T. G. MASARYK'S PRAGUE

A Modernized City and a Literature of Ghosts

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As for other European cities, modernization for Prague was closely bound to advances in industrialization, long delayed, to new networks of communications, and to the economic boom of the 1850s and then again toward the end of the nineteenth century. The first to modernize, in his own way, had been Emperor Joseph II, who by his transformation and destruction of many monastic and ecclesiastical institutions and buildings, had greatly changed the historical charms of Prague's ancient towns. In the 1830s and 1840s, the Prague burgrave Count Karl Chotek energetically pushed for a productive collaboration of urban architects and new industrialists, built new avenues, initiated a society to construct a second bridge over the river (the one that goes from the National Theater to Smíchov), reorganized the quay on the right riverbank, and yet also protected old gardens, parks, and churches against developers.

Another, far more incisive phase of urban modernization began in the mid-1880s, when a proud city government, by 1888 entirely Czech, suggested a radical plan to "sanitize" the most decrepit parts of the Old Town and a few other corners; in 1895 (after the plan had been approved by the Vienna authorities) the old Jewish quarter - with the exception of a few historic synagogues, the cemetery (though narrowed), and the old Jewish town hall - was totally razed, as was the northern side of the Old Town Square and at least three old churches together with adjacent buildings. The rubble was transported in 21,700 wagonloads to be used as landfill in a district still endangered by frequent inundations from the river. Neither the Hussite civil wars nor the enlightened policies of Emperor Joseph II had so massively threatened the historical shape of Prague, and while poets, artists, architects, and students voiced their protest in newspapers and in mass meetings, the city government did not substantially yield. International Čapeks who visit the Prague Jewish Town today walk in the ancient grid of streets, but all the apartment buildings, left and right, reflect *fin de siecle* middle-class tastes. Pařížská Street, now a concatenation of international airline offices, violently and destructively intrudes into the old street structure.

Yet the advantages of modern *asanace* (sanitation) did not primarily affect Jews, because in the fifth district, newly incorporated into Prague's union of towns in 1850 under the name of Josefov ("Joseph's Place"), Jewish civic life no longer prevailed and only 10 percent of its residents were still Jewish. The emigration of rich Jews to other parts of the city had started well before the revolution of 1848; a year later the familiant's law was annulled; by 1852 Jews were allowed to acquire housing wherever they wished; and in 1867 they were assured all civil rights equal to those guaranteed to Czechs and Germans. Even the less well-to-do tried to find apartments somewhere else, especially in the New Town and at bourgeois Vinohrady (a little east of the New Town), although some families, like that of Franz Kafka, restlessly moved year by year, in a circle around the old ghetto. The shabby old houses in the Jewish Town had become the last refuge of the poorest of the poor; contemporary reportages by the Czech realist Jan Neruda described them as havens of unsavory crime, pimps, and low prostitution (the better places, like the famous Goldschmidt salon, were located elsewhere in the Old Town). Contemporary studies prepared by Dr. Václav Preininger were discouraging; by 1885, the Josefov district, or Prague V, with 186,000 inhabitants, was the most overpopulated of all Prague quarters; in the Old Town, 644 people lived on one hectare of housing space, but 1,822 in Josefov, and even in proletarian Žižkov the number had been 1,300. Overall in the city the proportion of one-room apartments was 53 percent, which was bad enough, but in Josefov it was as high as 64 percent; in one small house more than 200 people were found living together. On the average, one toilet served five to ten apartments. The mortality rate for infectious diseases in the Old Town in 1895 was 18.13 per thousand, in the Minor Town 20.61, and in Josefov, a quarter without clean water, sunlight, or gardens, however small, 30.61. So there was ample need for "sanitation" in the strict sense, but there was another reason too, less often discussed publicly. This was the age in which representative public buildings for the new Czech middle class were being constructed in grand neo-Renaissance style along the Vltava embankment and elsewhere - the National Theater (1881-83), the Rudolfinum concert hall (1884), the School of the Applied Arts (1884), the new National Museum (1885-90), and the Museum of the City of Prague (1898). Prague wanted to rise and shine, preparing for three international exhibitions in the 1890s to show its material and intellectual achievements, and the poor of Josefov were barely hidden by the surrounding new splendor.

The decisions of the magistrate to change so much of Prague provoked the opposition of many organizations, including the Czech Club of Architects and the German Club for City Affairs, yet people were not concerned about the disappearance of the former ghetto, though they helped to protect the streets nearby, the churches of the Old Town, and a few old buildings in the New Town - for instance, the "Faust" house - endangered by city planners. In 1895, the Czech Club of Architects and the Měšťanská Beseda submitted a memorandum reminding the city fathers of the ancient history of Prague, and

soon artists and intellectuals were on a collision course with the powers that be. The distinguished novelist and playwright Vilém Mrštík (a Moravian) unsparingly attacked Prague's urban renewal, speaking against the "blindness" and "ignorance" of the few people robbing Prague of its "most precious treasure," and in yet another, even more belligerent essay (1896-97) called those responsible for the cleanup the *"bestia triumphans,"* a term derived from Friedrich Nietzsche to denote the absolute victory of brutal power over sensible intelligence.

One of the old palaces people fought about was the late Baroque Benedictine prelacy originally built by Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer in 1730 to be affiliated with nearby St. Nicholas. In that prelacy, secularized by Joseph II, Franz Kafka was born in 1883, but the original building was destroyed by fire (1897) and a new construction, in style and adornment imitating the old prelacy, was built on the spot in 1902. In 1966, after considerable conflict with the Communist authorities, people were able to affix a plaque to the house saying that Franz Kafka was born there - true, in a purely topographical sense - and international pilgrims deciphering the Czech inscription have to learn that in the Old Town, as in Kafka's writings, things are not always what they seem.

In the time of the *asanace,* continuing into the first year of World War I, Prague advanced, as if with a sudden leap of energy, to being a modern city, massively industrialized, especially in its expanding suburbs, and run by a new strong Czech middle class legitimately proud of its splendid cultural and economic institutions, the Czech University, and new banks and insurance companies. Germans had been defeated in the city council elections of 1861 and, increasingly excluded from the political administration of the community, tried to balance their political losses by much attention to their theater, a flowering literary life, and innumerable social clubs. Since the new industries attracted a continuous immigration from the Czech countryside, the number of German speakers in Prague quickly decreased (in 1880 to 15.5 percent, and in 1900 to 7.5 percent).

The four original Prague towns grew constantly; not only was the Jewish community incorporated as Josefov (Prague V) but the Vyšehrad district and Holešovice-Bubny, a mighty bastion of the Czech proletariat, followed in 1901. Other suburbs did not want to be incorporated into the city; they were afraid of its special tax on rents (approximately 14 percent) and enjoyed being favored by the government, which readily granted them the privilege of being imperial and royal towns on their own, as was Vinohrady and Žižkov; Vienna recognized, of course, that rapid incorporation of so many Czechs into Prague would wash away the last vestiges of German entitlements there.

Matters were complicated even more by the social transformations of Prague's Jewish community, which demographically held its own, though its members were now dispersed, predominantly all over the Old and New Towns. An increasing number of families, though continuing to send their sons to German schools and the German university, preferred to declare during statistical inquiries that their language was Czech; by 1900, 14,576 Prague Jews declared themselves to be speakers of Czech, while the number of German speakers had dropped to 11,599. The reorientation of language did not immediately affect the community's religious life; administrative functions were in the hands of well-to-do German-speaking liberals, and the major synagogues, including the Old New and the Pinkas synagogues, retained the old Hebrew rites. Mixed marriages, in spite of the advancing acculturation to other language groups, were surprisingly rare (in 1894, 1 in 655, rising to 4 in 684 in 1895 and 21 in 676 in 1897). (The corresponding numbers in Vienna and especially Berlin were twice as high.) The notion of Jews as a "nation among nations" had been current among the young writers of the *Sippurim* in 1847, and yet the first Zionist student group was not established until 1893, renewed as Bar Kochba (bilingual) in 1899, while the Czech Theodor Herzl group suffered from a dearth of Jewish students at the Czech University (by 1911, there were only 101, and even by 1921, only 469, as compared with 1,400 Jews studying at the German university).

As Prague increasingly modernized, a special literature about it be gan to emerge internationally, insisting on its magic if not mystical image. Contemporary Czechs, concerned with commercial, technological, and political advances, celebrated Zlatá Praha, the golden Slavic city of past and future achievements, yet English, German, and American writers on the grand tour once again became enchanted by the metaphysical, strange, and spectral town of ancient cathedrals and synagogues, and dutifully wended their way through the old streets to the famous old Jewish cemetery. The walk itself followed literary convention; ever since the later eighteenth century, cemeteries had been sweet places of melancholy reflections about frail life and sublime death, and Prague's Jewish cemetery exerted a strong pull on minds shaped by Christian tradition. Uncertain feelings of otherness, history, and eerie portents curiously mingled; it is not difficult to understand why English and American travelers, who are more substantially responsible for the literature of magic Prague than we perhaps assume, were ready for supernatural experiences, and they wrote stories of hypnosis, strange blood transfusions, ghosts, and weird revenants. The *asanace* ordered by the city magistrate may have razed much of the Jewish Town, but the many stories about magical Prague kept alive the literary image of a topography long gone.

George Eliot, accompanied by her devoted friend George Henry Lewes on a trip from Vienna to Dresden, spent July 16, 1858, in Prague, walked through the Old Town, kissed "a lovely dark-eyed Jewish child ... in all its dirt," looked

at the "somber old synagogue with its smoky groins," and never forgot her impressions. Publishers and critics were confused about the immediate result of her first trip to Prague, a story called "The Lifted Veil," written in 1859, and later she was inclined herself to hide it in a volume of other stories rather than risk independent publication again. She defended it by saying she had written "a *jeu de melancholie,"* an *"outre"* story. That much is true: an aging Englishman who always wanted to be a poet but lacked inspiration confesses that instead he received the gift of "prevision," the ability to look forward in time and into people's secret thoughts. Strangely enough, it is the word "Prague" (where his father wants to go on a trip) that, for the first time, triggers a precise vision of a future moment; though he has never been in Prague or seen a picture of it, he suddenly sees "a city ... in the summer sunshine of a long-past century arrested in its course ... and the dusty, weary, time-eaten grandeur of a people doomed to live on in the stale repetition of memories, like the past and superannuated kings in their regal gold-inwoven tatters," and as he walks he passes "under the blank gaze of blackened statues" along "the unending bridge."

On a later trip to Prague, he discovers his extraordinary vision fully confirmed, but he also begins to feel how difficult it is to live on. He recognizes in one of his visionary moments that his late wife, whom he truly loved, had been possessed by an uncaring and dangerous egotism: her maid dies, and a medical friend by a rather unorthodox transfusion of blood brings the dead woman to life again and she confesses, in a hypnotic state, that she helped her lady in an effort to poison her husband (who is not totally surprised). Prague, "prevision," and the occult sciences combine here, and yet it is less obvious that this man, burdened with his knowledge of the future, has become one of the denizens of the deadly city himself, "urged by no fear or hope ... but compelled by this doom to be ever old and undying, to live on in the rigidity of habit... without the repose of night or the new birth of morning." With the future known, time paralyzes the mind and petrifies the body, like the statues on the Charles Bridge. Only a few years later, George Eliot turned her attention to contemporary Jewish problems, and after she had met Rabbi Emmanuel Deutsch in London (1866) and taken Hebrew lessons, she returned to Prague in April 1870 (visiting the Old New Synagogue again) and reread Leopold Kompert's Jewish stories in the original German, in preparation for her novel *Daniel Deronda,* in which Jewish Prague, among other cities, reappears.

In May 1859, not long after George Eliot's first visit, the North German writer Wilhelm Raabe came on an excursion to Prague, although he had wanted to go to Italy; four years later his "Holunderblute" ("Lilac Blossom") appeared, a story that is late romantic in mood and yet a provocative signal of strong, ambivalent feelings laboriously repressed. In it a traveling medical student encounters a fifteen-year-old Jewish girl, a kind of Mignon of Prague V, but he tells of their meetings at the old Jewish cemetery at a distance twice removed - by time and by another story about a life cut short. It is not easy for him to speak of Jemima Loew, and of how they walk hand in hand among the graves, clouded over by lilacs, and how the dead, among them Rabbi Loew, one of her ancestors, come to life in what she tells him. Raabe remarked, as did other writers of the time, on the "incredible dirt" of Prague's narrow streets, but he also showed much compassion for the Jewish people, "so maliciously tormented, mistreated, scorned, and burdened by fear." His traveler does not really want to speak about his most intimate feelings, tries to assure himself that he does not love young Jemima, yet spends his days in Prague almost paralyzed and feverishly driven by the expectation of seeing her again. He refuses to call his enchantment by its name, but later, in a suburban crowd in Berlin one day, he suddenly feels that Jemima has died, as she predicted she would, rushes back to Prague, and hears she was buried eight days earlier. Raabe barely skirts sentimentality, and yet Jemima, in spite of a few "exotic" elements, asserts herself as an astonishing figure, full of honest feelings, coquettish, loving, talking, and teasing. She does not hesitate to taunt her wide-eyed visitor with that famous Czech line without any vowels whatsoever and beyond the phonetic possibilities of any German visitor, *"strč prst skrz krk"* (put your finger down your throat). No wonder that he is smitten.

