

# Czech Nationalism

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**Popište pojem nacionalismus.**  
**Vysvětlete, v čem podle Vás spočívá český nacionalismus.**  
**Uvedte vývoj českého nacionalismu.**  
**Zaměřte se na českou národní identitu a její znaky.**

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato práce zkoumá původy českého nacionalismu, z čeho vychází a co ho předurčilo. Popisuje pojem nacionalismus, zkoumá vývoj českého nacionalismu, zabývá se jednotlivými obdobími v historii českého národa a poukazuje na významné osobnosti jednotlivého období. Cílem práce je určit, proč je český nacionalismus slabší než nacionalismus některých jiných zemí, jako jsou například Spojené státy americké.

Klíčová slova:

Nacionalismus, národní identita, národní obrození, Rakousko-Uhersko, Československo, Česká republika, Evropská unie, nacismus, komunismus, demokracie, sametová revoluce

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the origins of Czech nationalism, what preceded it and what followed it. It defines term 'nationalism', investigates the development of Czech nationalism and deals with every period in the history of the Czech nation identifying the important figures in each period. The aim of the thesis is to determine why Czech nationalism is weaker than the nationalism of other countries, like the United States of America.

Keywords:

Nationalism, national identity, national renaissance, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Czechoslovakia, Czech Republic, European Union, Nazism, communism, democracy, Velvet Revolution

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## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own and certify that any secondary material used has been acknowledged in the text and listed in the bibliography.

May 1, 2011

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## INTRODUCTION

Czechs lack a strong sense of nationalism. The question is why. The answer might relate to history. For example the United States has existed for a couple of centuries, so its nationalism had an advantage to develop over time. However, the Czech Republic has existed only since 1993 – a huge difference.

Chronologically since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Czechs were part of the Austria-Hungarian Empire, then Czechoslovakia (since 1918), then German occupation from 1939 to 1945, then the Russian occupation from 1948 to 1989. The latter was the communist era. Since 2004 the Czech Republic has also been a part of the European Union, which means losing a part of national identity, too. The next part of the thesis focuses on Czech national characteristics and typical features. It explains who the Czechs are, how they behave, what makes someone Czech and how Czechs define themselves. The final part of the thesis utilizes surveys of Czechs to support the conclusion of the thesis which is that Czechs are not strong nationalists.

## 1 WHAT IS NATIONALISM?

To define nationalism is quite a complicated task. As it is a relative concept, it is better to determine the region and period of time it is connected with. Furthermore, many scholars have come up with their own concepts of nationalism, which often radically differ. For these reasons, it is safe to conclude that nationalism is a construct. Yet, it is clearly a powerful construct, worthy of study.

The concept of nationalism is defined as a political movement and ideology based on the confidence of the exceptionality and superiority of one's nation.<sup>1</sup> It is very close to the concept of patriotism, which means love of country, devotion to the welfare of one's country or the passion which inspires one to serve one's country.<sup>2</sup> As philosopher, sociologist and anthropologist Ernest Gellner suggests, orthodox Marxists treated nationalism as a form of false consciousness, as a class ideology. On the other hand, the Austrian politicians Karl Renner and Otto Bauer argued that it had a truth value based on the reality of national culture which they associated with language.<sup>3</sup>

Gellner said that we should treat nationalism as an "ism", as a body of doctrines, as a political philosophy. Another view on nationalism was that of historians Carlton J. Hayes and Hans Kohn. They treated nationalism as an idea or doctrine but focused less on specific intellectuals, instead connecting the idea to national histories. While Hayes regarded nationalism negatively as irrational and aggressive, Kohn discerned a good as well as a bad side.<sup>4</sup>

Nationalism can be divided geographically into two parts: Eastern and Western, the latter formed within the nation states like Great Britain, France or the USA. Eastern nationalism formed within sub- or multinational states and in its drive for national independence appealed to the nation as an ethnic or language group.<sup>5</sup>

In the mid-1960s there were two major approaches to nationalism: the first one was that nationalism is an aspect of national history, a sentiment associated with the nation (the

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<sup>1</sup> Dictionary of Foreign Words Online, [http://slovník-cizich-slov.abz.cz/web.php/hledat?typ\\_hledani=prefix&cizi\\_slovo=nacionalismus](http://slovník-cizich-slov.abz.cz/web.php/hledat?typ_hledani=prefix&cizi_slovo=nacionalismus) (accessed March 10, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> English Dictionary AllWords.com, [http://www.allwords.com/query.php?SearchType=0&Keyword=patriotism&goquery=Find+it!&Language=ENG&v\\_PageSize=25](http://www.allwords.com/query.php?SearchType=0&Keyword=patriotism&goquery=Find+it!&Language=ENG&v_PageSize=25) (accessed March 10, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

sentiment could take good or bad forms). The best way to understand nationalism was through broad narrative stories of individual nations, perhaps linked to a typology such as that between the Eastern and Western nationalism. The second approach was that nationalism is a modern, irrational doctrine which could acquire sufficient power so as actually to generate nationalist sentiments and even nation-states.<sup>6</sup>

Understanding nationalism began with the ideas and the intellectuals who expressed those ideas, and moved on to consider how they changed the world. Gellner considered nationalism to be a function of modernity. The idea of nationalism was product, not producer, of modernity.<sup>7</sup>

Sociologist Liah Greenfeld claims that “nationalism lies at the basis of this world. It is an umbrella term under which the related phenomena of national identity or nationality and collectiveness based on them are subsumed. Nationalism, which distinguishes nationality from other types of identity, derives from the fact that nationalism locates the source of individual identity within people. People are the bearers of sovereignty, loyalty and collective solidarity. The people are the mass of population whose boundaries are defined in various ways, but which is usually perceived as a homogenous larger community superficially divided by the lines of status, class, locality and ethnicity. The only condition is an idea. Without idea no nationalism is possible.”<sup>8</sup>

Greenfeld understands nationalism as the most common and salient form of particularism in the modern world (particularism is a political principle enabling a state or a minority under a federation to follow own interests or maintain own laws, traditions etc.). In her book ‘Nationalism: 5 Roads to Modernity’ she contends that “there is a relationship between nationalism and democracy. The location of sovereignty within the people and the recognition of the fundamental equality among its various strata which build the substance of the modern national idea are the basic principles of democracy at the same time.”<sup>9</sup>

Generally nationalism spread in connection with the forming of national awareness and efforts to make a national independency by the non-independent ethnic groups (like the Czechs, Poles, Italians, Germans etc.). Later on some of the aspects of nationalism

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: 5 Roads to Modernity* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 3.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 8-10.

were used to form and defend a wide range of totalitarian and dictatorial ideologies and doctrines.

