s. In 1945–1948, it facilitated the transition to the Communist dictatorship; after 1956, it fostered the Czechoslovak versions of the third way between capitalism and socialism. It was the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia (1968) which definitively shattered this illusion which had been shared by many Czech communists and non-communists alike.

of the deliberately adapted version of Palacký's liberal philosophy of Czech history (which ends in a quasireligious vision of history of national salvation and uses, God knows why, the spell of the names Chelčický, Komenský, Kollár and Havlíček) with the realistic calculation of the contemporary politics; in the combination of popular emancipatory pathos concerning humanity, civilisation and progress with the crudely conservative criticism of modernism; in the combination of the repeatedly propagated and realised idea of popular education with the scornful criticism of the consequences of the democratisation of culture,[45] in the combination of the exaggerated veneration of the Czech reformation with the ruthless denunciation of leading and other representatives; in the combination of scientific exactitude with the unbridled philosophico-historical and ethnically characterologic fantasising. Explosive polarities which are not necessarily mutually exclusive in discursive critical thinking fuse and merge into emotionally compelling patterns of imaginative thinking based on analogies and myth,[46] in which the catholically educated, positivistically scientifically trained and politically legitimising mind eager for significant action seeks a law-like order. Methodologically taken, it was a clear but consciously risked regression: by implementing partial factual data, scientific cognitive procedures and considerations into a pre-critical analogical discourse, the whole Czech myth was made to look more scientific, which meant above all its subjugation to a controlling authority. The famous fights for the *Rukopisy* whose falsity among experts was a public secret anyway, undoubtedly served not only the promotion of an objectivist self-confidence in the Czech science, but also to construct the authority of its leaders. A scholar who was on the path to becoming at least a Central European Durkheim has yielded to the pressure of national metanarration and restylised himself into its prophet; hence, having to rot in Prague anyway, he could at least enter with the desired effect a political scene whose rejection of his extreme ambition had come from all sides and far outweighed its welcome, so that he had no other choice but to formulate and create his own programme and start off in his own direction. The spirit of realism, so difficult to express through its content, is defined by this distancing function itself. Masaryk saw this better than other realists. He did not hesitate to take the rational discursiveness and positively scientific cognitive attitudes into an efficient propagation serving the colouring of the philosophico-historical treatment of the Czech historical mission and fate and turn it into a moralist folklore which adorned, in modern fashion, the hopelessly pre-modern yet common and

45 STŘÍTECKÝ, Jaroslav. *Hätte Masaryk zum österreichischen Durkheim werden können?* See chapter 2.

46 On the basis of material from the early Czech revival movement, Macura has convincingly proved the syncretic character of the analogical discussion.

thus easily mobilisible vision, a vision which this mind, unburdened by the duty of criticism and self-criticism,[47] developed from many often incidental analogies.

It is fortunate that we did not only have Masaryk, but also Hašek. The Czech tendency to see themselves and be seen by Švejk discloses the compulsion to escape the almost unbelievable stylisation by conversion to an anti-myth. All of that, however, took place solely within the tricky sphere of fiction. Švejk himself is not only a disguised pacifist disclosing the absurdity of circumstances: there is also he himself, and in this very dimension he carries his message. Ironically, he reveals the social basis of the modernising emancipation of the common folk. He is a perfect impersonation of a Czech folk Prager who escaped being a peasant and turned into a worker. We can see his village origin in the deftness with which he steals dogs. He is comprehensible to the world, more so than the stubborn pre-Hussite preachers, heroic Hussite hetmen, more than the twenty-seven Bohemian gentlemen who died by the executioner's hand in the Old Town Square, more than Amos Komenský, the Teacher of The Nations, or Tomáš Masaryk himself. To Švejk, being Czech is not a problem. It is given just like any other incidence of life: pure coincidence which does not follow from any philosophy of national history, and which furthermore, is not in need of one. Josef Švejk is quite an exemplary being who looks after himself, who, in hoping peacefully for death, fills his time with worries without giving a damn for the extent of their authenticity. In him, we can see a fully accomplished, all-systematising Enlightenment ideal of Reason which longs for the homogenisation of the manifold. It is no accident that Švejk's face resembles the opposite round part of a body: just like that hole, one witnesses in the tirelessly chattering mouth his permanent ability to render anything devoured into the homogeneity of excrement. Truth wins in him, as it is written to this day on the presidential standard fluttering over the Prague castle. He also reveals the truth about the Czech character: Švejk does not win because of any strength of character, but because he does not know anything of the kind, does not possess it and takes no risks. As an unintended outcome of the modem emancipatory process, he impersonates the socially and nationally authentic mode of existence; that is why he simply laughs in face of the humanitarian ideal of a perfectly patient, conscious, industrious, educated, abstinent, jogging, and with the exception of being uncompromisingly virtuously highly-principled, tolerant citizen, who, if necessary, returns wrong for wrong. At this obedient free citizen and all of its national variations, he simply laughs.

47 This received sharp critical opposition from the top representatives of Czech positive science – above all by historians – whose influence Masaryk largely used in the Manuscript arguments, and against whom Masaryk never, even at the zenith of his power, exacted any revenge, displaying, instead, a tolerant nobility of spirit.