Only a few years later, as the American scholar Jeffrey L. Sammons has shown again, modern anti-Semitism seized on the motif of the Prague Jewish cemetery as the spectral place where Jewish world domination is plotted. Herrmann Goedsche - once an employee of the Prussian postal service, dismissed because of his involvement in an unsavory forgery case, and later a co-owner of an ultraconservative Berlin newspaper - among other sensational novels wrote a historical potboiler entitled *Biarritz,* dealing with Bismarck and Napoleon III. As early as in Volume 1 (published in 1868), he showed, in the eyes of a secret witness, how the delegates of the twelve tribes of Israel, with the Eternal Jew as an extra, meet in enclave at the Prague cemetery at midnight to consider the Jewish past and to discuss conspiratorial plans for the future domination of the world (the representative of the Prague tribe demands that all management positions in law and education be given to Jews). Goedsche published this popular historical novel under the name of Sir John Retcliffe, and the improvised alias served well when the Prague chapter was separately published in Russian translation (possibly by members of the tsarist secret police in Paris), losing its fictional character on the way and alleged to refer to incontrovertible facts. Sergei Nilus, a homespun Russian mystic and predecessor of Rasputin, added a text based on a French version (which has its own complicated history) to one of his own books; *The Protocols of the Elders of*

Zion, thus born, was used by the tsarist secret police, French anti-Semitic groups, German proto-Nazis in the 1920s, and in Henry Ford's newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent.* (Though in 1927 Ford disavowed personal responsibility for the publication, other right-wingers, and not only in the United States, continue to believe the stuff.) Hitler, of course, referred to the *Protocols* in *Mein Kampf* - the most notorious poison flower of magic Prague and, to this day, an underground bestseller of the extreme right in many countries.

At the time when much of the old Jewish Town and other ancient quarters had been destroyed by city planners, the myth of Prague the fantastic city went on crystallizing. A small library of *fin de siecle* novels is built on this theme. The earliest example was *The Witch of Prague* (1890), written by Francis Marion Crawford, an American expatriate who otherwise preferred to write successful novels about Renaissance history; he was followed, in Prague, by Rilke's *Konig Bohusch* (1899), Jiří Karasek of Lvovice's *Gothic Soul (Goticked Duse,* 1900), Guillaume Apollinaire's *Le Passant de Prague* (1903), a witty novella which impressed French and Czech surrealists. After the stories and novels written by Anglo-Saxon and German authors and the publications by Prague "decadents" of both languages, the first German golem movie by Paul Wegener, in 1914, triggered a third and eclectic wave of darkly occult Prague novels. Gustav Meyrink, born in Vienna, in his own golem novel of 1915 concocted a European bestseller made up of mystical and whodunit elements; Paul Leppin liked to add erotic spice; and Leo Perutz, later, stuck to the traditional Baroque sets. It was not difficult to shift the conventions of the old gothic novel to Prague as long as it was considered an eerie place and a repository of eerie tales, with well-defined specters and dramatis personae - the golem, the Eternal Jew, Rabbi Loew, and Rudolf II - seen at particular places, on weird streets, in half-ruined churches, ancient synagogues, cemeteries, or prisons, and of course, with melodramatic fatalities, creeping disease, Baroque miracles, occult power, and a "Jewish" exoticism that even the anti-Semites did not want to miss.

Crawford's *The Witch of Prague* was in its time unusually popular in England and America (reprinted four times in 1891-92) and available to continental readers in an inexpensive Tauchnitz paperback edition. Much happens in this novel and most of it far beyond the ordinary: a traveling gentleman of artistic leanings and independent income roams all over Europe to find his Beatrice again, once loved and lost, and in his search for her stumbles into the arms of a Prague Czech femme fatale called Unorna. She comes to know that Beatrice lives in a Prague convent, yet charms the gentleman herself, in a hypnotic seance, in the shape of his lost love. Matters are made even more complicated by a dwarfish talkative Arab who experiments with mummies and revivifies the dying, and by Israel Kafka, young and handsome, who passionately loves Unorna. She, in turn, taps his blood to use in the strangest experiments (Kafka has the unfortunate habit of hiding behind gravestones in the old cemetery and surprising her when she walks nearby). The American author was not entirely happy with his occult Prague lore, and in one of his expansive footnotes tells us that Unorna's hypnotic techniques can be fully explained scientifically by reading Professor Krafft-Ebing's recent study, second edition. Yet Crawford, who usually lived in Italy or Munich, had spent some time in wintry Prague, had a good ear for Czech and the meaning of Czech history -"an ardent flame of life hidden beneath the crust of ashes" - and of course offered his readers a long set piece on the ancient Jewish cemetery. His Prague descriptions can amply compete with those of Gustav Meyrink, who transferred to his golem novel pictures of the London slums taken from his own excellent translations of Charles Dickens, done under contract for a German publisher, to serve as visions of magic Prague. "The winter of the black city that spans the frozen Moldau," the American author wrote, "is the winter of the grave, dim as the perpetual afternoon …cold with the unspeakable frigid mess of a reeking air that thickens as oil but will not be frozen, melancholy as a stony island of death in a lifeless sea." There are reasons why the witch incarnating the city calls herself Unorna or, translating from the Czech stem of the word, Februaria.

When World War I entered its third year, Prague was a haggard, cold, and hungry city, and people moved in a gray zone of daily compromises, anger, and hidden hopes, trying to think of the future. Czech soldiers fought on both the Austrian fronts (as conscripts) and on the Allied side (as legionnaires); Hapsburg military tribunals harshly persecuted and imprisoned Czech politicians of note. Only a few courageous men and women knew exactly what Professor T. G. Masaryk and his friend Dr. Eduard Benes were doing abroad, and they secretly collected information about events in Vienna and Prague to transmit to them in order to support Masaryk in his discussions with the Allies. The majority of the representatives of the Czechs elected to the Vienna parliament for a long time expressed satisfaction with the successes, if any, of the imperial armies, closely watching, all the time, the eastern and southern fronts; they adjusted the tenor of their opportunistic declarations to a rapidly changing situation. It was not a particularly dignified spectacle; in May 1917 Czech writers and intellectuals issued a manifesto, actually written by Jaroslav Kvapil, dramaturge of the National Theater, strongly rebuking these parliamentarians, who had been elected to defend national interests, the writers said, and should renounce their mandates if they thought they could not do so. After the Russian Revolution in October 1917, the Dual Monarchy itself began to explore the possibilities of making a separate peace with the Allies,

regardless of Germany; parliament was called into session again; Emperor Charles, definitely not an ardent militarist, amnestied the imprisoned Czech leaders; and even regular publications were allowed to speak of national self-determination - within the Dual Monarchy, of course. Within a year, the situation had changed. In Rome, the Congress of Oppressed Austrian Nationalities met in early April 1918 to declare their right to self-determination, the Allied War Council at Versailles two months later fully supported these aspirations, and the governments of the Western Allies, including the United States, confirmed that a "state of belligerence existed between Czechoslovakia and the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires." Later that spring, delegates of all the Czech political parties from left to right met in Prague, and on July 13 constituted, once again, a National Committee to prepare for the future. What the committee members had in mind was not a bloody revolution but administrative and economic blueprints for a new state once the Austrian monarchy had collapsed under the weight of its own burdens. The Socialist members, distrustful of middle-class liberals, wanted to have their own piece of the pie but, on October 14, went too far in trying to organize a general strike to protest the export of grain and coal from suffering Bohemia: Prague was immediately occupied by regular army units - for the last time, however - and, after some discussions, the Socialist organizations submitted to the discipline of the National Committee. Dr. Karel Kramář, a distinguished Young Czech of conservative leanings, who had visions of a Bohemian kingdom under the aegis of the Romanovs, was chairman of the committee; at his side were Antonín Švehla, of the Agrarian Party, a patient negotiator; Alois Rašín, an experienced economist; the National Socialist Vilém Klofáč; and the Social Democrat František Soukup. These five men emerged as the National Committee's most important members and formed a de facto government of the new state; they were later to serve the Czechoslovak Republic long and in prominent functions.

In the course of September and October, the monarchy, in order to save itself, in rapid sequence offered more radical concessions to the Czechs than it had done in the last century, but it was too late. The Czechs, encouraged by the United States, which had recognized the Czechoslovak National Council organized in Paris, told Vienna that the Czech cause would depend more on international agreements than on arguments between Vienna and Prague about the extent of its new autonomy. On October 16, Emperor Charles published his last manifesto to his "loyal Austrian nations," calling on them to transform the monarchy into a federation of national states (Palacký's grand vision of 1848); in Prague it was noted immediately that the federalization would not affect Hungary, with its Slovak, Serb, and Romanian citizens. The Prague National Committee felt more in consonance with the Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence that T. G. Masaryk issued in Washington on October 18, followed by President Woodrow Wilson's note of the following day stating that it was not enough any longer to discuss the future of the Dual Monarchy on the basis of his earlier Fourteen Point program; the Czech and the Yugoslav nations would themselves have to determine which way they wished to go. Within a few days, the Italian front collapsed, the Austrian armies retreated, and Count Gyula Andrassy, the empire's last minister of foreign affairs, addressed a polite communication to President Wilson asking, in the name of the Dual Monarchy alone, for a speedy discussion of an immediate armistice. The monarchy, Andrassy said, "by offering federalization to Czechs and Yugoslavs" was, after all, in full compliance with Wilson's program (Point 10) that had demanded the "freest opportunity of autonomous development" for the peoples of Austria-Hungary. Even the brand-new Austro-Hungarian government headed by the pacifist Heinrich Lammasch clearly underrated Wilson's change of mind and foolishly hoped that there might be negotiations between Vienna and the White House. When the Andrassy note was made public in Prague, under great red headlines, in the display windows of newspaper offices at Wenceslas Square by 9:45 a.m. on Monday, October 28, people decided to read the text in their own and perhaps slightly anticipatory way, and began to celebrate the demise of the empire on the spot.

October 28 was a day of immense joy and grand illusions, of little planning and many improvisations, of an astonishing lack of communication between Czechs at home and those abroad (acting, nevertheless, in surprising accord); historians even of the most patriotic kind rightly hesitate to call these events a revolution but call them, rather, a *převrat,* a takeover of power. Since both the Austrian authorities and the National Committee were, after so long a war, concerned with preserving law and order, not a drop of blood was spilled. On the evening of October 27, a Social Democrat named Vlastimil Tusar, who was in close touch with the new Lammasch government, telephoned the National Committee from Vienna to say that, in view of the Austrian defeat on the Piave River earlier in the summer and the breakthrough of the Italian armies in September, Austrian surrender was possibly imminent; the gentlemen of the National Committee agreed to meet the next day at a leisurely nine o'clock in Švehla's apartment to discuss the new situation and to prepare for the hour of Austria's capitulation, which would also be the first hour of a new state.

The Czechs decided that it was important, first of all, whatever the future might bring, to send a delegation to the War Economy Grain Institute, responsible for the distribution of food to civilians and the army, and request that its officials take an oath of allegiance to the National Committee; this was not at all a revolutionary act, for the Vienna government was expecting that its

administrative institutions would work with the National Committee; the gentlemen of the committee did not care to go into lengthy legal discussions about what kind of state they had in mind, a federal territory within Austria or an independent body politic. The takeover of the grain institute was ceremoniously brief and polite, and after handshakes all around, the delegates left the Lucerna building, where the institute was housed, and entered Wenceslas Square - suddenly to face a jubilant mass of singing and marching citizens and of red-and-white flags, swiftly appearing from nowhere.

At 11 a.m. the National Committee's executive task force met at Prague's Municipal House, but not even the experts knew exactly how to interpret Andrássy's note. Alois Rašín (later Czechoslovakia's efficient minister of finance, before being killed by an anarchist) suggested that a council delegation ask the governor's office whether instructions or news about the capitulation had arrived from Vienna and announce that responsibility for civil affairs now rested with the committee. At noon, the delegates had made their way to the office of the imperial governor and were told by his (Czech) deputy that Count Max Coudenhove had left on the morning train for Vienna to receive instructions from the new government; the delegates, unable to learn more about what was going on in Vienna, simply recited their declaration that the National Committee was taking over, and departed; the deputy immediately informed the Vienna government on the phone about the visit and implied that he had not been willing to offer resistance. The delegation, in an almost experimental mood, next went to the offices of the Bohemian diet, where they politely asked Count Adalbert Schonborn, chief of its administrative commission, to swear an oath of allegiance to the National Committee, which he readily did, assuming that he was loyally complying with the emperor's federalization manifesto.

In the city, the semiotic transformation went on; people sang a new national hymn ("Kde domov můj," "Where Is My Home," originally a song in a popular play of 1834 by Josef Kajetán Tyl), tore the Austrian signs from the uniforms of officers, adorned policemen with new red-and-white cockades, and watched as the imperial and royal eagles on official buildings came crashing down. Popular speakers addressed the milling crowds at the traditional places: at the St. Wenceslas monument Isidor Zahradmk, a patriot priest, was speaking; members of the National Committee orated at the corner of Wenceslas Square and Jindřišská Street; and from a balcony at the National Theater the popular song writer Karel Hasler, long persecuted, was heard, but what he had to sing and say was definitely not gentle. Alois Rašín, who knew his fellow citizens only too well, had few illusions that the jubilations of the crowd would not turn into ugly and destructive anti-German and anti-Jewish demonstrations, and according to earlier plans, the National Committee requested Dr. Frantisek Scheiner to mobilize his Sokol (Falcons), a national gymnasts' organization established in the nineteenth century in imitation of the anti-French German *Turnverein,* to make certain that triumph did not change into chaos. The military members of the Mafie, Masaryk's secret organization that had been working for a free Czechoslovakia, all of them Czech officers and soldiers in the Austrian army, made clumsy preparations to neutralize the army command; unfortunately, the chief conspirator lived in a suburb and did not hear until 2 p.m. what was happening in the city, and by that time Magyar units of the army, fully armed and with machine guns, were taking strategic positions all over Prague - at the upper end of Wenceslas Square, close to the Cafe Rococo, at the Old Town Square, and elsewhere. By three o'clock, a clash between loyal army units and the people seemed almost inevitable.

