

Josette Baer, Ed.

# **Preparing Liberty in Central Europe**

Political Texts from the Spring of Nations 1848  
to the Spring of Prague 1968

With a foreword by Zdeněk V. David

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*For Cristina, Edi and Katja*



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## Foreword

Josette Baer's selection from the writings of prominent Slovak and Czech representatives of the National Awakening, and of their successors, is to be welcomed as a significant contribution to the understanding of the genesis and character of modern national consciousness in East-Central Europe. By implication, the lessons learned may be applied to other instances of nationalism, not only in Europe, but also on a global scale. Professor Baer includes the writings of Ján Kollár, L'udovít Štúr, and Ján Palárik, on the Slovak side; and those of Karel Havlíček, František Palacký, Thomas G. Masaryk, Václav Havel, and Milan Kundera, on the Czech side.

The selected texts illustrate the different roots from which the two intellectual trends grew. Early on, the Slovaks were strongly influenced by German Lutheran universities, where they studied in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Ján Kollár and his generation, particularly Pavol J. Šafárik, thus came under a spell of Herder's teaching, transmitted by the intellectual ambiance of the University of Jena (1815-1819). L'udovít Štúr and many of his contemporaries, such as Josef M. Hurban, Michal M. Hodža, Štefan Launer, and Benjamín P. Červenák, attended by and large the University of Halle in the 1830s and 1840s. Halle was then a domain of German Idealism that sheltered its students from exposure to British empiricism or French positivism. Štúr and other Slovak Lutheran theologians developed there a special attachment to Hegel's philosophy of history and metaphysics, which they connected with Herder's idea of *Humanität*.

Meanwhile the Czech awakeners received intellectual impetus from the Austro-Bohemian Catholic Enlightenment, particularly from the Josephist era (1780-1790), which was characterized by a realistic and anti-metaphysical orientation. The early teaching of Karl H. Seibt and Josef Dobrovský was later amplified by the prominent teachers at the University of Prague, Bernard Bolzano and Franz Exner during the first half of the nineteenth century. Karel Havlíček was an admirer of Bolzano and (in the 1830s) an appreciative student of Exner. He absorbed their distaste for German Idealism in general,

and Hegel's teaching in particular. As a prominent leader of the Czech intellectual revival he spearheaded the epochal assault against Idealist metaphysics in the 1840s, in which other notable Czech intellectuals participated, in particular Vilém Gabler, Václav B. Nebeský, and Karel B. Štorch.

František Palacký represented a paradoxical case. Although he appeared in many ways to have a background similar to the Slovak Lutheran intellectuals, he actually eschewed the powerful impact of German Romanticism and Idealism. For one thing, unlike Kollár or Štúr, he never studied at a German university. For another, although – unlike most Czechs -- a Protestant, he was not particularly interested in Lutheran theology. While he studied at the Lutheran Lyceum (1812-1819) in Pressburg (Bratislava, Pozsony), he preferred – in agreement with his teachers there – to acquire his philosophical education outside of the formal academy, in the houses of Hungarian gentry, where he was employed as a tutor. There he was exposed to what was – partly due to Magyar reaction against the German *Kultur* – a fascination with British thought and literature. Thanks to this Anglophilia, Palacký, rather than embracing Herder, turned instead to British writers and historians, especially Scottish ones, like Hugh Blair and William Robertson. Thus his basic intellectual outlook was not shaped by German Romanticism, but by the Scottish Enlightenment.

When the Czech awakeners questioned the value of German philosophy, as in the earlier mentioned campaign of the 1840s, the term was a shorthand for German Idealism, and was a mark of authentic philosophical conviction rather than atavistic xenophobia. They actually drew heavily on thinkers who were linguistically German, but unlike Kant, Schelling, Fichte and Hegel, oriented toward realism and ontological pluralism, including Karl L. Reinhold, Christoph Bardili, William T. Krug, Bolzano, Johann F. Herbart, and Exner. The latter current (realistic and empirical) has become known as the Austrian philosophical tradition, which within the German cultural sphere, however, played second fiddle to the more widespread Idealistic and speculative orientation.