Nationalism also gave rise to a lot of modern national myths, which should encourage national cohesion. The myths and interpretations of history however played an important role by the forming of collective consciousness since the oldest times, thus a long time before the origination of modern nationalism, and continue to fulfill its ambiguous function.

## **2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF CZECH NATIONALISM**

Czech nationalism had various forms during the past. It went through changes, and each period of its history is somehow characteristic and had its own representatives. In the Czech lands there has always been some kind of nationalism, and it adapted to each ideology (democratic, authoritative, communistic, and socialistic as well as fascistic). This thesis aims at the period from the Czech national renaissance till nowadays.

### **2.1 Czech National Renaissance and Enlightenment (1770-1850)**

Generally, national renaissance meant a break-up of feudalism and a start of capitalism. It brought the abolition of serfdom or servitude, and modern nations were created. The subject peoples had to fight furthermore for parity (their own standard language, schools, voting rights etc.) and for political independence.

The Czech national renaissance lasted from 1770 to 1850, when the Czech lands were part of the Habsburg Monarchy. It was the period of Terezian and Joseph II's reforms. Josef II lifted the Jesuit Order in 1773; in 1781 he abolished serfdom and issued the Toleration Patent. It meant religious freedom, and non-Catholic entrepreneurs came to the Czech lands. The Czech economy was in its heyday. However, the German bourgeoisie was economically stronger than the Czech one, so the weak Czech bourgeoisie relied on the Czech aristocracy and the rural people as well. The Czech National Renaissance had democratic character. It had 3 periods: the defensive, preparatory phase (1770-1800), offensive phase (1800-1830) and the formulation of the political programme (1830-1850).

#### **2.1.1 Defensive, preparatory phase (1770-1800)**

The goal of the first phase was to restore the standard Czech language. It was a period of Enlightenment and Classicism. The most significant personalities of this period are Václav Matěj Kramerius, Václav Thám, Karel Hynek Thám, Gelasius Dobner, František Martin Pelcl, Antonín Jaroslav Puchmajer, Václav Kliment Klicpera and Josef Dobrovský.

Václav Thám translated old ancient literature and created old Czech poetry. He is connected with the beginnings of Modern Czech poetry. Václav Matěj Kramerius was the first journalist and issued the imperial-royal newspaper called 'Pražské poštovní noviny' in his publishing house called The Czech Expedition. The Thám brothers and Václav Kliment Klicpera established the first Czech theatre called 'Bouda'. It was a patriotic theatre, and the plays were played only in the Czech language.

Josef Dobrovský (1753 – 1829) was the leading personality of the preparatory phase. He did not believe that the Czech language could become a language of scientists and artists, but it has importance for Czech people. That is why he wanted to restore it. He established a literary history, divided older Czech literature into periods and showed the richness of older Czech literature. He codified Czech standard norm, and he is considered as a founder of Slavonic Studies and Czech national literary history. He wanted to depict truly the history of the Czech nation and to show the significant position of the Czech state in the history of Europe in his literary works. He also wished to lift up the maturity of the culture and Czech language of the past. It was to strengthen patriotism and pride of the Czech nation at that present time.

### **2.1.2 Offensive phase (1800-1830)**

The aim of the second phase was to push through the Czech language as a scientific and artistic language and to create artistically demanding literature. It was the period when pre-romanticism and romanticism were developing in the world. The most significant personalities of this period are Josef Jungmann, František Palacký and Pavel Josef Šafařík.

Josef Jungmann believed that the Czech language will become a language of scientists and artists. He translated world romantic literary works and said that the Czech language will fall into step with the world languages. He translated for example Milton, Goethe or Chateaubriand. From his own authorship, the Czech-German dictionary can be mentioned. In this five-part dictionary he wanted to prove that the Czech language is richer than the other ones. In his other works he wrote about what kind of relationship do the Czechs have to the Czech language and he evaluated the state of the Czech language in the Czech conditions.

František Palacký was a historian and politician. In his work History of the Czech nation from the beginning till 1526 (Habsburg accession to the throne) he priced the era of Hussitism. He fought for equality. He created the political programme called Austro-Slavism, which meant to keep the Habsburg Monarchy as a federation, but each nation being part of it would be equal. He is considered as the father of Czech nationalism and it is predominantly because of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. He read all Palacký's works and referred to him a lot.

Pavel Josef Šafařík started up the study of Slavonic prehistory. He argued that the Slavs belong to the ancient inhabitants of Europe.

### 2.1.3 Formulation of the political programme (1830-1850)

The most distinctive personalities of the last phase of the Czech National Renaissance were Karel Havlíček Borovský, František Palacký and Ján Kollár. They all wanted the literature to keep following the national interests and to catch up with the world literature. And of course to portray the real world with the social problems as well (like the authors Karel Jaromír Erben or Božena Němcová did).

František Ladislav Čelakovský was a collector of folk verbal art. He expressed admiration for this kind of art and for common people. The main topic of his works was to show the life and mentality of the Czech nation. Among other, he also wrote about Russia, because in Russia he saw the support of his free nation.

Another important personality was Ján Kollár. He was Slovak. He enforced the idea of Slavonic mutuality, too. He realised the difference between the famous past times of the Slavs and the present day. He wanted to boost and save the Slavs and the only way for him to achieve this was to join to Russia and hope for their help.

In this period also the Manuscripts of Zelená Hora and Dvůr Králové were written. However, they were fakes, which was lately proved for example by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Otakar Hostinský, Jan Gebauer and others. The manuscripts should prove that the Slavs have the same historical pieces of work as the Germans. The Manuscript of Zelená Hora should come from the 10<sup>th</sup> century but in fact it was created in 1818. The Manuscript of Dvůr Králové should come from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but was written in 1817. The probable authors are Václav Hanka and Josef Linda. The substance of these fakes was to enhance the national confidence. The manuscripts as well as the disputes over them popularized Czech culture and notably helped to its spread. The struggle for the manuscripts stirred up seeking of further ancient literary texts and manuscripts and further facilitated development of art. They inspired a lot of other authors like Palacký, Šafařík, Smetana, Mánes, Zeyer etc.