One participant in the events later noted that on that afternoon the National Committee was still unsure of the Austrian army (though army units were melting away rapidly while the National Committee played for time). The army command in the Minor Town was headed by General Eduard Zanantoni, of an Italian family of soldiers, Paul Kestřánek, a Prague German in spite of his name, both somewhat beyond their prime but experienced bureaucrats, and Colonel Viktor Stusche, a younger man who was politically more acute and had not yet ceased to make fine distinctions between the necessities for Austrian federalization and what the National Committee really had in mind. Orders from Vienna were that bloodshed must be avoided, and when the Social Democrat Soukup, of the National Committee, called General Zanantoni and guaranteed that the committee would keep order in the streets, Zanantoni ordered the Magyars to return to their barracks. Further discussions between the high command and the committee were scheduled for the evening, and it says something about the residual civility of the moment that at 8 p.m. the generals and their entourage came downtown to the offices of the National Committee, where a complicated arrangement was reached: the National Committee and the Sokols would guard factories and ammunition depots, officers were no longer to be insulted in public, and the National Committee would be responsible only for civil affairs while the army command would not yet relinquish its formal military authority. At about the same time, the military experts on the National Committee, including Dr. Scheiner of the Sokol and Jaroslav Rosický of the Mafie conspirators, began organizing a military command post of their own on Žofín Island, and all Czech army personnel on leave in Prague were notified to assemble there to form a first unit of volunteers. They came, ragtag, and were joined by about eighty highly qualified Czech sailors and officers from the imperial navy (then rather decorative among Prague landlubbers), ordinarily stationed at Pola and Cattaro, on the Adriatic Sea, and by an entire Romanian unit that had left its Magyar regiment.

Even if the generals negotiating with the National Committee had known of the committee's political proclamation (they probably did not), they would have noted that the committee painstakingly avoided speaking of military matters. At 6 p.m. (that is, two hours before its discussions with the army command) the National Committee had issued its first Law Concerning the Establishment of an Independent Czechoslovak State, which, resolutely going beyond all previous statements, cut all links between Vienna and the new Czechoslovakia, and declared that the National Committee now had legal responsibility for all administrative affairs. It was left open exactly what this new state would be and all military questions were carefully kept in abeyance - quite apart from the sobering circumstances that the new state, de facto, could not extend farther than fifty or sixty kilometers to the north of Prague, because Germans there were asserting their own self-determination, and Slovak patriots, still under Magyar domination, were represented in Prague by lonely Vavro Srobar, M.D., whose welcome presence had not much more than symbolic importance.

On October 29, additional imperial offices, including that of the police, were taken over without many complications, but the National Committee still had to deal with the imperial governor, who had returned from Vienna, and with the army command, increasingly showing signs of stiffening resistance, especially after the war ministry in Vienna admonished it for being too soft in its arrangements with the National Committee. By noon the usual delegation paid a call on Count Coudenhove, explained to him the ongoing process of takeovers and, ignoring its own independence resolution of the preceding evening, surprisingly agreed to a principle of co-administration in civil affairs - until Coudenhove, speaking of Bohemia's German citizens, uttered the word *Deutschbohmen* (German Bohemians), which irritated Dr. Rašín, who said he did not want to hear the term again. Then the delegation left, and Coudenhove, no less irritated, called Vienna to report about the meeting, handed in his resignation, and left the field to the National Committee.

The last nest of loyalty to the emperor was, of course, the army command, where the generals began to have second thoughts and yet did not exactly know that many in the Prague garrison were simply going home. On October 29, the German Eger infantry regiment decided to depart, and most of the Magyars assembled at the railroad station. The National Committee conveniently organized trains to get the Magyars out, but the Sokol guards saw to it that each Magyar could leave with only one uniform and one set of underwear; if a Magyar soldier was found to have two, he had to yield one to the new republic. The Czechs and Romanians gathered at Žofín Island waited for orders; by evening, the Austrian command prepared for a last stand and pushed the Sokol guards out of its building, and challenged the National Committee to order its units to block the surrounding streets. Once again, a delegation arrived at the Minor Town to discuss matters of mutual interest, and when the generals noted that the last Maygar troops were fraternizing with the Czechs, they simply gave up and went home; a few officers were put under house arrest for the time being. By the evening of October 30, power was in the hands of the National Committee in Prague and in the Czech regions of Bohemia, and everybody waited for the return of a delegation which had gone to Geneva to discuss the organization of the new state and its future government with Dr. Eduard Benes of the Czech National Council in Paris and his diplomats.

The Vienna government still wanted to demonstrate that it meant federalization seriously, and to create goodwill among the Allies, the emperor had directed that passports be handed out to a group of Czech representatives to travel to Switzerland to meet Dr. Beneš for a discussion of the future (BeneS himself was rather surprised). On October 25, a delegation of seven had left Prague, among them representatives of the National Committee, Czech members of the Vienna parliament and two directors of important Czech banks; another passport was given to a Catholic delegate, who was, however, shunned by the group and did not participate in the conversations. Benes welcomed the delegation, headed by Dr. Kramář, at the five-star Hotel Beau Rivage (a brilliant choice), and although nobody really knew what was going on in Prague, there was unanimity of views. Benes told the Prague politicians what the Allies believed and expected, and the delegation was at times overwhelmed by the thought that their interests had been so efficiently defended on the international scene (they also enjoyed the clean tablecloths, the excellent food, and the perfect service). Benes, who shared certain didactic inclinations with his mentor, Masaryk, spoke with the authority of a man who had been active in Europe's capitals and was able to relay the wishes of the Czech legions now fighting on the Allied side in France, Siberia, and Italy; discussions centered on the republican shape of the future state (Kramář sacrificing his views of a royal Bohemia). The legions had elected Masaryk president, and agreement was now reached on a cabinet in which both the National Committee and the National Council would be represented. Kramář was to be chief of government, Benes minister of foreign affairs, the Slovak Milan Rastislav Štefánik minister of war, Rašín minister of finance, Švehla minister of agriculture, and there were places for three Slovaks and one German "to defend the interests" of their countrymen. (In fact, the first German minister entered a Czechoslovak government only in 1926). On October 30, when the delegates finally heard what had happened in Prague, they tried to get home as quickly as possible - Rašín later wrote that he felt as if "intoxicated by hashish" - and they arrived by train on November 5, welcomed

by thousands of citizens. Not many days afterward, the National Committee issued a proclamation asking for citizens to stop singing and celebrating and to start working again. Yet eight weeks later, there was another grand cause for celebration and parades: T. G. Masaryk himself returned home after four years of absence.

Masaryk Returns to Prague

After seeing President Wilson once again, Masaryk started on November 20 on a long trip home from New York via London, Paris, and Italy, accompanied by his younger daughter Olga. He had heard that he was badly needed in Prague to fulfill the most varied expectations; during his ocean voyage on the SS *Carmania,* he was in a pensive mood; "I did not want to speak to anybody," he wrote later, "and for many days I walked back and forth on deck, my eyes roving over the the seas, and in my heart the hammering of future tasks." He came to Bohemia from Italy, where he had been welcomed by the king and watched a parade of Italian soldiers and Czech legionnaires who had fought on the Piave; when his special train wended its way through Austria, he had time to talk to his entourage, the white-haired Italian General Piccione (later to command Czech units against the Hungarians), the British military attache, Colonel Cunningham, M. Clement-Simon, France's first ambassador accredited to the new republic, and Masaryk's own military adjutant (clad, as we are told by malevolent tongues, in the tsarist uniform of a crack Cherkassian unit). Another special train had been dispatched from Prague to meet Masaryk at the border, carrying his son Jan and an appropriate delegation; at Horní Dvořiště, the border station, when the trains moved up alongside each other, Jan had to tell his father that his mother, Charlotte Masaryk, sinking into melancholy again, had been committed to a Prague institution for the mentally ill. Next day, a cannon shot announced the arrival of the train at Prague station, and a long day of ceremonies immediately commenced. Present were Alice, Masaryk's older daughter (who had been imprisoned in Vienna and let go only upon American intervention), Dr. Kramář and the entire government, officers, poets, and diplomats. Speeches on the platform and in a waiting hall were mercifully short, even that of Alois Jirasek, the most famous writer among the patriots. Masaryk looked ill and feverish, was moved to tears, and stubbornly refused to take a seat in a horse-drawn imperial coach when asked; he rode in an open automobile. Surrounded by flowers, flags, and units of the Russian, French, and Italian legions, his car slowly moved down Wenceslas Square (with the cinematographic cameras rolling). He paused at the Old Town Square to look at Ladislav Šaloun's new Hus monument, which he had not yet seen, and proceeded to the National Assembly in the Minor Town, to take his oath of allegiance in a brief ceremony, and then went up to Hradčany Castle, a rather disheveled and gloomy place at that time.

In the afternoon, Masaryk immediately went to see his wife at the Veleslavin institution, where she was being treated with indifferent success (she was to return to live with him a few times, only to be committed again); it is curious that Masaryk's biographers are very reticent about Charlotte's and his intimate tragedy. Later in the day, we are told, Masaryk in his warm winter coat with a fur collar was seen in the streets of Prague on a leisurely walk with his friend J. S. Machar, a poet and colleague of his Vienna days.

Masaryk had invited members of the National Assembly to visit him at Hradčany next afternoon, but the time of revolutionary improvisations had passed, and he had to learn the hard way that the provisional constitution had defined his prerogatives rather narrowly; it was more than polite conversation when Kramář, as chief of government, told him "to stay above the clouds" as president, for everyone who was immersed more deeply in Czechoslovakian political life would have to defend himself against mudslinging and loss of authority. (Masaryk nonetheless managed to have his prerogatives widened, while Václav Havel seventy years later went the other way.) The National Assembly, newly picky about constitutional niceties, did not wish to be at the president's beck and call, yet resolved to go to the castle not collectively and as an institution but, as it were, altogether privately - in spite of the fact that Masaryk had earlier submitted, by special courier, the text of his first political speech to the government, which promptly cut two paragraphs from it - one suggesting amnesty for wartime collaborators with Austrian power and another one warning against anti-Semitic emotions. As later events showed, Masaryk's warnings were legitimate, and the government was wrong.

Masaryk's speech of December 22 was political (when he wanted it to be), unusually frank, and, as far as Czechoslovakia's Germans were concerned, distinctly contentious; members of the assembly recognized that the president did not intend at all to stay above the clouds. In his speech, he developed a concept of democracy in which he skillfully combined his habitual respect for daily work with the preferences of Czech civil servants: democracy was essentially, he insisted, a workaday matter of justly administering human affairs ("justice as the mathematics of humanism"); he added, possibly with a glance at Kramář and the last Pan-Slavs, that the Russians unfortunately had never learned how to administer and the new democracy was *logically* bound to the traditions of the West. He freely admitted that he had been antimilitarist for a long time, yet the republic needed an efficient army, not to indulge in military adventures but for reasons of defense (Slovakia was still held by the Magyars). Speaking to Bohemia's Germans, Masaryk firmly declared that the state would

not be divided, reminding his listeners that the United States had risked civil war rather than tolerate the seccession of the southern states; Czechs and Slovaks had created a new state, defining by that act the legal position of the Germans who "had originally come to the country as immigrants and colonists" (here he sounded like Palacký in one of his more irritable moments). In that one relative clause, quoted for decades by his friends and adversaries, Masaryk chose to break a good deal of political china; even Ferdinand Peroutka, a political analyst who cannot be accused of anti-Masaryk sentiments, in his essential books about the founding of the republic (1934), skeptically asked how many centuries immigrants and colonists would have to live in a country before they ceased being immigrants and colonists. The sociologist Masaryk, usually more ready to defend the natural rather than the historical rights of people, kept his own counsel. Three days after his speech, he attended, together with members of the government, a festive performance at the Prague German Theater and, on that occasion, thanked the Prague Germans for the trust they put in him; he expressed his hope that his presence at the theater was but a "prologue" to the grand drama that Czechs and Germans were now called on to perform. It was an appropriate metaphor, before the curtain rose. Few people in the audience knew in what forms and scenes the drama would develop - creative, conciliatory, and brutal - in the years to come.

From the Coachman´s Cottage to Prague Cattle: A Modern Fairy Tale

The story of Masaryk's rise from the plebeian cottage of his birth tp the castle of the Bohemian kings sounds like a modern fairy tale (he used the term himself), and though he came to enjoy a few surprising and happy turns of fortune, he never ceased to speak of the necessity of hard work, and he knew why. He was born in 1850 at Hodonín (Göding), the son of a Slovak groom and coachman, later a bailiff on an imperial estate in southeastern Moravia, and a Moravian mother who was educated in German and spoke the local Slovak only later in her marriage. It may be said of Masaryk that he did not have a mother tongue (though his mother taught him to count and pray in German), and he grew up with the Slovak-Moravian dialects spoken in the villages near the border. Unfortunately the family was continually transferred from village to village, the result being that the student and scholar Masaryk had considerable trouble with the literary Czech and educated German in which he was to teach and publish. In village schools, some Czech and more German were taught; after he had attended a Catholic *Hauptschule* with good success, his father sent him to Vienna (where his mother had worked as a cook) to be apprenticed to a locksmith; in practice, he had to operate a primitive contraption to punch out heel protectors; after running home from Vienna, he was put up with a local blacksmith in order to learn how to shoe horses and in the hope that the blacksmith would reveal to him something of his art in healing animals and people. A former teacher and an honest village priest, who taught him Latin, told his parents that he should go on to school; after preparing for an entrance exam he entered the *Gymnasium* in Brno (Brünn). He had to tutor to eat and, in a surprising chain of events, was hired by Brno's chief of police, Le Monnier, the very man who had once checked on Havlíček's passage through Salzburg, to tutor his son; he also had a good chance to learn French and to read the German classics, including Lessing and Goethe, which stayed with him all his life. When the strong-willed lad from the provinces almost came to blows with the headmaster and was told to leave, Le Monnier, now appointed police chief in Vienna, welcomed him in his home; young Masaryk was accepted into the elite *Akademisches Gymnasium,* where among his fellow students were three future Austrian ministers and the later president of the Republic of Austria. Masaryk did excellent work in religion, German, and Greek, less so in history and philosophy, and passed his final examinations in the summer of 1872.