Unlike the Lutherans -- Kollár and Štúr – Ján Palárik was a Catholic priest who, after the hiatus of the revolutionary events, 1848-1849, continued the tradition of Štúr and Hurban in affirming the establishment of a separate Slovak literary language, and in the 1850s (based on an agreement in Press-

burg of October 1851) he succeeded, with the help of Andrej Radlinský, in bringing Catholic intellectual leaders to support the linguistic reforms developed by the Protestants. However, Palárik appeared much less susceptible to the Romanticist or Idealist/Hegelian enthusiasms of his earlier Lutheran confreres. He rejected Štúr's and Hurban's reliance on Russia (and for that matter on Vienna) and proposed a settlement of the Slovak issues in alliance with the Hungarian liberals, who in fact were gaining influence in the country in the 1860s. The Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 did shift power to the liberals, but it soon became apparent that – in view of their penchant for a Magyar linguistic hegemony -- Palárik's formula did not hold much promise for promoting Slovak national aspirations. Nevertheless, his readiness to take a rather unpopular stand injected a healthy dose of pluralism into Slovak politics.

Proceeding beyond the stage of the National Awakening, Thomas G. Masaryk's *Weltanschauung* -- despite his interest in British, French, and even Russian thought -- grew largely out of the Austrian philosophical tradition. Much of his realistic philosophical orientation was shaped by his favorite teacher, Franz Brentano, at the University of Vienna. The philosophical foundation of his search for religious truth came to a large extent from his even earlier reading of the works of the Neo-Kantian, Friedrich A. Lange. Masaryk's highly prestigious position in the interwar period, as President of the Czechoslovak Republic, kept the mainstream of Czech thought within the realistic Austrian tradition. Yet, at the same time, his ambiguity on the religious and metaphysical issues offered scope for more daring intellectual exploration.

The last part of Professor Baer's collection illustrates the drastic fluctuation in the fortunes of Czech national politics during the twentieth century. The major wave of political change moved from the height of the democratic regime of interwar Czechoslovakia (1918-1938), mainly under President Masaryk, to the depth of the occupation by Nazi Germany (1939-1945) and, after a brief respite, to the Soviet-imposed Communist system (1948-1989). Another democratic highpoint was then reached after the Velvet Revolution of 1989 in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (1990-1992) and eventually in the successor states of the Czech and Slovak republics. Within the preceding downswing there was a brief, but brilliant, recovery of the democratic spirit

– the Prague Spring of 1968, which temporarily disrupted (virtually at its midpoint) the long phase of Communist totalitarianism. The debate between Václav Havel and Milan Kundera, recorded in the last section of the book, illuminates this remarkable – and, for the long run, seminal -- liberal revival. The discussion involves the famous future President of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, on the one side, and an outstanding novelist and public intellectual of free Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, on the other side.

Within a framework of meticulous scholarship, Professor Baer's approach displays insights and sensitivity, which particularly engage the readers' attention. Her work offers a wealth of knowledge in the translated texts, which appropriately represent the prominent actors and their ideas, as well as offering informative introductions and copious explanatory notes. The collection contributes to our understanding of an area that is imperfectly known in the outside world. Although it refers to a specific geographic region, the book can yield awareness of universal significance.

*Zdeněk V. David*

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D. C.

August 24, 2006

## Introduction

The present volume is the result of my course “Introduction to Czech and Slovak Political Thought, 19<sup>th</sup> Century”, which I first taught at the Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies Program REECAS at the University of Washington in Seattle in 2002. In regard of the lack of an English version, I translated selected texts and excerpts of texts by Ján Kollár, Ľudovít Štúr, Karel Havlíček, František Palacký, Ján Palarík and Thomas G. Masaryk from their German, Czech and Slovak originals, respectively. *The Czech Fate* (Český úděl) was a famous debate between Václav Havel and Milan Kundera about the options of the Czechoslovaks after the invasion of August 1968. The debate provided an additional helpful insight to the principal 19<sup>th</sup> Century theme of liberty, comparing them to statements on political independence in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Czechoslovakia. The texts cover a period of time of a hundred and thirty-one years with the earliest published in 1837 and the last in 1968/9.

The major part of Thomas G. Masaryk’s works<sup>1</sup>, except his article *Nesnáze demokracie* (The difficulties of democracy), has been translated into English. The plays, essays and speeches of Václav Havel<sup>2</sup> and Milan Kundera’s<sup>3</sup> novels are available in several languages. With the exception of some of his sonnets and the famous poem *Slávy dcera*<sup>4</sup> (The daughter of Sláva), no English translation of Kollár’s essay *Ueber die literarische Wechselseitigkeit zwischen den verschiedenen Stämmen und Mundarten der slawischen Nation* (On Literary Reciprocity of the Various Tribes and Dialects of the Slavonic Nation) was so far available. The English reader lacked also a translation of the romanticist *Das Slawenthum und die Welt der Zukunft* (Slavdom

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<sup>1</sup> George J. Kovtun, *Czech and Slovak history: an American Bibliography* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1996), 317-322. See also literature on Masaryk in the bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> *Václav Havel Online*. <http://vaclavhavel.cz/>; accessed 18 May 2006.