### 2.1.4 Revolutionary year 1848

In some countries it is also known as the Spring of Nations. The revolution began in France and spread over the whole Europe. In France the February revolution led to the creation of the Second Republic. Only the rich people could vote and the poor people were very unsatisfied. People all over Europe were looking for a change in politics and governments of their nations. Technological changes created new ways of life for working class and press spread new values and ideas. There was also a big potato famine.

The dramatic events that happened in 1848 are considered as the first Czech revolution. According to Czech historians Milan Hlavačka and Jiří Kořalka, most of the uprisings emerged because of nationalistic reasons. There were a lot of hidden problems needed to be solved, like the introduction of constitutionality, involving more people in politics or dwelling on public affairs. Key personality for general public was Karel Havlíček Borovský. He has promoted important opinions and reforms already before 1848, particularly in the manner of Ireland.<sup>10</sup>

However, there is no doubt that the most influential personality at that time was František Palacký. He was primarily known as a historian who pressed for independence of Czech nation and who emphasized its important role in Europe. But he was politically active, too. As one of a few, he pursued the then situation in Austria as well as in Germany, because the matter of Germany played an important role in the Czech revolution. The existing German confederation should turn to a German nation state. Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and other parts were considered as parts of the German confederation and that is why Palacký was invited to Frankfurt. He was invited as a relevant representative of Austria and Czech lands. However, some did not know who Czechs are. They considered them as a kind of oppressed group of people. That is why Palacký declined the invitation to Frankfurt. For his whole life he followed evidence to peculiarity and distinctiveness of Czech nation. He argued that he is a Czech, not a German and he does not want to be involved in creating this German nation state.<sup>11</sup>

He realised that Czech environment is not sufficient for creating an independent state, so he supported Austria, but not unconditionally. The condition was that Austria will turn into a federation of equal nationalities and religion. It is unbelievable that voice of one intellectual influenced the whole movement for a long time. His brilliance and genius lies in exact timing.<sup>12</sup>

Czech Germans were surprised by his declination. They did not suppose that Czechs could become an independent nation next to German nation. That is why Palacký was rejected by them – he could not understand that Czechs could gain advantage by joining with German nation. He refused this view and Czech public stood up for him.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Česká televize, Historický magazín, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/10095687448-historicky-magazin/208452801280011/> (accessed April 28, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



Up to 1848, Czech society has not differentiated a lot, nor have conservatives expressed themselves. The year 1848 can be considered as a catalyst of differentiation of particular movements. Beginnings of the Czech revolution were very calm, there was no fighting in Prague (unlike in Wien or Berlin in March). It had an air of a petition movement which was successful. The petitions were answered and there was a clear programme to call an assembly election, not on the basis of estates, but on liberal basis. The situation in spring 1848 became complicated because of Frankfurt, and after that Czech – German national conflict was sharpening.<sup>14</sup>

According to development of the revolt it is obvious that it had no organisation, no programme and that it was more or less accidental. The causes are more psychological than historical and the consequences of the uprising in June were fatal for next course of the revolution in Czech lands. There are indications that the uprising was provoked. The result of all this was a religious freedom and equality (not only tolerance), new political system (which was constitutional and liberal), new political culture and recovery of autonomy.<sup>15</sup>

Publicist Jan Čulík claims that extreme nationalism ruled in Austria and then in Austria-Hungary. The revolution resulted from the dissatisfaction with feudalism and absolutism. It was unsuccessful, because instead of unification of the citizens against the emperor in order to gain democratic freedoms, all the ethnic groups had an unbelievably cruel quarrel. That is why the Bach's absolutism won.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.2 The Austro – Hungarian Empire (1867-1918)

The Austro – Hungarian Empire lasted from 1867 to 1918 and it was created as a transformation from the Habsburg Monarchy on the basis of the Austro – Hungarian Settlement. It was the reign of Franz Josef I. The Czech lands were part of a bigger unit along with other nations. However, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some signs of possible change occurred. It was thanks in part to Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the main issue in the Czech lands was the increasing tension between the Czech population and the German minority, living mainly in the west part, later known as the Sudetenland. Inspired by the continuing campaign in

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<sup>14</sup> History World,  
<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?groupid=2617&HistoryID=ac40&gtrack=pthc>  
(accessed March 10, 2011)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Britské listy, <http://blisty.cz/art/49566.html> (accessed March 10, 2011).

Hungary for a Magyar political identity within the Habsburg Empire, the Slavs in the adjacent regions of Moravia, Bohemia and Slovakia began to aim for something similar. But their hopes were dashed in 1867, when the emperor Francis Joseph gave in to Magyar demands and set up the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary.<sup>17</sup>

The border between the separate kingdoms of Austria and Hungary ran between Bohemia and Slovakia. The Slavs were now subject to Germans in Austria north of this line, and to Magyars in Hungary south of it. In Bohemia and Moravia this setback intensified the local struggle for the Czech values against the German predominance. Gradually, when the Czechs became more prosperous and literate, significant advances were made - particularly in the use of the Czech language in education and in the courts of law. In 1882, the Czech departments in the long-established German university in Prague became a separate and independent Czech university. One of its first professors was a philosopher, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.<sup>18</sup>

To a certain extent, the situation now was reversed. The Czechs were afraid of Germanization in the last decades, and yet the Germans feared Czechization. Over the years the both sides had no contact and ignored each other. After 1890, the relations between Czechs and Germans were a subject of constant conflicts and disagreements, which were at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century turning into a serious political crisis. The attempts to find acceptable solutions all failed and were being postponed for another time. Serious conflicts of interests were thinkable only on the periphery of the civilization, not in the peaceful Europe. Before 1914, only few people admitted to a possible break-up in Central Europe. Finally it happened, and the year 1914 was the beginning of huge upheavals with immense consequences not only for Europe.<sup>19</sup>

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the world knew about the Czech lands and took it into account as a part of Europe. However, the way to a separate Czech state was still very difficult and it seemed that also very distant.<sup>20</sup>

Most of the Czechs took a stand of refusal to World War I. The Czech soldiers sent to the frontiers evinced it most strongly. They were absolutely not enthusiastic about sacrificing themselves for the emperor. The official press blamed them for cowardice, but

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Mikuláš Teich, *Bohemia in History* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1998), 210-212.