After his youth of dire poverty, Masaryk's years as a student at the University of Vienna were free of difficult financial problems, and he devoted most of his time to classical philology and later to philosophy. He was also active in the Czech Academic Union and wrote his first essays, which editors in Prague usually turned down because of his "crabby Czech" (actually, a Slavic language he concocted out of Russian and Slovak elements). He lived as resident tutor in the opulent home of Rudolf Schlesinger, director of the Anglo-Austrian bank, teaching his oldest son, also interested in philosophy; he had no reason to complain either about his open-handed employer or his new academic friends. His early love for Plato prompted him to study Latin and Greek and to attend the lectures of the famous scholar Theodor Gomperz (from a Brno Jewish family), who kept an eye on the young and serious Moravian; Gomperz's colleagues were pedants, however, and Masaryk, perhaps seeking consolation after the death of his younger brother, turned from classics to philosophy. He was attracted by Franz Brentano, ex-priest and newcomer to the university, who urged him to read Aristotle and to study the British skeptics and the French positivists; following Brentano's ideas and Vienna tradition, Masaryk early turned away from Kant, Hegel, and the idealist tradition. But he never resolved, in his own mind, the conflict between his Platonic aspirations and British empiricism, and (as it would appear later) his sincere religiosity, ever in search of a fitting church, and his sociological view of a world accessible to reason and patient research.

In 1876, Masaryk submitted his doctoral dissertation, in German, on the essence of the soul as defined by Plato, and his *Doktorvater,* Brentano, though somewhat puzzled by his written German, which obscured the argument, readily accepted the dissertation, saying, "The labor expended on the thesis must be rated higher than the thesis itself." After passing his oral examination in mid-March 1876, Masaryk received his Ph.D. in philosophy and left for Italy with his student Alfred Schlesinger, all expenses paid by Schlesinger *pere.* It was resolved that later they would go to Leipzig to continue their studies in philosophy. Arriving there on October 15, 1876, they rented rooms with Mrs. Augusta Goering (no relative of Hermann) in a little *pension* in which many American visitors also stayed. Masaryk liked Leipzig, attended lectures by Wilhelm Wundt, and enjoyed conversations with his fellow Moravian Edmund Husserl, but in the summer of 1877, studious Masaryk, twenty-seven years old, turned away from the abstractions of philosophy to the enchantments of life. He met Charlotte Garrigue, a young American student of music, who took lodgings at Frau Goering's too.

Masaryk is often described by his biographers as a Victorian and a puritan, and he certainly was (not only judging from his literary opinions about European "Decadents"), but in the summer of 1877 it must have dawned upon him that something was missing in his experience. Curiously, he felt what was coming; he read more voraciously than ever (three novels a day), went to the opera to immerse himself in Richard Wagner, and perused a spate of sociological and anthropological studies about women. When Charlotte turned up with her grave eyes, energetic nose, firm chin, and the bearing of an independent young American woman, his awkward hesitations were gone; he wrote to a friend that the idea had occurred to him that he might be capable of cherishing affections for Charlotte. She was giving English lessons to the landlady's handicapped daughter, Masaryk joined the ladies (who were reading Lord Byron), and upon his recommendations they went on to study Henry Thomas Buckle's *History of Civilization in England,* not exactly a literary aphrodisiac; when Masaryk, on an excursion, helped to save Frau Goering's life (she had slipped and plunged into the Elbe River) he came down with a cold, so the English reading lessons decorously shifted to his room. Romance was in the air.

When Charlotte went to the little Thuringian spa of Elgersburg, Masaryk sent her a letter proposing marriage (she must have thought he was out of his mind), then shortly appeared in Elgersburg himself, and after a few days of walking and arguing, the two announced their engagement on August 10. Charlotte then returned to Brooklyn and Masaryk to Vienna to work on his treatise about the principles of sociology, which was to be submitted to the university. Perhaps it is not impossible to assume that Charlotte's father—a Huguenot by extraction, of Danish birth, a Leipzig bookseller by training, and more recently director of the Germania Insurance Company - and her midwestern mother wanted to meet her fiance personally; they wrote to him that she had suffered a little accident and wanted to see him, and in February 1878, T. G. Masaryk went aboard ship in Hamburg. Seventeen days later in New York he found Charlotte much improved (if there had been any danger to her health at all). Young Masaryk expected, perhaps in the European way, that Garrigue Sr. would financially contribute to setting up the new menage, and he sulked around Brooklyn when his father-in-law refused, but on March 15 Charlotte and Thomas were married nevertheless. Garrigue Sr. then relented as far as financial matters were concerned, and the two newlyweds immediately sailed back to Europe, where they eventually settled in a spacious apartment in Vienna. Their daughter Alice was born within the year, and later Herbert, Olga, and Jan.

Masaryk did not have an easy time trying to fulfill the requirements for his appointment as university lecturer. His disquisition on the principles of sociology was not accepted, and his manuscript "Suicide as a Collective Social Phenomenon" barely squeezed through, a curious and yet remarkable mixture of a romantic philosophy of culture and statistics that ascribed modern frustrations to the loss of religious certainties; his amiable professors argued that their positive evaluation was based on his personal commitment rather than on the manuscript's intrinsic merits. He was duly appointed lecturer, teaching Plato, while Charlotte tried to make ends meet, and when it became known that Prague's Czech University was to be established formally, he applied there, though he had qualms about Prague, which he did not know well, and about his Czech. Charlotte did not like Vienna and welcomed the possible move.

In the fall term of 1882, Masaryk gave his first lecture in Prague, entitled "Hume and Skepticism," immediately challenging his older colleagues by turning to British and French thinkers, by inviting his students to his home on Friday evenings, and by speaking, in a special lecture series for young lawyers, about problems of the state, morality, and prostitution (he was the first professor to utter that terrible P-word, though he abhorred the phenomenon, in the hallowed halls of the university). There were many reasons why the conservatives disliked the newcomer; when in February 1886 the distinguished philologist Jan Gebauer, in a periodical Masaryk edited, again raised the question whether the famous *Rukopisy* were authentic (those allegedly ancient manuscripts, falsified by Václav Hanka in 1817-18, to make certain that the Czechs had an older literature than that of the Germans) and Masaryk in a friendly editorial letter revealed that he too did not believe in the authenticity of the documents, nearly everybody turned against him, accusing him of

nihilism. But the young philosopher merely insisted that, from a moral point of view, it was important that national consciousness was not mired in fabrications lacking real historical existence. People called him an abominable traitor to his nation, and the worst was yet to come.

Yet younger intellectuals, scholars, and professionals were attracted by Masaryk's honesty and sobriety. Together with Masaryk himself, they formed a political alliance with the Young Czechs; from 1891 to 1893, Masaryk commuted from Prague to Austria to serve in the Vienna parliament, where he learned fast; his maiden speech touched on the academic problem of reforming the study of the law; later he resolutely condemned the Austrian occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 and turned his attention early to Slovak and South Slav problems.

When the alliance Masaryk had made with the Young Czechs not surprisingly broke down, he returned to his studies, published a series of temperamental books - e.g., about Jan Hus (he could not bear the Young Czechs' disregard of his religious engagement) and Karel Havlíček - and in 1896, after thirteen years of near-disgrace, the associate professor was finally promoted to a full professorship, with a somewhat higher salary. Again, he was not a man to withdraw to his library and to learned discussion; when a young Bohemian Jew was accused of ritual murder and Masaryk fought against the ancient superstition, even his students revolted against him. He thought of going to America until Charlotte, now almost Czech and in strong sympathy with the Social Democrats, encouraged him to fight his adversaries vigorously.

On March 29, 1899, the seamstress Anezka Hruzova had been found murdered in a little forest near Polna, a provincial Bohemian town, a terrible gash through her throat, and since there was, or seemed, so little blood on the corpse (which had been dragged from another spot closer to the road), local people began talking about ritual murder, and twenty-two-year-old Leopold Hilsner, unemployed and of uncertain means, was arrested on suspicion of murder; after a first trial in Polna based on circumstantial evidence, he was sentenced to death by a second Bohemian court (though found not guilty of another murder which had been thrown in for good measure). The trial of Leopold Hilsner was a European cause celebre; the emperor commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment, of which Hilsner served twenty-eight years in an Austrian prison.

Masaryk at first did not want to participate in public discussion of the case, but Sigismund Münz, a former Vienna student, asked him about his views, published them in the Vienna liberal *Neue Freie Presse,* and prompted Masaryk to investigate the legal procedures against Hilsner; by 1900, Masaryk had published a number of analyses of the trial and its implications. At that time, many Jewish families in the countryside (among them my Jewish grandfather) fled to Prague because their shops and homes were being attacked by local patriots, and the government persecuted Masaryk for allegedly interfering with the process of justice. Jiří Kovtun, curator of the Slavic division of the Library of Congress, who recently has written the definitive story of the Hilsner case and its repercussions, comes close to saying that Masaryk did not really care about Hilsner personally but only about the principles involved; it is certainly true that he did not have a high opinion of the young Polna drifter, who had never held a regular job (a cardinal sin in Masaryk's view) - and yet, studying the Talmud and the Zohar, Masaryk was fighting a "European disease" for the sake of his own nation, which he wanted to be untouched by intellectual perversions. Leopold Hilsner had a sad life; after the Austrians let him go, against the wishes of a Czech court, he sold needles, beads, and combs from house to house, married, and died in Vienna in 1928. The historian Wilma Iggers reminds us that a Czech newspaper, on May 4, 1968, reported that Anežka Hrůzová's brother on his deathbed in 1961 confessed that *he* had killed his sister: he had not wanted her to have the dowry she asked for.

In later conversations with his friend the writer Karel Čapek (published under the title "Masaryk Tells His Story"), Masaryk tried to suggest that he was, fundamentally, a shy man who disliked being in the limelight. He did not resist his friends, however, when they wanted to establish a political party of high intellectual standards in the wake of the Hilsner affair and make him its leader; it was to stand on its own feet rather than be dragged along by Young Czech or Agrarian organizations. The new group was called the Czech People's Party, or rather Realists, and when general suffrage (for which Charlotte Masaryk demonstrated in the Prague streets) was granted in 1907, Masaryk, with the help of a few sympathetic Social Democrats, was elected to the Vienna parliament from a district in eastern Moravia together with another Realist from Bohemia; after new elections in 1911, when his colleague lost his mandate, he remained the one and only Realist in the Vienna Reichsrat. In 1908 Austria had annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the minister of foreign affairs tried to defend Austrian policies in the Balkan countries by a show trial in Zagreb of fifty-three Croatians accused of high treason, conspiracy, and terrorism, and by the publication of documents (provided by a respected liberal scholar) showing the grip of the Slavic conspirators. Once again Masaryk was called on by his friends, or rather his former Prague students, to intervene; he traveled to Zagreb and Belgrade, where, on discovering a conspiracy of forgers within the Austrian diplomatic service, he immediately asked for a full parliamentary investigation. The result was that Emperor Franz Josef, citing "reasonable doubt" about the legal evidence in the case, quashed the Zagreb sentences, the scholar withdrew his documents, and Count Aehrenthal, the minister of foreign affairs, went on a long leave from which he did not return

to office.

When war came in 1914, Masaryk did not hurry; he witnessed the German mobilization at Bad Schandau, in Saxony, where he was spending a vacation; enjoying his parliamentary passport, he went twice to Holland to strengthen his British contacts, and at home began to establish a secret organization, his *Mafie,* to provide him with political information. Warned of the police, he left with his daughter Olga for Italy on December 18, 1914. When an Italian stationmaster at the border tried to stop him, he jumped back on the rolling train. He traveled light: for four years, in Paris, London, New York, Moscow, Siberia, and Washington, he conferred with foreign correspondents, ambassadors, prime ministers, and presidents to organize a new republic, which, for a long time, existed only in the realm of his Platonic ideas.

Turbulent, Republican Prague

Taking over power from the imperial and royal authorities on October 28-30, 1918, in an orderly and almost ceremonial way was one matter, but the consolidation of the new state within its intended borders was another. If Masaryk said that he did not sleep on the first night in Hradčany Castle, it may have been only the first sleepless night of many yet to come. The new republic was to unify Czechs and Slovaks - as foreseen by the Pittsburgh agreement of June 30, 1918, with the Slovaks to enjoy an as yet unspecified autonomy, and even before Masaryk, the son of a Slovak father, had returned, Czech troops had started to push the Magyars out of Slovakia, and on February 14, 1919, Dr. Srobar was able to set up an office in Bratislava; but in May, Red Army units of Bela Kun's Communist government in Budapest were trying to take back Slovakia (one of their political commissars at the Slovak front was the young philosopher George Lukacs); after considerable military gains, they withdrew again under Allied pressure. The question of Bohemia's German regions was not easily solved either. Insisting on their own Wilsonian concept of self-determination, the Germans had established four autonomous provinces - Deutsch-Böhmen (German Bohemia, with Reichenberg as its capital), Sudetenland (referring only to northern Moravia and Silesia), Deutsch-Südmähren (German southern Moravia), and the Böhmerwaldgau (Bohemian Forest) - declaring that they were all integral parts of a (Socialist) Republic of German-Austria which would, in turn, join Socialist Germany. The Allies immediately intervened against this plan, and post-poned an *Anschluss* between Austria and Germany for twenty years. Within six weeks three Czech regiments had occupied the German regions, but the Germans went on hoping that the Allies would allow a plebiscite and on March 4, 1919, demonstrated in many towns to show their allegiance to Deutsch-Österreich. Czech units were trigger-happy, and in the confrontations fifty-two Germans died and more than eighty were wounded, but by September 1919 the peace conference of St. Germain confirmed that the German regions of Bohemia would be part of the historical lands of the new Czechoslovak Republic. On June 15, German citizens participated in its first communal elections, showing that more than half of the German population favored the Social Democrats; parliamentary elections of April 18, 1920, from which the Czech Social Democrats, the National Liberals, and the Agrarians emerged victorious, also confirmed that Socialists, Agrarians, and Catholics were in a significant majority among the Germans (with fifty-five seats), clearly prevailing over the two German nationalist groups (seventeen) set irrevocably against the republic. Slowly, Czech and German Socialists and Agrarians began exploring the chances of working together, but it took many years before they actually did.