<sup>3</sup> *Milan Kundera Online*. <http://kundera.de/english/>; accessed 18 May 2006.

<sup>4</sup> George J. Kovtun, *Czech and Slovak Literature in English* (Washington DC. Library of Congress, 1988 (2)), 88.

and the World of the Future) by Ľudovít Štúr, an important contribution to the history of Panslavist thought. The first Slovak translation<sup>5</sup> of the original German text was published only in 1993. Karel Havlíček's articles<sup>6</sup> *On Legal resistance* and *The danger of pan-Slavism* are rare English versions of the ingenious journalist's works. His critical article *Why am I a citizen?* (Proč jsem občanem?) illustrates his Švejkian talent to sidestep Austrian censorship. Until now, the equally fascinating essay *Explaining my point of view* (Na dorozumenie) by the Slovak priest Ján Palarík has been available in Slovak only. Apart from his letter to the Frankfurt liberals<sup>7</sup>, translations of František Palacký's articles have yet to be done. My excerpts of Palacký's *The idea of the Austrian State* (Idea státu Rakouského) and of *The Czech Fate* are the first English versions of these important documents of Czech intellectual history.

The volume presents a chronology of Czech and Slovak political thought, which starts with Kollár's a-political claim for mutual cultural relations of the Slavonic people. Deeply disappointed by the neo-absolutist regime following the *Spring of Nations* of 1848, Štúr promotes his romanticist version of Panslavism as the only option for the Slavs to achieve freedom from foreign rule. Havlíček's ironic analysis reveals the appalling state of corruption in the Habsburg Monarchy. Palacký and Palarík use natural law theory and the legality of the constitution to legitimate their political demands for the equal status of their nations with the ruling Austrians and Magyars, respectively. Masaryk expresses his critique of the Vienna parliament and his demand for a true democracy in his didactic and dry scientific style. The debate between Havel and Kundera, eventually, is not only a masterpiece of political rhetoric, but provides also crucial insights to civic resistance and optimism in the months following the violent intervention that ended the *Spring of Prague*.

Additional information on the political history of the Habsburg Empire and the crucial events of the revolution of 1848 were particularly required to provide a better understanding of essential issues such as national revival,

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<sup>5</sup> Ľudovít Štúr. *Slovanstvo a svět budoucnosti*, transl. by Adam Bžoch (Bratislava: Slovenský Inštitut Mezinárodných Studií, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Kovtun, *Czech and Slovak Literature*, 74.

<sup>7</sup> "Letter sent by František Palacký to Frankfurt," translated by William Beardmore, *The Slavonic and East European Review* XXVI, no. 67 (1948): 303-308.

Austroslavism, Pan Slavism and the language rights in both the Cisleithanian and Transleithanian parts of the Monarchy. In the present volume I opted for a middle way. I tried to provide sufficient information for the reader to get a concise picture of Czech and Slovak political issues, and their relations to Western ideas of liberalism and nationalism, without “drowning” the ideas and statements of the authors in a flood of historical detail. My intention was further to let the authors and the political atmosphere speak for themselves rather than to try to “overexplain” the historical context they described so aptly themselves. For additional historical reading I refer to the section “Recommended Literature on Czech and Slovak history and politics” in the bibliography, in particular to the works of Robert A. Kann<sup>8</sup>, Otto Urbán<sup>9</sup>, Ludwig von Gogolák<sup>10</sup>, Petr Toma and Dušan Kovač<sup>11</sup> and Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch<sup>12</sup>. Ján Pauer<sup>13</sup> and Kieran Williams<sup>14</sup> provide excellent analysis of the *Spring of Prague*.

A further goal was to keep a reasonable balance between a careful adaptation to the original wording and the accurate sense of the contents. For the sake of clarity, I had to sacrifice some of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century style of political prose. The texts appear in chronological order according to their dates of publication. Biographical remarks on the author and a brief summary of the text precede each chapter. The most important works by the authors as well as selected secondary literature about their life and works are listed in the bibliography.

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<sup>8</sup> Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1526 – 1918* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1974), 243-365.

<sup>9</sup> Otto Urbán, *Česká společnost 1848 – 1918* (Praha: Svoboda, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> von Gogolák, Ludwig, “Ungarns Nationalitätengesetze und das Problem des Magyarischen National- und Zentralstaates.” in *Die Habsburger Monarchie 1848-1918*. Band III Die Völker des Reiches (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1980), 1207-1303.