<sup>20</sup> Alexander Ort, *Češi a Evropa* (Klatovy; AgAkcent s.r.o., 2008), 15.

it was a manifestation of their national consciousness and belief. After some time, it appeared that the superiority would gradually move to the side of the Triple Entente (France, Russia and Great Britain) and that the victory will bring freedom and independency for the Czech nation. It was not easy to surrender the political orientation for modernization of Austria from the times of Palacký and to go the route of its crushing. But the analysis of the international situation showed that the inner conflicts in the Austria-Hungary reached such a dimension, that no other end could be expected. The only way out of the given situation was the fight for a free and independent Czech state. The major initiator of this step was Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, fully supported by a Slovak M. R. Štefánik.<sup>21</sup>

The diplomatic acceptance of Czechoslovakia already on the eve of the end of World War I was a huge success of the resistance and an appreciation of the qualities of the temporary Czechoslovakian government on the diplomatic field at the same time.<sup>22</sup>

As said before, Czechs were totally paralyzed by the war and did not share enthusiasm for it. Parliamentary institutions did not function; the political parties stopped most of their activities. All public, economic, cultural and political life was subordinated to the needs and aims of the war.<sup>23</sup>

Activities of the small groups of Czech émigrés partly substituted the enforced Czech passivity. Among them Masaryk, who represented the Realists, became a leading personality. In 1915, he took up and reformulated the original political programme of Palacký and Rieger, he modified it to the current situation and chose an active resistance instead of the passive one.<sup>24</sup>

For a long time, this programme was only an idea and its realization depended on the result of the war and other circumstances. The collapse of Russian tsarism in 1917 also had an impact on the fall of the Central European monarchies and its political systems. By the time of the defeat of Central Powers in 1918, the programme was accepted by decisive political forces in Czech society. At the end of the war, new perspectives were open for the Czech society.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>23</sup> Mikuláš Teich, *Bohemia in History* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1998), 212.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

In April 1918, Italy held a “Congress of Oppressed Nationalities” in Rome. The representatives of the Czechs and Slovaks together with South Slavs raised their demands for self-determination there. Under the impact of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the United States shifted its position and expressed the earned sympathy with the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav desire for freedom. By then Masaryk was in the United States, where he scored a diplomatic success. He and the American Czech and Slovak organizations signed an agreement in Pittsburgh on May 30, 1918 promising to work for a common state with federal institutions and a separate Slovak diet.<sup>26</sup>

On January 6, 1918 the Czech Reichsrat and diet deputies issued a declaration demanding the independence of the Czech nation with complete democratic and social rights and the equality of all citizens in the frontier of its historic lands. It was the strongest domestic support for Masaryk yet.<sup>27</sup>

On October 27, 1918 the Austrian authorities accepted Wilson’s conditions and asked for an armistice. The news reached Prague on October 28 at 10 a. m. The interim leaders of the National Committee organized a meeting for that evening in the Municipal House. When the National Committee issued the first law, a Slovak was present. Independently of events in Prague, on October 30 a meeting of Slovak leaders created a Slovak National Council and asserted their right to self-determination.<sup>28</sup>

The negotiators in Geneva were approving the exiles’ actions abroad and creating a government and in Prague the Austro-Hungarian military surrendered authority to the National Committee. In Geneva they agreed on a democratic Czechoslovak republic with Masaryk as a president and Beneš as a foreign minister. The delegation returned to Prague on November 5 and on November 11 Emperor Charles announced his withdrawal. The next day, Austria was declared a republic and announced its annexation to Germany. Four hundred years of association between the Czech lands and the House of Habsburg were formally at an end.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Hugh LeCaine Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown* (Stanford; Hoover Institution Press, 2004), 169.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 171-172.

### 2.3 Czechoslovakia – the First Republic (1918-1938)

Hugh LeCaine Agnew says that “the new state that came into being on October 28, 1918 brought with it many legacies from Austria-Hungary, not all negative. Czechoslovakia inherited the lion’s share of Austro-Hungarian industry, but the Austrian and Hungarian parts of the country reflected different levels of economic development. Finally, Austria-Hungary’s collapse raised security issues for those who were submerged. Coping with this historical inheritance demanded time. Masaryk remarked in the early 1930s that it will take thirty more years of peaceful, rational and efficient progress till the country will be secure.” However, Czechoslovakia’s time was up well before then.<sup>30</sup>

The transfer of power to the representatives of National Committee in Prague on October 28, 1918 took place very democratically. This change of situation was respected by the imperial vicegerents as well as by the commanding Austro-Hungarian officers. Czechoslovakia was generally considered as a stabilization factor of the European policy and was called a democratic island in the middle of Europe by the press.<sup>31</sup>

Due to its democratic character, Czechoslovakia became an asylum for emigrants from surrounding undemocratic states. The idea of “Central European Democratic Union”, which was prepared at the end of the war in the USA by T. G. Masaryk and which was introduced to President Wilson, did not come true.<sup>32</sup>

Among the many factors that influenced the young Masaryk one was particularly decisive – the tradition of 19<sup>th</sup> century Austrian philosophy. Especially important in regard to this were his relations to his teachers and fellow students, which contributed significantly to the shaping of his ideas.<sup>33</sup>

The vision of democratic Europe, the continent of peace and the cooperation among nations were the basis of his philosophical belief. During World War I, in the years 1914-1918, he laid the foundations for the establishment and development of the Czechoslovak Republic. He was elected president four times and acted as a president for 17 years.<sup>34</sup>

He very sensitively responded to the danger of fascism, he responded to the arrival of Hitler’s fascism in Germany. He criticized Hitler in his book *Hitler’s Credo*. He described a critical analysis of the racist and chauvinistic foundations of Hitler’s programme. Besides

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>31</sup> Alexander Ort, *Češi a Evropa* (Klatovy; AgAkcent s.r.o., 2008), 19.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>33</sup> Josef Novák, *On Masaryk* (Amsterdam ; Editions Rodopi B. V., 1988), 1-2.