The spring and summer of 1920 were turbulent seasons, and by mid-November the disorders reached Prague again. Once again the national groups had a difficult time adjusting to each other; in the countryside, Czech soldiers, legionnaires, and Sokols, supported by nationalist journalists, were less than tolerant, and the Germans were unwilling or unable to grasp that they had grievously underrated the political potential of the Czechs, whom they had been looking down upon for so long. In late June, a legionnaire was found shot dead at Jihlava (Iglau), Czech soldiers and Sokols took over the town, disregarding the law, and all along the northern and western brim of Bohemia bitter fights erupted between Czechs wanting to do away with local German monuments, especially those to "the Germanizer," Joseph II, and German townspeople defending his im perial glory, possibly for the wrong reasons. When the poet J. S. Machar, by now inspector general of the Czechoslovak army, was asked about the matter, he told the new iconoclasts that Joseph II had been, really, a revolutionary acting from the top and had advanced new ideas with which republicans would certainly have to agree. He spoke in vain, of course, and Czechs and Germans went on fiercely disputing their monuments. In Asch, units fired into the crowd (killing and wounding people), in Podmokly (Bödenbach), a statue of Joseph II being absent, the Czechs wanted to vent their rage upon Friedrich Schiller of all people, and in Cheb (Eger), after the monument to Joseph was destroyed, Germans were said to have attacked a Czech school. In Prague, four Cheb schoolchildren, bandaged and looking miserable, were exhibited at the St. Wenceslas monument to stir up the people; on November 16, enraged demonstrators shouting "Revenge for Cheb!" began attacking the Jewish quarters, destroyed the archives of the Jewish town hall, burned Torah scrolls in front of the synagogue, and occupied the offices of Prague's German newspapers, including the liberal *Prager Tagblatt;*

led by actors from the National Theater, who had long wanted another stage, they occupied by force the Theater of the Estates, established under the protection of Joseph II to reconcile nations through the joys of art. (My father, who happened to be dramaturge at the time, was rudely removed from his office and to my mother's surprise came home early for dinner.) Unfortunately, the crowds were encouraged by the strident newspapers and by Karel Baxa, Prague's mayor, who had risen to political power on the anti-Semitic wave at the time of the Hilsner affair, defending the idea of ritual murder, and it took a few years before the legal questions were sorted out by the hesitant courts. Yet there were intelligent people who did not yield to the demands of the street, among them Professor Emanuel Radl, who declared that the crowds and their supporters "by occupying German institutions [and] the German theater and by persecuting Jews" acted against the fundamental ideas of the republic. Masaryk, as stubborn as ever, never again attended a performance at the Theater of the Estates because he did not want to seem to approve of any disrespect for the law, by whomsoever.

National conflicts became clashes of social interests, and in a city of rising prices and inflation, low wages, and unheated one-room apart-ments, after so many weeks of jubilation people were irritated, accusations were made easily, and riots were frequent, especially against the *ket'asy* (black marketeers) and *lichváři* (profiteers), who were held responsible for Prague's economic malaise. On May 21, 1919, industrial workers left the suburban factories and marched to the city center; thirty thousand people gathered in the Old Town Square to protest against the enemies of the people, shops and emporia were occupied, and people began to sell at prices set by themselves or simply plundered the shops until the police and the army intervened. The left radicals, or rather the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democrats, led by Bohumil Šmeral and Antonín Zápotocký (later president of the Socialist Republic in 1953-57), strained against the bounds of the Socialist organization and a year later occupied its Lidovy Dům (People's House) and the editorial office of the party press. The government sent in the police, and the occupiers, barricaded behind office furniture, were turned out with only a few scratches. On December 10, 1920, the left faction responded with a general strike against the government, and, in its strike proclamation, went far beyond the party issues at hand, demanding that all industrial and agricultural production be controlled by workers' delegates, that wages rise 30 percent, and that all property be nationalized. For a few uncertain December days, strikers in Prague clashed with the police (one worker was killed), and though many but not all working people actively joined in the strike, the new government resolved not to yield. After five days the left radicals finally called the strike off; unlike Berlin, where during "Spartacus Week" working people and the army brutally fought each other in the streets, Prague was spared the bloody battles of a civil war. Six months later, in May 1921, the left Social Democrats joined the Third International, and in late October a unification congress of the new Communist Party met to gather Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians, and a few anarchists (who were to regret it) in a Bolshevik party of proletarian solidarity. In the election to the Prague city assembly in 1923, the Communists polled 18.18 percent, beating the Social Democrats down to 9.2 percent of the popular vote.

The turn of so many working people in Prague to the Communists may have been a signal to the Social Democrats and Agrarians to intensify their conversations with German comrades and colleagues; when the parliamentary election of 1925 again revealed much Communist strength, Prime Minister Švehla, acting in unison with Masaryk, negotiated with the German Agrarians (in the Bund der Landwirte) and Catholics, who were ready to test the possibilities of active participation in governing the republic; the first German ministers to be appointed, the ministers of public works and justice, were, respectively, Franz Spina, professor of Slavic studies at Prague University (he was to correct gently the bad Czech of his officials), and Robert Mayr-Harting, a distinguished lawyer. It was a time of slow consolidation and conciliation; though German nationalists remained unforgiving, German "activists" tried to do their best to transform the Czechoslovak state (including a few minorities) into a republic of nationalities; when Masaryk was re-elected president in 1927, their vote was indispensable in defeating his adversaries from the Communist Party, the Slovak Populists, and the Czech National Democrats, who were inexorably drifting to the right. In Prague, of German-speaking citizens (many may have been Jewish) 12,386 voted for the republican "activists" and 3,631 for the nationalist intransigents. Few people nowadays remember Spina, Mayr-Harting and his later colleague Dr. Ludwig Czech (the Socialist minister of public works and health, who died in a concentration camp), or Erwin Zajíček, German minister without portfolio, who died, a modest Austrian school principal, in 1976. The tragedy of the German "activists," Czechoslovakia's unsung heroes of national conciliation, deserves respect and recognition, even though their names do not appear in any of the travel guides. In the catastrophic elections of May 1935, when 1,249,531 Germans voted for the Sudeten Party, 605,122 German "activists" (Social Democrats, Christian Socialists, and Agrarians) held their own against Hitler; and in the Prague municipal election of 1938, 15,423 German-speaking citizens cast their ballot with the nationalists, and 4,849 voted, against all odds, for the German "activist" parties. Some German-speaking voters (I believe) may have cast their lot with the Czech Social Democrats and Communists, strongly internationalist at that time.

The Czechoslovak Republic recognized Jews as a nation, and as early as September 3, 1918, Masaryk asserted in the United States that Jews would enjoy the same rights as all other citizens; a month later, in *The New York Times,* he declared his respect for Zionism: "not a movement of political chauvinism" but one that "represents the moral rebirth of [the Jewish] people." Delegates of Jewish organizations in Prague presented a memorandum to the National Committee on October 28, and on December 31, 1918, delegates of the newly established Jewish National Council, one of them being Max Brod (Franz Kafka's closest friend), were received by the president at Hradčany Castle; he assured them that he looked with favor on their aims, though he delicately reminded them that Jews who felt close to Czech or German tradition should be free to assert their views. Assimilation, or rather acculturation, had advanced far in the western lands of the Czechoslovak Republic, and there was a significant gap between Jews who defined themselves by religion and those by nationality: in 1921, of all Bohemian Jews, nearly 80,000 in number, only 14.6 percent felt they belonged to a Jewish *nation,* and nine years later the situation had not much changed - of 76,301 only 16.6 percent declared Jewish *nationality.*

On January 6, 1919, a Jewish Party, claiming a right to self-determination based on Wilsonian principles, was established in Prague, but factional and ideological tensions continually ran high; in the elections, it failed to rally sufficient support to enter parliament and later succeeded in sending two delegates to parliament only by agreements with a Polish group in 1928 and in tandem with Socialists in 1935. In Prague, most middle-class Jews acculturated to the German tradition regularly voted for the German Democratic Freedom Party (Deutsche Demokratische Freiheitspartei), ably led by Dr. Bruno Kafka, a cousin of the writer; those closer to the Czechs more often than not voted Social Democratic (the record of the right-wing National Democrats was not inviting to either of them). The elections in the Prague Jewish community, reflecting the many Jewries of the republic, clearly revealed the polarity of options: of 31,751 Jews entitled to the ballot, less than one-third cared to vote at all in 1921, with the Jewish Party polling 1,968 votes, and, among other groups, the German Liberals 2,362, and the Union of Czech Jews nearly as many (2,344). Zionists, active in the Jewish Party and in many other organizations, were deeply divided between those who wanted to help build Eretz Israel here and now and the others, influenced by the theologian Martin Buber, who were committed to studying Jewish history and philosophy to increase Jewish religious and cultural self-consciousness. "Little mother Prague," as Franz Kafka well knew, did not let go of its people easily, and though Kafka's friend Hugo Bergmann and others left for Palestine early, Max Brod, personally committed to Jewish affairs, left on the last train from Prague to the Polish border (on March 15, 1939) and saw, through the windows, advance German units occupying Ostrava station. When he died, it is said, the 1939 Prague telephone directory was found on his desk.

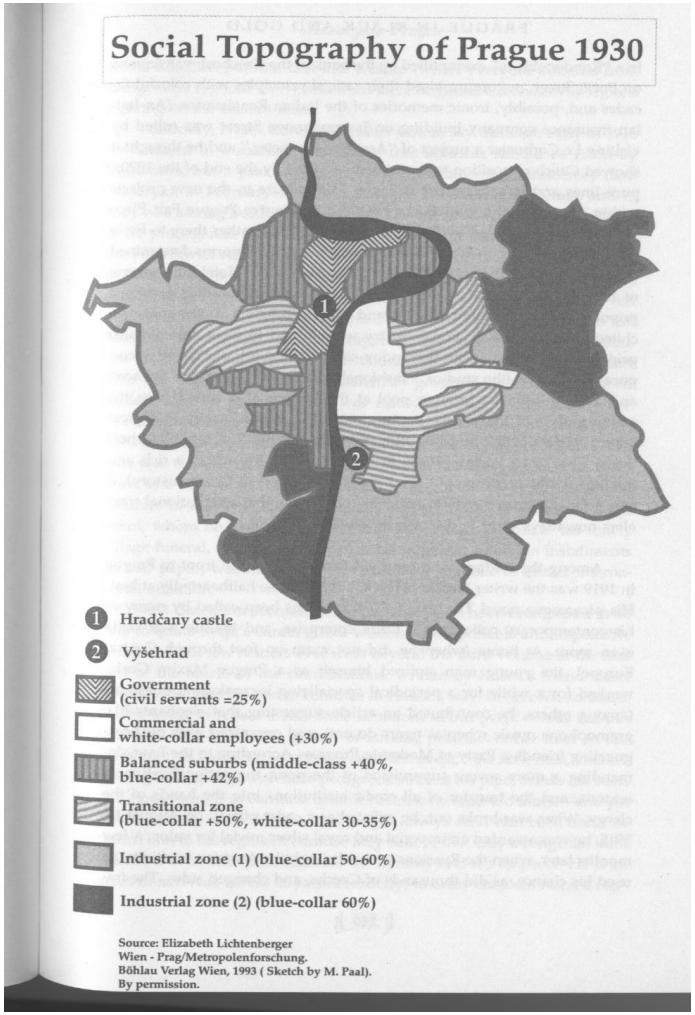
The Cultured of Republican Prague

Punctually on October 28, 1918, a new committee, chaired by Přemysl Šámal, chief organizer of Masaryk's Mafie, took over Prague's city administration, but the discussion about how to reorganize the new capital of the republic dragged on for years; only on January 1, 1922, was Great Prague legally established. This new city consisted of the five towns that had been brought together in the mid-nineteenth century (Old Town, New Town, Hradčany, Vyšehrad, and Josefov), the five suburbs that joined subsequently, and thirty-eight towns and villages; the new metropolitan region incorporated nearly 700,000 citizens and was the sixth largest city in Europe. At that time, 27.2 percent of all its apartments still consisted of only one room, and 81.3 percent lacked baths; it is not surprising, though patriots were astonished, that one-fifth of all votes in the municipal elections were Communist. Prague was distinctly behind in constructing affordable housing for the less privileged, and while in post-World War I Vienna, a Socialist city government had immediately employed outstanding architects to build apartments and swimming pools for the proletariat (or, rather, for loyal Social Democrats), in Prague funds and energies were invested in public office buildings and the new ministries. Prague architects had already broken with the past by 1911 - 12 (perhaps a little later than the painters who, after exhibitions of works by Edvard Munch and Paul Gauguin, formed the Czech-German Group of Eight), and Frantisek Kotera had trained a remarkable group of disciples; from abroad came the Slovene Jože Plečnik, who made Hradčany Castle more habitable for Masaryk. Kotera was fortunate to have patrons who did not interfere with his projects; his sternly playful Mozarteum, now a bit grimy and disfigured by a bazaar on the ground floor, the Koruna building on the lower left corner of Wenceslas Square, and, above all, the Lucerna complex of elegant shops, restaurants, theaters, and bars, built for Václav Havel's father, have become attractive elements of the modern cityscape. Younger members of the group tended to a Czech version of Cubism, which was among the most remarkable achievements of the Czech arts - e.g., Josef Gočár's house of the black Madonna (now, appropriately, a showplace of modern art) and Josef Chochol's ingenious apartment houses, hidden from the tourists in the gray streets under the Vyšehrad.