<sup>11</sup> Petr Toma and Dušan Kovač, *Slovakia. From Samo to Džurinda* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, eds., *Die Habsburgermonarchie, 1848 – 1918*. Band III Die Völker des Reiches (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1980) 489-521, 411-488, 775-800.

<sup>13</sup> Ján Pauer, *Prag 1968. Der Einmarsch des Warschauer Paktes* (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968-1970* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Titles, subtitles and/or numbering of sections are given identical to the original texts. Beginnings and ends of excerpts I marked with /.../ and the relevant pages of the original text. The names of locations, towns and cities appear according to their historic names in the subject period, i.e. Kremsier instead of the later Czech Kroměříž. Slavonic names appear according to the transliterations used in the original languages, i.e. in Kollár and Štúr's case in the German transliteration of early and mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, which was not yet standardized. For the Russian names, except well-known emperors, I followed the transliteration of the Library of Congress Slavic Cataloguing Manual. The Czech, Slovak, Polish and South Slavic names appear in the original spelling with diacritical signs.

A brief remark on remarks: All authors refer to contemporary political ideas, thinkers, and works of poetry and prose. To show the intellectual atmosphere and political contexts of the author's subject period, I tried to provide as much information as possible about individuals, works and popular sayings referred to by the authors. If not referred to otherwise, I found this information on *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online* and *COTOJE Online*. *Encyklopedie Universum*. *Ottová Encyklopedie*. *Malá Československá Encyklopedie*. Wishing to avoid a bulk of references to the same websites over some ninety pages, I trust that the reader can verify this "encyclopaedic" information by consulting the mentioned online resources.

I should like to thank, eventually, the following colleagues and friends for their helpful suggestions and comments. I am greatly indebted to Michael Biggins and Greg Shelton, for their suggestions on my first drafts; to Gordana P. Crnković, for her help with the Serbo-Croatian translations; to Galya Diment, for the reference on *Cirk*; to Ryzsard Kott, for his help with the Polish translations; to Alfred R. Mele, for the references on Vergilius and Archimedes; to Vladimir Rannev, for the reference on Fanny Ellsler and to Jaroslava Soldanova, for her suggestions. I thank Carey Ammann and Tomas Ermolaev for proofreading my manuscript and I am honoured that Zdeněk David agreed to write the preface. The errors and shortcomings of this volume are my own.

Josette Baer

St. Petersburg, Russia and Zurich, Switzerland, July 2006



## The Czech Alphabet<sup>15</sup>

|    |   |
|----|---|
| A  | as <b>u</b> in cut  |
| Á  | long as in <b>father</b>  |
| B  | b   |
| C  | ts as in <b>bats</b>  |
| Č  | ch as in <b>church</b>  |
| D  | d; but di = d <sup>i</sup>  |
| Ď  | dj as in <b>duty</b>  |
| E  | as in <b>met</b>  |
| É  | long as in <b>bad</b>   |
| Ě  | be <sup>^</sup> , pe <sup>^</sup> , ve <sup>^</sup> = bje, pje, vje<br>de <sup>^</sup> , te <sup>^</sup> , ne <sup>^</sup> , me <sup>^</sup> = dje, tje, nje, mje |
| F  | f   |
| G  | as in <b>good</b>   |
| H  | as in <b>half</b>   |
| CH | as in <b>Sottish loch</b>   |
| I  | as in <b>bit</b>  |
| Í  | long as in <b>see</b>   |
| J  | y as in <b>yes</b>  |
| K  | k   |
| L  | l   |
| M  | m   |
| N  | n; but ni = n <sup>i</sup>  |
| Ň  | nj as in <b>canyon</b>  |
| O  | as in <b>hot</b>  |
| Ó  | long as in <b>short</b>   |
| P  | p   |
| Q  | kv, not kw  |
| R  | r, rolled in the front of the mouth   |
| Ř  | somewhere between r and sh  |

<sup>15</sup> <http://ufal.mff.cuni.cz/pdt/Support/czech-info.html>; accessed 9 June 2006.

|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| S | as in <b>set</b>            |
| Š | sh as in <b>short</b>       |
| T | t; but ti = t <sup>i</sup>  |
| Ť | tj, similar to <b>tulip</b> |
| U | as in <b>book</b>           |
| Ú | long as in <b>moon</b>      |
| Ů | long as in <b>moon</b>      |
| V | v                           |
| W | v as in <b>van</b>          |