<sup>34</sup> Monika Prokopová, *T. G. Masaryk* (Norderstedt; GRIN Verlag, 2007), 3-4.

other things, he declared warningly against Hitler's character. He considered him a particularly dangerous psychological type. In all of his writings issued still before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century we meet with his broad horizons, and we can see that even then he was able to perceive the dangerous evils of that time. These were nationalism, racism and later on fascism. He lined up against these and propagated humanistic ideals (based on the Christian faith in his case).<sup>35</sup>

As a president, he was extremely popular. However, he eventually found himself turning into a figurehead. He had a great deal of luck when he was alive, but little since he died in 1937. A year after his death, Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia and Masaryk became a democratic patriot not to be spoken of.<sup>36</sup>

He revered America and what it stands for. He created the only Central European state based on American democratic principles and able to withstand fascist tendencies throughout the 1930s, his life and ideas are known only to a tiny number of Americans, and to almost none under the age of 60.<sup>37</sup>

On the other side, Masaryk was in many ways unattractive – he may appear didactic, self-righteous and self-aggrandizing to someone. But we must see his wisdom, courage, radical criticism, integrity and humanity. His failures are part and parcel of his greatness.<sup>38</sup>

Another instrumental personality in the formation of Czechoslovakia was Edvard Beneš. After World War I, he actively participated as a supporter of Masaryk in domestic anti-Austrian resistance and helped to organize resistance organization called 'Maffie'. His major task was to procure connection between Prague and Masaryk, staying in Switzerland. After 1915 he went abroad, too. He lived in Paris, where he organized external anti-Austrian resistance and where he took part in propagation of Czechoslovak political programme. In 1916 he was involved in creation of Czechoslovak national council and one of his major achievements was acceptance of this council as a representative of new Czechoslovak state by France, England and Italy in 1918.<sup>39</sup>

After declaration of Czechoslovak independence on October 28, 1918 he became minister of foreign affairs. From 1921 to 1922 he held the post of prime minister and in

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>36</sup> Karel Čapek, *Talks with T. G. Masaryk* (North Haven; Catbird Press, 1995), 6-8.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>39</sup> Životopisy online, <http://zivotopisyonline.cz/edvard-benes-2851884-391948-tvurce-ceskoslovenske-zahranicni-politiky/> (accessed May 1, 2011).

1935, after Masaryk's abdication, he was elected second Czechoslovak president. After European powers forced Czechoslovakia to accept humiliating Munich dictate in September 1938, he went to London exile. Emil Hácha became new president of occupied Czechoslovakia.<sup>40</sup>

As a result of the Anschluss of Austria to Germany (in March 1938) the threat to Czechoslovakia's independence became imminent. Half a year later the Munich sealed the fate of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia.<sup>41</sup> The Munich Agreement took place in Munich on September 30, 1938 and the representatives of 4 countries Neville Chamberlain (United Kingdom), Édouard Daladier (France), Adolf Hitler (Germany) and Benito Mussolini (Italy) agreed on resigning Czechoslovak border areas inhabited by Germans to Germany.

In total, it led to the annexation of extensive border regions of Czechoslovakia to Germany, Poland and Hungary. As a result, Czechoslovakia lost 30% of its territory and more than a third of the population at the same time as about 450 000 inhabitants were expelled or fled from their home in the borderlands into the interior of the country. Severe losses of industrial and agricultural capacity were incurred as well as vital fortifications were forfeited in the border regions that Germany annexed.<sup>42</sup>

## **2.4 Second Republic (1938-1939), German occupation and Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia (1939-1945)**

Under these circumstances the life of the rest of the state's territory, the so-called Second Republic of Czechoslovakia, was doomed. The Nazi leader Adolf Hitler was still not satisfied. On March 13, 1939 he forced Josef Tiso (leader of the Slovak majority political party) in Berlin to declare the independency of Slovakia under the German protection, which then happened.<sup>43</sup>

The day after that, he welcomed the president of Czecho-Slovakia Emil Hácha and announced to him that the Czech lands will be occupied by the German military the next day. He enforced the command for Czech soldiers not to put up resistance out of him. He also threatened with bombing Prague and by this he enforced the president's request, so that he will accept the Czech lands under his protection. On March 15, 1939 the occupation

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Mikuláš Teich, *Bohemia in History* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1998), 267-269.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Alexander Ort, *Češi a Evropa* (Klatovy; AgAkcent s.r.o., 2008), 28.

of the rest of the Czechoslovakia by the German army occurred and the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia was declared the next day.<sup>44</sup>

The impact of the occupation of the Czech lands was for its inhabitants clear – it was necessary to find ways how to get rid of it, because it led to the elimination of the Czech nation. People were acutely aware of the situation and of the puppet position of president Hácha, having no presidential powers.<sup>45</sup>

In the protectorate, a lot of patriot groups willing to help the arising domestic resistance movements occurred. It was hard for them to remain undercover and live in illegality. A lot of Czech social, public enlightenment, cultural and sport organizations offered an opportunity to maintain the national consciousness and sometimes a space for covering the resistance activities.<sup>46</sup>

Thanks to the resistance movements and the Czechoslovakian exile government, the partial recognition was gained in 1940. After Soviet Union entered World War II in 1941, the government gradually managed to prove the invalidity of the Munich conference.<sup>47</sup>

In 1942, Beneš organized from exile the assassination of the Reichs-protektor Reinhard Heydrich. As revenge, the Nazis burnt down villages Lidice and Ležáky. This act provoked a huge outrage in the world. Nazi occupation revealed its real face, which a considerable part of European public still did not want to believe.<sup>48</sup>

The Czechoslovakian resistance contributed to the awareness of creating anti-Hitler's coalition of all democratic powers in order to end the war. Declaration of United Nations from January 1, 1942 was the first act of this policy. In 1945, the United Nations Organization was established.<sup>49</sup>

## 2.5 Third Republic (1945-1948)

The renewal of Czechoslovakia was from the point of view of international law not such a big problem. As the majority of European states, Czechoslovakia decided to create new state arrangement on the basis of democratic principles. Czechoslovakia had an advantage that it could pick up the threads of the pre-war period.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 34.



After the war, Czechoslovakia decided to function as a connection between the East and West, ensuring the world peace, because cooperation without problems was not easy. The after war peace euphoria did not last for a long time though. Instead of peaceful Europe, the Cold War began.<sup>51</sup>

The post-war economic revitalization of Czechoslovakia was quite successful, but it was soon after the division of power in Europe connected to the bloc led by the Soviet Union, which determined the conditions and possibilities of further development in the long term. The newly emerging blocs extraordinarily complicated the situation of the small states, which were forced to accept the powers. This led to violation of democracy inside the state and it took a lot of years to take remedial actions.<sup>52</sup>

In 1943 Beneš concluded a new treaty of alliance with the Soviet Union, which he considered as a guarantee of Czechoslovak postwar independence. He did not believe Western powers any more, Munich was still a fresh blow for him. He started to discuss postwar form of Czechoslovakia with Czechoslovak communists. In 1945 he was reelected president. He strived for fair and parliamentary system based on democracy. In February 1948 there was a political crisis provoked by communists and ministers of democratic parties offered their resignation. Beneš accepted it and authorized Klement Gottwald to form a new government. On June 7, 1948 Beneš abdicated, after he resigned to sign new constitution in May, and Gottwald became next president of Czechoslovakia.