National and political demands have long burdened the free play of the arts in Central Europe and it can be argued that republican independence was a mixed blessing to the new architecture, requiring as it did that architects take on official tasks not necessarily consonant with avantgarde ideas. In Vienna, there was sufficient space for new offices in the old imperial palaces, but the

new Czechoslovak Republic wanted its own ministries, not merely old Baroque shells for new files. State-sponsored competitions favored a massively modern tradition, as was evident in the ministries of transport and agriculture, and cubists began patriotically to play with Slavic folklore in which abstract and bright lines were softened in a "Rondocubism," exemplified by the bank of the Czechoslovak legions on Poříč Street, or compromised their radical principles with colorful facades and, possibly, ironic memories of the Italian Renaissance. (An Italian insurance company building on Jungmannova Street was called by visiting Le Corbusier a project of "Assyrian character," and he thought it showed Czech opposition to recent architecture.) By the end of the 1920s, pure lines and long glass fronts began to dominate in the new projects within the inner city; Josef Fuchs built the impressive Prague Fair Place (its history was spoiled by the Nazi order that Jews gather there to leave for the camps), and on Wenceslas Square constructivist norms determined the sober shape of the Stýblo Passage (now Alpha) and Hotel Juliš, unsure of its function today but in its time elegantly incorporating a cinema popular with chic young couples and a splendid cafe. Avantgarde architecture and the new film industry were bound to meet: functionalist principles prevailed at the Barrandov site on the south of Prague, incorporating the new film studios, a fashionable restaurant, U-shaped terraces, and a magnificent swimming pool at the bottom of a cliff. It was the meeting place of the *jeunesse doree* - poets of uncertain income and great talent, starlets of the budding film industry - in the first republic's best years. Thanks to Václav Havel, Sr., father of the president, a rich and intelligent real estate mogul (perhaps the only one in Czech history), it was a far cry from the dark, self-centered Prague that international travelers nowadays want to discover at almost any price.

Among the soldiers who returned from the Siberian front to Prague in 1919 was the writer Jaroslav Hašek, but he did so halfheartedly at best. His picaresque novel *The Good Soldier Švejk* has been called by many of his contemporary colleagues a Dada enterprise, and his life was Dada even more. At home (when he did not roam on foot through Central Europe), the young man stylized himself as a Prague Maxim Gorki, worked for a while for a periodical specializing in zoological questions (among others, he contributed an article suggesting that elephants like gramophone music whereas tigers do not), and organized with his beer-guzzling friends a Party of Moderate Progress According to the Law, demanding a more severe supervision of the poor, the nationalization of sextons, and the transfer of all credit institutions into the hands of the clergy. When war broke out, he enlisted as a cadet officer; on August 13, 1915, he was awarded an imperial and royal silver medal for valor. A few months later, when the Russians broke through the Austrian positions, he used his chance, as did thousands of Czechs, and changed sides.



The fraternal Russians put him first into a camp (where everyone suffered from hunger and typhoid fever), and from there he joined Czechoslovak legions fighting on the eastern front.

Politically, Hašek developed rather fast, to say the least; early in 1916 he declared in a soldiers' newspaper that Bohemia should be ruled by Romanovs, but a year later he defended parliamentary democracy (and Masaryk), in February 1918 he joined the left Social Democrats, and in May was among Bolsheviks, who sent him to Samara, on the Volga River, to do propaganda work there. Promoted to chair the party committee of the Fifth Soviet Army in April 1920, he edited a revolutionary newspaper in Irkutsk and married his assistant, Comrade Shura, a former aristocrat; somehow he forgot to tell her about his wife and son in Prague. He felt quite comfortable in Siberia, and the Prague party committee had to ask Moscow to send him home to Prague, where he was urgently needed. But when he finally arrived with Shura, the Communists had just lost their first battle against the parliamentary government and most of their leaders were in prison. Hašek was nearly lynched in the street when Czech legionnaires recognized the "commissar" who had deserted to the Bolshevik enemy, and the police suspected him, rightly, of bigamy. His idea was to write a novel that would end all his struggles, and he withdrew to a Bohemian village, where he wrote, or rather dictated, the first volumes of his *Švejk,* slowly drinking himself to death. Members of the Sokol, whom he had always ridiculed, were honor guards at his lonely village funeral, and the novel, which his publisher issued in installments on bad paper, was the first book in the new republic to attract international attention.

Most Czech intellectuals of recent generations have been proud to be able to quote Švejk's cunning folk wisdom in all possible and impossible situations, but few readers ever went beyond the third volume or the first part of the fourth to the continuations, written by Hašek's friend Karel Vaněk, who tried his best to continue in Hašek's way. In his own volumes, Hašek tends to repeat a few basic situations about Švejk versus the bureaucrats, and he offers a gallery of striking portraits rather than an unusual plot, as the picaresque genre requires. Švejk, "the little man," makes a living selling dogs with false pedigrees, smokes his pipe, drinks his beer, and finds himself in constant trouble because he talks too much - and yet police officers, army doctors, and judges always send him back home or return him to his regiment because they believe that only a congenial idiot can show so much enthusiasm for the dynasty and the emperor. He is an artist of survival, serves as *pucflek* (orderly) to army chaplain Katz, a baptized Jew, and to First Lieutenant Lukáš, a Czech and a ladies' man, and is constantly picked up by the Austrian military police as a Russian spy. He is the master of "yes saying," forcing his triumphant adversaries to reveal their foolishness, but the trouble is that it is rather difficult to say whether Švejk is cunning enough to offer his resistance without resistance or whether he is a simple moron. Hašek rarely intervenes as narrator and leaves it to the helpless reader to decide - except in the episode in military prison, where the narrator definitely suggests that the chief of guards is wrong to believe that Švejk is merely naive. Among Czech critics, responses to Švejk were less than unanimous; the left was generally in favor, the liberals preferred mixed enthusiasm and skepticism, and conservative patriots despised him as an egotist who was merely intent upon saving his "stinking skin from the world massacre" (as Arne Novak put it). Even Julius Fučík, a star Communist critic who was later killed by the Nazis, tried to find his own way out of the critical dilemma, saying in 1929 that Švejk was "the type of the soldier [one finds] in all imperialist armies" and in 1939, when political dangers were more acute, assuring Czech readers that Švejk unmasked the power of reaction, developing an intense "political consciousness" all the way (this is certainly not in Hašek's text). It is another question entirely how many people during the Stalinist regime adopted Švejk's way of resisting without resistance and whether, in doing so, they really sabotaged the authorities or simply made life easier for the new bureaucrats, who knew Hašek's book as well as anybody else.

Only in schoolbooks do political and literary developments neatly coincide, but the history of the independent republic and the chronicle of the Czech avantgarde diverge only a little. In Prague in 1908-12, painters and architects moved first in perfect synchrony with developments in Milan, Paris, and Berlin; Czech writers followed at a distance of nearly ten years. It was not that voices of individual rebels, often of anarchist sympathies, were not heard but they too had to carry the burdens of tradition; although their language was that of daily use rather than a high and rare symbolist vocabulary, they still handled accepted forms and genres. They felt rebellious, but they lacked the new formal consciousness that emerged, elsewhere, from the radical social and technological transformations of Europe's great capitals; the enormously gifted young poets of the young republic paradoxically had to learn more about the idiom of Guillaume Apollinaire and his contemporaries before they could speak in their own voice.

Karel Čapek was well known beyond Prague as Masaryk's friend (in Čapek's garden in Vinohrady, the president had a chance to meet younger intellectuals on Friday for tea) and as the author of *R.U.R.* (1921), *Věc Makropulos (The Makropoutos Secret,* 1922) and *Bilá Nemoc (The White Plague,* 1937), much performed on European stages. But it was far less known that he worked for years on pioneering translations of modern French poetry; his version of Apollinaire's *Zone* was a key text for the Czech avantgarde in 1918 and his anthology of recent French poetry in 1920 revealed a totally new world to a younger generation. Later critics assert that a Soviet orientation should be taken into account as well; the avantgarde was certainly inclined to the radical left in Prague as much as in Germany or France. However, a serious knowledge of early Soviet aesthetic developments was rare, and it is not

impossible that the linguist Roman Jakobson (coming to Prague originally with a Soviet delegation) was one of the few witnesses qualified to tell young people what was going on in Soviet art and literature.

The avantgarde group that called itself Devetsil (the name of the butterbur plant tells little of the word's Czech etymological force, combining the words "nine" and "strength") first gathered in Prague in October 1920. Depending on the sources, it was made up either of talented bourgeois students of the elite Kremencarna school or of class-conscious writers (among them Jaroslav Seifert, a future Nobel laureate) ready to advance the cause of the revolutionary masses just preparing the first general strike against the young republic. A few years later, Devětsil's attention shifted from *Proletkult* fever to a revolution of aesthetic sensibilities, taking its strength from Charlie Chaplin's movies, from clowns, circus riders, and acrobats, from red stars in the sky, and from jazz; the young poets began to celebrate the rush of life as enjoyed in the great European and American cities (never London, perhaps thought to be too conservative). It was an intoxicating time of Devetsil poeticism, of which the proletarian poets were suspicious, but for a productive decade (1920-30) it was articulated by Karel Teige, its theoretician, and the expansive young poet Vítězslav Nezval, who became the experimental master of Czech verse. Nezval once wrote that he and Teige had discovered poeticism, or whatever it was, just walking through Prague, "feeling the atmosphere of happiness, witnessed by spring fragrances, the stars, the rosary of street lanterns, vomiting drunks, begging old women, and the makeup of the prostitutes leaning against the railing of the quai." Fortunately, Teige's theory of poeticism, in itself a conglomerate of all the ideas of the European avantgarde, was wide open to new talent - a creed of joy, exhilaration, sensuality, and amplitude that appealed to most gifted writers. Even if they did not stay, they participated in the elan of creating surprising poems, as did Jiří Wolker, issuing manifestos, and disdaining the middle classes. (Milena Jesenská, Franz Kafka's onetime friend, joined Devětsil by marrying Jaromír Krejcar, a functionalist architect close to Teige.) Nezval was the white magician of Prague who glorified its lights, clouds, bars, *parapluies,* and kisses:

Prague of a hundred towers
with the fingers of all the saints
with the fingers of perjury .. .
with the burning fingers of women lying on their backs
with the fingers that touch the stars ...
with the fingers of a windmill and a lilac bush ...
with the fingers of the rain, cut off, and the Tyn cathedral
on the glove of the dawns .. .

Karel Teige, who in the late 1920s taught at the Dessau Bauhaus, the institutional headquarters of the German avantgarde, and Nezval, a voracious reader with a photographic memory, were perfectly qualified to make fine distinctions between what was going on among avantgarde writers in west and east, and they provided poeticism with a program that was fully if critically aware of its early links to Italian futurism and European Dadaism. They had a more difficult time separating the Czech poeticists from the French surrealists who came, they said, only after Prague poeticists had articulated their views. Both Teige in his discussions (among them an early and remarkable analysis of the art of photography and the cinema) and Nezval in his lively essay entitled "The Parrot on the Motorcycle" (1925) believed that the poem should emancipate itself, asserting its independence as poem against philosophies and ideologies. The magnificent practitioner Nezval was particularly eloquent in praising the process of untrammeled association, "a woman-alchemist quicker than the radio," and the creative principle of assonance and rhyme; he was frank enough to admit that the French surrealists who had studied Freud (still unknown in Prague, Nezval wrongly believed) knew more about the subconscious sources of the imagination than their Czech colleagues, but he defended the Czech belief that the music of poetry triggered free association against the surrealist disdain for rhyme, which was understandable only in the context of the French tradition. The poeticists, it became increasingly clear, were but surrealists *in statu nascendi,* and when their group had run out of collective steam and the ideological cohabitation with the revolutionary left had turned difficult, Nezval established a Czech Group of surrealists and invited the French masters to come to Prague.

It was a great and much remembered moment when Andre Breton and Paul Eluard arrived in Prague in the earliest spring days of 1935. Breton, the prince of surrealism, before lecturing on the "surrealist object" (on March 31) and the political situation of the arts (on April 1) glorified Prague, a city "of legendary seductions," saying that among cities which he had never visited, it was perhaps the least foreign to him. Pushing aside geographical, historical, and economic considerations, and seeing it from a distance, it was *la capital magique de la vieille Europe,* the magic capital of old Europe. For decades Czech surrealists and their later friends misquoted Breton by simply ignoring his qualifying adjective *vieille,* telling us that Breton declared magic Prague to be the capital of Europe; even Angelo Maria Ripellino, who should know better, sustains that self-congratulatory myth. To Breton, Prague was the capital of *old* Europe and Paris the first city of European modernity.

Breton wrote home about his triumphs in Prague, where he addressed hundreds of "comrades" (his term) and stayed longer than planned; it is

interesting to speculate about what the Czech and the French expected from each other in political terms. Paradoxically, as Mark Polizzotti has shown in his recent biography of Breton, both expected better grades in the books of the Communist Party (the French being able to refer to their famous revolutionary comrades Teige and Nezval, and the Czechs, not untouched by the commands of socialist realism, hoping that an alliance with the French masters would give them more elbowroom). The left avantgarde in Czechoslovakia, as all over Europe, had to confront the question of how to reconcile aesthetic choice with the stern discipline demanded by increasingly Stalinist party organizations; these factions of the 1930s immediately reemerged at the end of World War II. Those who had been critical of the Moscow show trials in 1936 or flirted with cultural policies as defined by Trotsky were later driven to silence and suicide or were, like Zavig Kalandra, sentenced in Prague show trials and executed. Others who adjusted to party requirements more readily were rewarded with important positions in the cultural apparat and rose from honor to honor. Teige (who died in 1951) was condemned to silence after the war, only to be rediscovered by the generation of the 1960s; Nezval, who had broken with the Paris surrealists before it was too late, especially in view of Breton's admiration for Trotsky, in 1949 wrote a submissive lyrical-epic poem "Stalin," to repent his sins, and was appointed chief of the nationalized Czech film industry. After sixty years or more, it has become clear that the Prague Devětsil created an ingenious and witty art of imagination and charm, and while some of its achievements, in particular those not bound to the printed page - for instance, the paintings by Jindřich Štýrský and Toyen (Marie Cerminkova) - are becoming more widely known, Czech poeticist poetry still constitutes one of the most astonishing and wonderful secrets of Prague, precisely because it is so difficult to translate. Nevertheless, in their own way, Nezval's vicissitudes and literary achievements raise radical questions about imagination and politics in the service of a party.

Jiff Voskovec and Jan Werich, two students at the elite Křemencárna school, located just opposite the famous U Fleků brewery, were also often found among the habitues of Kino Konvikt, where Charlie Chaplin films were shown regularly. These young men were to create an avantgarde theater of Devetsil inspiration, unique in Prague and in Europe; though Voskovec was later sent to Dijon (France) to study, Werich remained in Prague, and the inseparable friends met again when they entered law school, though there is little evidence that they were serious about training to become lawyers. Voskovec was early involved in the ideas of the European avantgarde, and in his essays (which he must have written when he was seventeen or eighteen) he defended futurism and expressionism against Czech traditionalists who still believed in the charms of "fragrant meadows," rather than in the "mechanical beauty" professed by the younger generation everywhere. In 1926, the two for the first time performed at a student matinee, and a year later, scribbling away at the Národní Kavarna and at the family dacha, completed their *West Pocket Revue,* a witty sequence of satire and parody, which created a theatrical sensation.

In 1928 Voskovec and Werich, known as V&W forthwith, consolidated their Osvobozené Divadlo (Theater Unchained, using Tairov's expression) in a 1,000-seat auditorium on Vodičkova Street, in the center of Prague, hired the comic Ferenc Futurista, he of the enormous buck teeth, to play minor parts, and were immediately excommunicated by the avantgarde community for having capitalist aspirations. They were fortunate to work with gifted Jaroslav Ježek, half a nervous George Gershwin, half Kurt Weill, who took over the orchestra, strong in the saxophone section, and composed, apart from concerti, V&W songs and haunting blues that have not been forgotten. (Theater history has less to say about the six vivacious if rather muscular Jancik girls who provided the ballet.) In the early 1930s, Voskovec and Werich were able to attract František Zelenka, a functionalist architect of note, who did sets and posters for them (he later organized the theater at Theresienstadt and died, together with his son and his wife, in Auschwitz). The team of V&W, Ježek, and Zelenka created an extraordinary moment for Prague theater, resuscitating the tradition of the commedia dell'arte, as the Soviet producer Meyerhold noted when he came to visit, and combining it with Dada's disruptive wit, surrealist imagination, linguistic intelligence, and, increasingly, a joyous defense of beleaguered Prague democracy - though, they had, like many others, considerable illusions about the policies of the Soviet Union.

Their most effective plays and films were produced in the mid-1930s, including the anti-Nazi *Osel a Stín (The Donkey and the Shadow,* 1933, against which the German ambassador protested), *Balada z hadrů (A Ballad of Rags,* 1935), and *Rub a líc (Heads or Tails,* 1936), which became the film *Svět patří nám (The World Is Ours,* 1937). By that time, fights between rightist and leftist students often erupted in the auditorium, and in the fall of 1938, after the Munich conference, a new Czech minister of the interior ordered the theater closed. The V&W team left for New York, where unfortunate Jaroslav Ježek (now totally blind) died in a hospital; the two friends worked for the Czech section of the Voice of America. They both returned to Prague in 1945, Werich first and Voskovec later, a little hesitatingly, but times had changed, and the Communist Party knew all too well what it wanted to tolerate and what to exploit. Werich stayed on and became a popular television personality; Voskovec left again and made his way as a serious actor in Chekhov and Shakespearean plays and in Hollywood. Werich died in Prague in 1980 and his friend Voskovec of cancer in California a year later. In Prague, CDs of their original repertory, edited in six installments, are among the hot items on the

electronic market.

It is deplorable that we have to satisfy our nostalgia for the avantgarde of the past, certainly more exciting than that of the present, by listening to CDs and by reading in libraries. But the old glory places are gone: the Cafe Union at Perstyn Corner, lovingly called Unionka, in a shabby building marked by a strange edgestone (with a grinning flat face, which I feared when I walked by it as a boy), was long the principal home for artists and intellectuals. Here Pan Davidek, the owner, played his gramophone, mostly for his own entertainment, and the headwaiter, Patera, a mythical baldhead, provided newspapers (he had to pay for them out of his own pocket), remembered for years who owed him for a cup of coffee, and benevolently functioned as a kind of one-man credit institute, lending money to young painters, chess players, and anarchists. Architects, editors, and critics sat here in the warrenlike little rooms or went from table to table - from the architect Gočár to the brothers Karel and Josef Čapek, from Jaroslav Hašek (who had his headquarters at the Zvěřina Pub) to Richard Weiner, interested in all things French. The German counterpart to the Unionka was the Arco, between the stock exchange and the old railway station, which was mostly frequented by traveling salesman, businesspeople, and bank clerks yet, for reasons difficult to fathom, attracted the most important German-writing authors and their artist friends; the headwaiter was weaselly Pan Počta. Kafka, Brod, and Franz Werfel, whenever he was in town, as well as the painters Friedrich Feigl and Willy Novak met here in a convenient extra room; occasionally, a Czech leftist turned up to demonstrate for Socialist solidarity; and, among the few women, Milena Jesenská was seen, to be close not to Kafka but to Ernst Pollak, a minor bank manager of a shrewdly critical mind, one of her future husbands. Hanging out at the Arco, she at least had a good chance to spite her father, an upright Czech nationalist who heartily disliked her German and Jewish acquaintances.

In the first years of the republic, Prague's housing shortage was catastrophic, and rather than freeze in their rented rooms, young writers, and many of the older people, assembled at the Národní Kavárna (National Café), exactly midway between the river and the Unionka; radicals, enamored of the Soviet habit of abbreviations, called it their Narkav - though the regulars were of at least three different persuasions: the Devětsil people crowded in the back corner, the progressive Catholics in front, and the more sedate liberal journalists on the banquettes along the wall. In a separate room, the famous scholars of the Linguistic Circle, among its members professors Jan Mukařovský, Vilém Mathesius, Jakobson, and young Rene Wellek, later to establish the modern study of comparative literature in the United States, met to discuss recent literary theory. Only if the place was too crowded or the Devětsil writers became too noisy did people move down to the Slavia, a Prague showplace often visited by Albert Einstein and Thomas Mann. For a long time, the Slavia had been second home to people from the National Theater, across the street, but after the demise of the Unionka and the Narodni Kavarna it became a (last) literary meeting place, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, when the dissidents had their regular tables here and the police agents (nearby) too.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Prague's cafes constituted an entire planetary system; though Czechs would rarely venture to the Cafe Continental (it was elegant and German), the frontiers of language were honored more by habit than by resolve, and writers also liked to sit at the Tumovka, the Deminka (among retired civil servants), or the Akademická Kavarna (Academic Café) on Vodičkova Street, now Prague's McDonald's . Other places catered to more specific inclinations and intents - for instance, the Cafe Rococo for the film industry or the Štěrba for ladies of the afternoon. Generations differed in their habits; Unionka regulars usually went, after hours, to the raunchy Montmartre in the Old Town, while the young Devetsil people preferred the chic bars, including the Chapeau Rouge, the Sect Pavilion, and the Pigalle.

The Nazi occupation and the long years of Communist Party rule did away with most of Prague's coffeehouses, but the new capitalism does not exactly favor comfortable places, either, where impecunious intellectuals can sip cups of coffee for hours and young people can hold hands (under the table, as they did at the Unionka). Since mid-century, the coffeehouse subculture has shifted to the writers' weekend *chatas,* or dachas, or to local pubs where regulars have held the fort for decades. The octogenarian writer Bohumil Hrabal was rightly famous for loyally dwelling at "U zlatého tygra" (At the Golden Tiger), near the Dominican Church, and when President Clinton visited Prague and wanted to see the sights, his colleague Václav Havel obligingly took him there, after the joint had been cased by the Secret Service, much to the dismay of Hrabal and the other regulars. Many tourists like to gather at the new Cafe Milena, run by the enterprising Franz Kafka Society, and members of the society are privileged to have coffee in the extra room, where they can catch a glimpse of roving Kafka experts from Duke or Yale in search of an authentic Prague cafe.

For thirty years now, the Czech intellectuals of the 1968 generation have celebrated "the world of Franz Kafka," or Prague German-Jewish literature, and it is difficult not to respond to their innocent generalizations with weary questions about history and its oddities. International tourists cannot complain that the Prague travel industry does not pander to their literary needs by offering Kafka T-shirts, ad hoc exhibitions, and Kafka pantomimes in every Old Town nook and cranny, but Čapeks have few opportunities to learn about the continuities and disjunctions of Prague's Jewish literary developments, which began well before 1848, if not before Emperor Joseph. They were, step

by step, strengthened by the liberalization of rules and regulations concerning Jewish life and education, by a productive accord with German writing by non-Jewish authors (often under the pressure of Czech nationalists who brought together Prague Germans and German-speaking Jews), and the emergence of at least three generations obsessed, in the absence of political options, with literature and the arts. The Austrian Robert Musil, author of the *The Man Without Qualities,* was not entirely foolish when he remarked that in Prague true genius *refuses* to write. German-speaking Prague was too small and cliquish to guarantee spontaneity and fresh air, and as soon as young people in a new and talented cohort looked around, they decided to go elsewhere, to a place perhaps less magic but abounding with publishers, newspapers, and many divergent, clashing opinions.

The scholar Kurt Krolop (perhaps against his intentions) has shown that the brain drain was continuous: even before the revolution of 1848, young writers in Prague, whether German or Jewish-German, left for more challenging editorial jobs in Leipzig and Vienna and, beginning in the 1890s, went to Munich and Berlin. There were great departures in 1911-12 and in 1920 and after; even Kafka left for Berlin. Rilke, Werfel, Paul Kornfeld, and Ernst Weiss, deeply offended by the excesses of Czech nationalism, chose to go, and of the more important writers of German and Jewish-German Prague only four or five remained throughout the years of the republic - among them Max Brod (who died in 1968 in Tel Aviv), Paul Leppin (who died in 1945 back in Prague), Johannes Urzidil (who died in 1970 in Rome), and Ludwig Winder (who died in 1946 in London); it is a more melancholy than cynical observation that the only ones who remained had excellent, prestigious newspaper jobs, were incurably ill, or were too old to move. Few readers are aware that another young generation of writers grew up in republican Prague - my friend the poet H. W. Kolben (who died in 1942 at the Mauthausen concentration camp), the studious Orientalist Franz Baerman Steiner (who lived until 1952 in Oxford), the novelist and poet H. G. Adler (who died in 1988 in London), and the playwright and poet Franz Wurm, still living and working as a psychotherapist in Zurich, the last of the Prague Mohicans.

Even well-meant celebrations are not a good substitute for literary criticism, and the question was not often raised whether Prague German writers moved only in the modern mainstream of classical, neoromantic, or symbolist literature, or whether at least some of them contributed to the achievements of the European avantgarde. From the perspective of the Devetsil people, the intentions of their German-writing colleagues seemed a little old-fashioned and their continued admiration of Goethe, Heinrich von Kleist, or Adalbert Stifter (all high even in Kafka's canon) rather odd. Yet quite apart from Kafka, other writers resisted tradition and advanced new ways of writing. First among them was Franz Werfel, who in his early poetry - *Der Weltfreund (The World's Friend,* 1911), *Wir sind (We Are,* 1913), and *Einander (To Each Other,* 1915) - was among those who initiated the expressionist revolt even to Berlin readers and audiences (never mind the Hollywood bestsellers of his later years). His long, harsh lines breaking through neoromantic stanzas were no less astonishing than his sweeping gestures of love for earth, heaven, and all his fellow beings:

I am a corso in a sunny town,
A summer fete with lawns where women glide,
My eye is dazed by too much brilliancy,
Upon the twilight grass I will sit down,
And with the earth into the evening ride ...
Oh Earth, oh Evening, Joy, Oh in the world to be!

(trans, by Edith Abercrombie Snow)

Only a few experts remember Werfel's young Prague disciple Karl Brandt, who was too sick to fulfill his promise, or Melchior Vischer, the only Prague Dadaist, who later moved with his Jewish wife to Berlin, where he published a book on Jan Hus in 1940 that was immediately destroyed by the Nazi authorities. Literary history rarely recalls that Prague's expressionist playwrights, among them Kornfeld and Weiss, gave the German stage an entire repertory of plays far into the 1920s and early 1930s. Most of Prague's early nonconformists published in the Berlin avantgarde periodical *Der Sturm* (where Max Brod developed his idea that true poetry was based on the importance of the individual word) or in *Die Aktion,* edited by the anarchist Franz Pfempfert, committed to discover art and literature in radical opposition to its time and place. One of the interesting writers contributing from Prague was Marie Holzer, who in her own way anticipated Milena Jesenska by about a generation. Holzer had a sharp eye for changing mores, unveiled the sham relationships between men and women, called loyalty in traditional marriage "a drug," refused to submit to "nationalist egotism," and acknowledged not without pain that the Czechs, in 1915 a people certain of victory, had "poets of a wonderful force and of an unerring formal power." Mrs. Holzer was shot by her husband in a marital dispute, and her courage has yet to be honored in our memory.