In the first postwar elections in 1946, the communists and Gottwald's party got 40% of votes. They urgently started to work on seizure of the whole country. Before February 1948, they managed to occupy one third of the army and kept a grip on key military reporting. They gained important positions by the police in secret service and in State and Public Security. February 1948 crowned the strategic planning. The two remaining political parties lost influence and the purges started overtly.<sup>53</sup>

## **2.6 Era of Communism (1948-1989), Russian occupation (1968)**

The process of integration of Czechoslovakia into the Soviet Union was set by the events that led to the start of the World War II, the subsequent nationalist socialistic regime and finally the result of this war, which was the entering of the Soviet Red Army to Central

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Jan Brabec, *Nemilosrdné příběhy českých dějin* (Český Těšín; Národní divadlo v edici Abonent ND, 2006), 77.

Europe. It should be mentioned that neither communism nor national socialism were the products of the Russian cogitation, but both of these collectivistic ideologies are products of Western European way of thinking, the routes of which date back to Judaism and originated in Germany. The Russian revolutionary intellectuals accepted communism with regard to admiration for Marx's and Engel's geniality. Communism was imposed upon the Russian inhabitants in a bloody civil war and in underdeveloped Russia it degraded to its vulgar form known as Bolshevism.<sup>54</sup>

The geopolitical position of Czechoslovakia along with other influences led to the fact that the communists in Czechoslovakia gained total power just by using democracy to their advantage in February 1948, after three years of postwar democracy. But how could it happen that the Czech nation was communized? There are a lot of causes – collectivism, Dickens's capitalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Pan-Slavism, Paris Commune and the influence of the communist revolution in Russia, the so called October Revolution. Its ideas were brought here by some Czechoslovakian legionaries, captives, and even Red Army soldiers.<sup>55</sup>

The extremely left-wing convictions, communism and Nazism were enormously supported by the economic crisis, which with the Western powers could not cope with for three years. The interparty conflicts, disgusting quarrels in the parliament, corruption and inability to solve problems led to the admiration for the totalitarian regimes. Munich Agreement was seen as a fall of democratic Czechoslovak state and as a betrayal of the Western powers and the total victory of the Soviet Union was for many people evidence of the advantages of the communist system.<sup>56</sup>

The collectivization of property caused an unprecedented decrease of respect for property and for all values. People stopped to esteem the values created by our ancestors. These values were not their any longer. The buildings stayed shabby, because now it was the property of the state, not of the people.<sup>57</sup>

However, most of the people collaborated with this system, although they did not agree with it. In 1968, the Prague Spring came. It came to the Czech lands from Slovakia. It was an effort to political release, but it was suppressed by the military invasion of the

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<sup>54</sup> Václav Makrlík, *Češi a Evropa* (Praha; Vydavatelství Ideál, 2007), 77.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-78.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

Warsaw Pact troops and Czechoslovakia was then under the military occupation. Some of the armed forces stayed till the Velvet Revolution in 1989.

The book *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation* tries to capture the wider causality of the fall of the communist regime in the Czechoslovakia and the subsequent transformation of the Czech society. The author Ladislav Holý convincingly demonstrates that these events were generally shared notions about the Czech collective identity and culture. He understands the Czech culture as a set of shared cultural implications, which is permanently strengthened, renewed and modified through discourses – public debates in media as well as in people's everyday communication.<sup>58</sup>

Communism brought strict division into a private sphere and a public sphere, represented by the state or by the communist regime, and the tensions between them. The alienation among the public sphere and state on one hand and the private sphere with the majority of people on the other hand came out during the demonstrations against the regime in 1988 and 1989. The participants of these demonstrations only rarely formulated some political requirements, instead of that they protested against the regime in the name of the nation – they sang the national anthem, waved the flags and chanted slogans, which dubbed the repressive state power in the role of betrayers and oppressors of the nation (in the role of non-Czechs.)<sup>59</sup>

According to Holý, the demonstrations against the regime expressed the disagreement with the decline of general and lasting values defined in the national terms above all. Then they called for a change of the political system. By the analysis of these protest actions it is possible to distinguish the specifically Czech cultural construction of the relationship among an individual, the nation and the state. It means to reveal with what contents the Czechs fill the concepts of a nation, an individual and a state and what place do they attach to these categories in the process of perception and everyday experience with the world. In the Czech environment, the nation is understood as collectiveness blessed with own will and interests and takes precedence over the will and interests of other nations.<sup>60</sup>

Within the last years of the communist reign in Czechoslovakia, the dilemma between the totalitarian nationalism and the pluralism of democratic ideology was solved to the benefit of nationalism. It was the reason why the pre-November demonstrations, the main

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<sup>58</sup> WebHumanita.cz, <http://www.webhumanita.cz/?a=reviews&rid=8> (accessed March 15, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

demand of which was freedom, were mostly nationalistic and they did not deal with specific political means and structures to gain the freedom at all. The demonstrators longed for the freedom of the nation, which the hostile anti-national state denied them. The free nation automatically means free individuals. At the end of the 80's in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the communist state – primarily for the sake of brutal interventions against the demonstrators – became quickly and for the majority of people the enemy of the nation. The state stopped to be a national state and a tool for satisfying the welfare of the nation and had to be, in the interest of this nation, destroyed. The arrangement of the relationships among an individual, the nation and the state receded too much from the ideal embedded in the Czech culture on the eve of the revolution and the radical criticism of the communist regime was led by the effort to assimilate the relationships among the individuals, nation and the state for this desired ideal.<sup>61</sup>

## **2.7 Velvet Revolution (1989), the Czech Republic (since 1993), Era of Democracy**

The communist system had a major problem: a human-individual, who is biologically equipped to prefer his own satisfaction to the catering of the needs of the team. All the integration formations like the Third Reich, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Turkish Empire or Russian Tsarist Empire had something in common, which brought them to disintegration. They made violent integrations of states and nations, made efforts to suppress wide groups of inhabitants, often the whole nations. The state (collective) was always above an individual. Democracy and protection of human rights were missing.<sup>62</sup>

In the Czech lands, there was an informal civil initiative called Charter 77, which criticised the political and state power for not respecting the human and civil rights. This initiative acted in the years from 1977 to 1992. It is considered as one of the most significant actions of opposition to the pre-November regime in the era of normalization after the year 1968. The first signatories were Jan Patočka, Zdeněk Mlynář, Pavel Kohout, Ludvík Vaculík, Jiří Hájek or Václav Havel.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 became a symbol of revolutionary changes in the Central and Eastern Europe. In Czechoslovakia, an impulse for far-reaching changes was