Prague German-writing Jews, not much liked by the Czech nationalists, did their best, especially during the years before World War I and between the wars, to make the achievements of Czech art and literature widely known outside Bohemia. Czech writers tended to look to Paris, which rarely responded to their love, while their German-speaking friends were busy in Leipzig and Berlin triggering interest in Czech Prague. Max Brod had a certain

inclination to see himself at the center of a Prague "circle" which actually consisted of many circles within circles, but I do not want to dispute his long and caring efforts to have the works of his German and Czech friends published in Germany and to attract attention to Czech literature and art. He was responsible for bringing Hašek's Švejk to the attention of the Berlin theater (and, indirectly, to Brecht) and he was instrumental in having Leoš Janáček's operas performed in European opera houses.

Prague Germans and German-writing Jews had long been active translating from contemporary Czech. In 1837-48, Rudolf Glaser had edited the courageous periodical *Ost und West (East and West),* cultivating German-Slavic togetherness. Siegfried Kapper was among the first translators of K. H. Mácha, and in the following generation Friedrich Adler rendered Jaroslav Vrchlicky, a master of formal versatility, into German. During World War I, Pfempfert, in his *Aktion,* published German versions of Czech authors persecuted by the Austrian authorities, yet passed Prussian war censorship without much difficulty; he even printed three special Prague issues, dedicated to the expressionist Franz Werfel, the Czech artist Josef Čapek (brother of Karel), and the architect Vlastimil Hoffman. The trouble was that German and Czech poetic idioms had ceased to run close to each other; and as soon as Czechs relied, in a revolt of their own, on the spoken word of the family, the street, the pub, and the workplace, Prague German translators were immediately handicapped, for their literary as well as their spoken language was bookish and it lacked popular dialect or plebeian terms. Werfel's translation of the Czech visionary Otokar Březina (done with the support of Erik Saudek) was perfect, because both the Czech original and the German used rare and artful words, but translators had a far more difficult time in tackling Petr Bezruč, spokesman of the oppressed Silesian miners, or playful Vítězslav Nezval; it is not surprising that the best translations of Bezruc and Nezval were often undertaken by outsiders (the Bezruč translator Georg Mannheimer, for instance, came to Prague from Vienna before going to Israel). In the years of the republic and until mid-century, Paul/Pavel Eisner was the most productive literary mediator between the two languages, and he devoted so much loving effort and sympathy to Czech that he had become for all practical purposes a writer of the Czech tradition himself. During World War I he translated recent Czech poetry into German, often with expressionist overtones, but by 1930 he turned around and translated German into Czech. Eisner survived the Nazi occupation hidden in his room in Prague and, after the liberation, emerged as a Czech writer; in a widely read book he praised the strength and courage of Czech. His Czech translation of Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* was published in 1948, linguistically congenial to the original text and an irreplaceable monument to the translator's art.

As the Prague philologist Emil Skála has shown, many elements appeared and disappeared in the long history of Prague German; if, in early centuries, northern and central German idioms combined, the events of 1620 and the Hapsburg centralization brought about an "Austrianization" of the Prague idiom; the scene was thoroughly provincial. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries offered a late, uneasy stage; Yiddish had gone underground and was spoken with ambivalent feelings by family patriarchs (Kafka's father, for instance); when Czechs and Germans met in everyday situations, curious constructions with many interferences and fusions could be heard. Czechs spoke *Kucheldeutsch* (kitchen German) with German employers and superiors; middle-class German housewives used *Kuchelböhmisch* (kitchen Czech) to discuss culinary matters with their Czech cooks and servant girls. *Mauscheldeutsch* (the term used by the Jewish-German nationalist Fritz Mauthner, which suggests "kinky" German) denotes the last traces of ancient Jewish-German stubbornly defying the rules of polite German conversation. Phonetically, spoken German in Prague was part of an equally complicated situation: Whether Jew or gentile, Prague speakers of German immediately revealed to German listeners that they were "different," using the consonants *p, t, k* for *b, d, g,* simplifying all diphthongs in a uniform *at,* and relying on Czech prepositions where German would have been appropriate. Johannes Urzidil renewed the romantic belief that Prague German was the purest of them all, going back to Johannes Noviforensis, chancellor to Emperor Charles IV—a defensive myth that compensates for the idiosyncrasies of speech and the literary abstractions of a middle-class idiom largely out of sync with the everyday speech of small-town Bohemian and Moravian Germans.

It may be misleading to regard Kafka as incarnating "Kafka's world" or Prague German writing (he was not even representative of himself, he would say), but he was one of the few writers who wrote about writing, and he did not avoid even the most painful, if not self-destructive, reflections about the language he was doomed to use in a city he wanted to leave. Kafka wrote little about Prague, and his early prose, as in *Beschreibung eines Kampfes (Description of a Fight,* 1909), combines literary considerations with rare allusions to Prague's streets, churches, and monuments, all unhesitatingly named; a similar combination can be found only in his late *Das Stadtwappen (The City Escutcheon),* though there in a more impersonal mode of narration. In the first part of the early text, a Prague flaneur who knows his Hugo von Hofmannsthal talks to a chance companion who turns out to be a writer too, characterized in a lively way by his theatrical manners as an actor and a thorough solipsist (I hesitate to think of Franz Werfel, who is chronologically wrong for the part, but the thought persists). The flaneur does not have a high opinion of his colleague's writings; they are too exalted, restless, "this fever, this seasickness on the firm

earth." Unfortunately, the fellow writer is not content to call a poplar tree a poplar tree; he is not satisfied, in his "utter heat" to use "the truthful names of these things," and pours out words, in striking impatience, over things. He does not even want to know what kind of a tree a poplar is, speaking of it as "the tower of Babel," and the critic ironically adds he could have called the tree, swaying in the wind, "Noah as he drank." Such metaphors, though biblical and of high seriousness, hardly yield valid insights into matters as they are, though they do reveal good or bad writing; mobilizing metaphors, refusing to call a tree a tree, turns into a central indication of bad style. Good writing, the Prague flaneur assumes, would be unadorned, free of ornament, like Adolf Loos's architecture, and confident of a language of untroubled reference.

In their splendid and chaotic essay classifying Prague Jewish-German writing among the "minor" literatures of strong political potential, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have suggested that Kafka, trying to solve his authorial problems, did not opt for Czech - as if it had been an option to leave or take. Kafka's knowledge of Czech was better than Rilke's, who knew deplorably little Czech (as emerges from his as yet unpublished correspondence with Valerie David-Rhonfeld, his first Prague love), but, after a completely German education from elementary school to his law degree, he never mastered it. He read it with great philological empathy, shown in his German letters to Milena, born and bred Czech, but his difficulties are revealed in letters he had to write to his superiors at the Labor Insurance Company (1908-24); as Josef Cermak has shown, he found himself in dire language straits when the company after 1918 switched to functioning solely in Czech; Kafka, when writing to his director, had to enlist the services of his "family translation office," as he put it, consisting of his sister Ottla and her Czech husband, Josef. Kafka himself wrote about the "gorgeous lie about [his] knowledge of Czech" to his sister, and, when he went on writing in Czech to Josef, he curiously mixed spoken and literary idioms, ordered his sentences according to German syntactical rules, and stumbled over vocabulary and morphology, particularly difficult for anybody educated in German schools. Yet he could not escape to Yiddish either, which powerfully attracted him when he attended the performances of a Jewish traveling theater group in the shabby Cafe Savoy; he even arranged an evening of Yiddish recitations for his acculturated Prague Jewish audience, who truly feared, he believed, a language that had been spoken in Prague two generations ago. He felt, in one of his romantic moods, that Yiddish was the vital and lustful language of an authentic and proud community of Jews, but he, son of his father and member of a German acculturated society, had gone too far the other way. More clearly than anyone else, he recognized himself as one of the young Jews who resolved to write in German, though "with their hind legs ... still glued to their father's Jewishness and with their waving front legs they found no new ground," who made their despair their inspiration. (His story of the young man who awakes one morning in the shape of an ugly insect may be a linguistic self-portrait.) In his search for pure and simple words, Kafka was, among all the impossibilities of writing (including the one *not* to write), condemned to German; he believed that the product of his despair "could not be German literature, though outwardly it seemed to be so." In his self-flagellation, he used images current in the vocabulary of contemporary German anti-Semites, as the historian Christoph Stolzl has reminded us, and asserted in 1921 that he was producing "a gypsy literature which had stolen the German child out of its cradle and in great haste put it through some kind of training, for someone has to dance on the tightrope." His anxieties were a far cry from the joy and exultation that brought together his Czech contemporaries, blissfully walking under his dark windows.

Prague, September 21, 1937

The sad news of T. G. Masaryk's demise did not come suddenly. He had been elected president of the republic four times, the last time in May 1934, but a year later decided that he should relinquish the office for reasons of health and age, and parliament voted to offer him his Lány residence and all his emoluments for life. He walked in the park, read, and welcomed a few visitors; his son Jan, an avid musician, said that his life went "from forte to fortissimo and then to pianissimo." In mid-September 1937, symptoms of a stroke combined with an inflammation of the lungs, and on September 12, the attending physicians notified the family and the government that the inevitable end was near. Masaryk died peacefully, on September 14, at 3:29 a.m., being eighty-seven years, six months, and seven days old. It was not an easy moment for the republic or for European democracy. Hitler had gone from success to success; in the Spanish Civil War there was heavy fighting around Oviedo and a new government offensive against Franco, the Prague newspapers reported; and when it was decided that Masaryk's funeral should be conducted by the army, people felt it was the right gesture of resolve and dignity in the face of increasing dangers. Citizens began to travel to Prague from all corners of Czechoslovakia, and the trains were crowded. His coffin was first placed in the Plečnik Hall of Hradčany Castle, and people lined up for days and nights to pay their respects. Nobody prodded them, and yet they came, 600,000 strong, a silent and dark column slowly moving ahead.

On September 21, the funeral was to proceed from Hradčany Castle to the Old Town and up Wenceslas Square to the railroad station (actually reversing the path Masaryk had taken when he triumphantly entered the city after his

exile), and people put up chairs and little stools in the streets the evening before, to be there in the morning. By 10 a.m., after the family members had a last chance to take their leave, the casket was carried by six generals to the courtyard of the castle, where, on black-clad tribunes, the official guests gathered, on three sides, row after row. After President Benes's funeral oration (which makes melancholy reading today, considering the development of his policies later), the old Hussite battle hymn, sung by a famous chorus of Prague schoolteachers, sounded out, and the procession formed while an air force squadron (later that air force was handed over to the Nazis plane by plane) crossed the sky. First in the procession was General Syrovy on his horse, steel helmet and saber drawn; he was followed by representatives of all the Czechoslovak regiments, legions, and Sokols, carrying army flags and standards. The casket, placed on a howitzer gun carriage, was covered by the tricolor of the republic and accompanied by six soldiers who (a thought that might have pleased Masaryk) represented the six language groups serving in the army-Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians, and Poles. Behind the gun carriage walked Jan Masaryk and two grandsons (daughters and granddaughters waited at the railroad station), and behind them President Benes, all alone, and his staff of presidential advisers at some distance. I was in the crowd, a fifteen-year-old kid, and we all were especially excited to see the many foreign representatives, ministers, generals, and diplomats, among them Leon Blum of France (of the government of the French Popular Front) with his shaggy head; Constantine Stojadinovic, chief of the Yugoslav government; Norwegians, Americans, Albanians, British, Romanians, and dozens of others. I can see from newspaper clippings that Ambassador Eisenlohr of Germany was also there with two Wehrmacht attaches, and a first secretary of the Soviet embassy (actually a diplomatic snub, but the Soviets and Masaryk, who had financed a university of Russian emigres in Prague from his own pocket, never liked each other very much). Konrad Henlein, *Führer* of the victorious Sudeten Party, called in sick at the last moment like a schoolboy, and he was represented by none other than Karl Hermann Frank, an ardent National Socialist, SS general (later), and Germany's last state minister in Prague before the Reich collapsed (he was executed immediately after the war). Massive units of legionnaires concluded the procession; twenty-five thousand of the Russian legions, joined by units who had fought in France and Italy, marched together for the last time under a clear autumn sky. I remember the eerie silence of the day; one million people lined the streets, but you heard only the muffled sound of the horses' hooves, the clink of wheels and weapons, the infantry boots on the cobbled streets, and quiet sobbing in the crowds.

Shortly after 3 p.m. the funeral procession arrived at the railroad station, and the small group that would accompany the casket to Lany County Cemetery was joined by Masaryk's entire family, including his daughters Alice and Olga, granddaughters Herberta and Anna, his niece Ludmila, as well as Hana Benesova, wife of the president. Two trains were readied, and all along the short route people waited and many of them threw flowers on the rails. Railroad workers took the coffin from the train at 6:45 p.m., and the final ceremony in the peaceful cemetery was private and brief. A preacher of the Czechoslovak Brethren read a psalm and a page from the Revelation of John, so dear to Emperor Charles IV, and while the hymn of the republic was intoned, the coffin was lowered into the grave, where Masaryk's mortal remains came to rest near his unhappy and courageous wife, Charlotte. Many poems and eulogies were published the next day, but none was more fair and moving than a short meditative piece written by Masaryk's friend Karel Čapek. He tried to grasp the many strains of his personality at a moment when legend had already begun to prevail, and in simple words suggested that Masaryk had been a "Greek Platonic" but also a man of science and reason and a believer in Christ's example. Čapek clearly explained what many had felt that day in a diffuse and anxious way. In Europe, new forces were emerging, of blood and collective instincts, and Masaryk had embodied, without strain and in living deeds, the most powerful counter-forces to these new threats: classical individualism coming to us from antiquity, sober reason in guiding the world, and, above all, a pristine Christian moral ideal of love for all your fellow people. Čapek was a student of American pragmatism, and it may have been his disinclination to accept metaphysical norms that made him particularly sensitive to what Masaryk had thought and done, in his own contradictory ways.