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Václav Makrlík, *Češi a Evropa* (Praha; Vydavatelství Ideál, 2007), 82-83.

the police crackdown on the officially permitted demonstration of students for 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of closing Czech universities on November 17, 1939.<sup>63</sup>

In the lead of various protests and demonstrations stood the Civic forum led by Václav Havel, who was very popular particularly abroad. The Czechoslovakian events had favourable responses in the world and the European public was wondering, how is it possible that the youth and students who did not know democracy managed to behave so democratically, culturally and in such a civilized way.<sup>64</sup>

The communist government ended and it was clear that there is a need to form a new government which would take Czechoslovakia from the crisis situation. In the elections in 1989, the former dissident Václav Havel became by a solid vote the new Czechoslovakian president. The revolutionary events which happened before the end of the year 1989 in Czechoslovakia were then called by the world public the “Velvet Revolution”, because everything went without fighting and bloodshed, which at that time happened in other countries in the Eastern Europe and Balkan.<sup>65</sup>

Communism is over, now we have democracy. Democracy and nationalism are often compared as twins. They originated in modern time and with similar goal. Nationalism provided people the experience of common identity and unity regardless of the social classes. Liberal democracy then gave people the political system.<sup>66</sup>

Democratic institutions need for their running specific economical and social prerequisites above all. Studying the birth of democracy in England set off the long-term character of evolution as a guarantee of democratic stability. The major condition for successful parliamentary democracy is the existence of strong urban middle classes.<sup>67</sup>

American political scientists Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba came to the conclusion that for creating and successful functioning of the democratic institutions the attitudes, beliefs and practical experience of everyday life are crucial. Political scientist Samuel P. Huntington developed the idea that the changeover to modern democracy lies in the deepening differentiation of political institutions and in gaining specific roles. Political scientist Dankwart Rustow reduced structural preconditions of the existence of democracy to only one – national unity. The point is that the majority of inhabitants cannot have

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<sup>63</sup> Alexander Ort, *Češi a Evropa* (Klatovy; AgAkcent s.r.o., 2008), 47.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>66</sup> Martina Klicperová-Baker, *Demokratická kultura v České republice* (Praha; Academia, 2007), 122.

<sup>67</sup> Vladimíra Dvořáková, *O přechodech k demokracii* (Praha; Sociologické nakladatelství, 1994), 13-15.

doubts to which community they belong and want to belong. Democracy is a process of adaptation, certain solution of conflicts.<sup>68</sup>

### 2.7.1 Dissolution of Czechoslovakia

On January 1, 1993 Czechoslovakia divided into two separate parts, although the political parties did not have it in their programmes in the elections in 1992. The Czech government led by economists was convinced that without Slovakia we would rank among the advanced states. The dissolution of Czechoslovakia passed in a democratic and cultural way, without armed combat.<sup>69</sup>

The dissolution was not primarily the consequence of emancipation efforts and patriotism of Slovak or Czech nation. According to public opinion polls from 1993, Czechs and Slovaks have never taken a stand for state separateness. Especially inhabitants from the borderland were against. The main causes of the dissolution were historical, then it were the differences between political culture of both nations, state problems, adaptation crisis during transition to democracy and market economy and new type of nationalism after the fall of communism. The propulsive motors in 1992 were the concrete personal interests of protagonists of the 'Movement for democratic Slovakia'.<sup>70</sup>

The historical causes were clear. The Czechoslovak nation was just an ideological construction. The common state of Czechs and Slovaks did not become an environment, where attitudes of both nations would get closer. The Slovaks did not identify sufficiently with Czechoslovakia and the Czecho-Slovak sense of belonging did not arise.<sup>71</sup>

The differences between Czech and Slovak political culture found expression in apparent divergences of attitudes and opinions on pluralistic political system, economic reforms and market economy and in different voting behaviour in these two countries. In 1989, before the fall of communism, the political, economic and socio-psychological situation in Slovakia was different then in Bohemia. The Slovaks felt danger arising from national hostility to a much higher extent than the Czechs and high percentage of the Slovaks feared the danger of outbreak of civil war as a consequence of inability to solve the problem of constitutional law arrangement of Czechoslovakia. Socioeconomic

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 16-20.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 48-49.

<sup>70</sup> Příčiny rozdělení Československa: analýza po 10 letech,  
[http://www.tahace.cz/vodicka\\_net/historcas2.pdf](http://www.tahace.cz/vodicka_net/historcas2.pdf) (accessed April 29, 2011).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

conditions were in Slovakia, too. There was also a different attitude towards market economy and privatization. Czechs were of the opinion that it is necessary, but in Slovakia only one third of the population held that opinion. These attitudes totally predestined behaviour of voters in both parts of Czechoslovakia. Czechs were for reforms, Slovaks against. It caused the fact that Czech and Slovak representation, elected in 1992, had diametrically different political and national economic concepts. Result of the elections boosted the Czecho-Slovak dilemma, which over the few years led to the political decision to divide the common state.<sup>72</sup>

Transition from centrally planned economy to market economy and from totalitarian regime to pluralistic system was necessarily accompanied by economic and social crisis. New beginning meant worsening the living standards of population and it strengthened social problems. This development was in Slovakia more dramatic than in Bohemia. Economic troubles in Slovakia led to rejection of the market-economic reforms organized from Prague.<sup>73</sup>

The institutional problem was grounded in fact that the acceptance of new democratic and functional constitution did not succeed soon enough, i.e. immediately at the beginning of 1990s. The constitution from 'Prague Spring' era, which continued to be valid after the revolution, was ineligible as an institution, which should facilitate finding of democratic consensus. According to its regulations of prohibition of majoritarianism, it was always necessary to create a Czecho-Slovak coalition in the parliament. That was also the circumstance, because of which Czechoslovakia broke down in 1992.<sup>74</sup>

Czech and Slovak political elites bear together responsibility for the fact that up to 1992 the consensus of constitutional law settlement between both nations was not reached and that the opportunity to create adequate constitutional mechanisms remained missed. However, active propelling force of the dissolution were Slovak politics – leaders of 'Movement for democratic Slovakia' in the lead with Vladimír Mečiar. This movement averted a re-election of the only strong integrative personality Václav Havel being the president of the republic. The movement required after the elections in 1992 full sovereignty and international law subjectivity for Slovakia, which in fact equalled to the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

demand of the dissolution of the state. Czech side could not do anything with the process of splitting in view of structure of power and situation based on constitutional law.<sup>75</sup>

The young Czech Republic is inherently connected with its first president Václav Havel. Democracy is relatively a new form of government in the Czech lands, likewise the Czech Republic itself is quite a new state. It is quite possible that the European Union threatens its continued existence.

## 2.8 Being part of the European Union (since 2004)

The Czech Republic submitted an application for joining the European Union in 1996. In the year 1997 it became part of NATO. Joining the EU came to pass on May 1, 2004, and it was approved by the Czech public.<sup>76</sup>

The EU membership strengthened the position of the Czech Republic in Europe and in the international politics in general. In the same time the Czech Republic has to submit to the accepted and approved laws and principles of the common life of the union, but simultaneously it has the right to actively participate in working out all the new laws and to make some of the measures impossible.<sup>77</sup>

The European Union is a community of European states based on the idea of unity in divergences. The European Union joins large and small states, which decided to co-operate closely in the political and economical area and to voluntarily share their sovereignty in the interest of joint action. It unites states with their own histories, cultures and traditions, which have a lot of common attributes but which also differ in a lot of ways.<sup>78</sup>

The goal of European integration is to gradually remove barriers among the European states, to create a continent of peace for Europe and to exclude war as a means of solving conflicts. Other intentions are to create a common market, monetary union, increasing of living standards and to cooperate in the area of foreign, safety, defensive and internal policies.<sup>79</sup>

The European Union has some authority or powers, and provides certain benefits to the citizens of the Czech Republic. 10 major items should be pinpointed: the right to stay and settle in all EU member countries, right to find a job and to work in all EU member

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Alexander Ort, *Češi a Evropa* (Klatovy; AgAkcent s.r.o., 2008), 49-50.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>78</sup> Miroslav Had, *Česká republika v Evropské unii* (Praha; Linde a.s., 2006), 13.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.



counties, right of self-employed people to provide services in all EU member countries, right of the Czech citizens to work in the EU institutions, favourable conditions for average wage and salaries growth, strengthening of the rights of a Czech consumer, higher protection of proprietary rights, strengthened position of employees, higher level of environmental protection and higher support of small and middle business.<sup>80</sup>

The common currency of European Union called Euro was created for strengthening the economic position of the EU in the world and to bring benefits for the states and citizens. The benefits are low level of inflation, low interest rate, saving of transaction costs connecting with exchange, easier comparing of prices in individual states etc.<sup>81</sup>

In Keith Cameron's book *National Identity* it is said that "as the European Union becomes more unified through its legislation and interstate trade and movement, there is a centrifugal movement in a number of member states as individuals begin to feel threatened and to think that they are losing their national identity."<sup>82</sup> By joining the EU the Czech Republic somehow evinced that it wants to be part of the European formation along with other European countries and to be part of the whole, not to be individualistic. This step is very significant for the country and nationality. It is an important milestone in Czech history and the Czech Republic had to realize that in the future it might lose a part of its national identity and one day maybe act as the United States of America. Czech descendants will perhaps call themselves Europeans, not Czechs. On the other hand, some do not believe in the long duration of the EU, because of some problems that occurred. Time alone will tell.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>82</sup> Keith Cameron, *National Identity* (Exeter; Intellect Books, 1999), 1.

### 3 CZECH NATIONAL IDENTITY

#### 3.1 National identity

Liah Greenfeld contends that “in a world divided into particular communities, national identity tends to be associated and confounded with a community’s sense of uniqueness and the qualities contributing to it. These qualities (social, political, cultural in the narrow sense, or ethnic) therefore acquire a great significance in the formation of specific nationalism.”<sup>83</sup>

She also stresses that “national identity should not be confused with other types of identity, and it cannot be explained in general terms. It is not a generic identity; it is specific. It is often perceived as a reflection or awareness of possession of “primordial” or inherited group characteristics, components of ethnicity, such as language, customs, territorial affiliation, and physical type. An essential characteristic of any identity is that it is necessarily the view the concerned actor has of himself or herself. Identity is perception.”<sup>84</sup>

Anthony D. Smith in his book ‘National Identity’ asserts that “nationalism provides perhaps the most compelling identity myth in the modern world, but it comes in various forms. Myths of national identity characteristically refer to territory or ancestry (or both) as the basis of political community, and these differences furnish often neglected instability and conflicts in many parts of the world. It is no accident that many of the most bitter and protracted ‘inter-national’ conflicts derive from competing claims and conceptions of national identity.”<sup>85</sup>

Not only historians, but also the churches, political parties and various media can play an important role in forming national identity and can be connected with national identity in our minds. For example the political parties in the run-up period to an election look for the advice of a psychologist to find out how to encourage electors to identify with their party, so people can be really intentionally influenced e.g. by politicians in forming their national identity.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: 5 Roads to Modernity* (Harvard University Press, 1993), 8.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>85</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno; University of Nevada Press, 1991), 8.

<sup>86</sup> Keith Cameron, *National Identity* (Exeter; Intellect Books, 1999), 2.

One of the big elements that figure into people's identity is the language. In many states there is only one official language, which is not the native language of all its inhabitants. People see in the language the evidence of their cultural bequest.<sup>87</sup>

The concept of nationality is inseparably linked with myths. Many of the symbols, by which people mark their national devotion, are shared with the people of other nations who do not place emphasis on them. Their values are in the mind more than in reality.<sup>88</sup>

### 3.2 Characteristics of Czech people and Czech typical features

The Czechs themselves have very strange criteria for considering who is a Czech. The person in question has to meet three basic conditions: to be born in the Czech Republic, to have the Czech language as a mother tongue and to have Czech parents. Even nowadays the Czechs think that the gypsies and Jews born in the Czech Republic are not or even cannot be Czechs. "Someone, who speaks Czech, does not have to be necessarily Czech. A gypsy always remains a gypsy. They cannot become Czechs because they have different customs and traditions and they are of different race," said mainly the respondents in a survey of Ladislav Holý, an English author of *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation*.<sup>89</sup>

The Czechs believe that they are basically homogenous. A typical representative of the Czech nation results from this - the little Czech, who is an embodiment of mediocrity and common sense. Even if he lacks almost everything, he definitely does not lack intelligence. Was the Good Soldier Švejk an idiot or an intelligent person? The majority of Czechs tends to think that he was intelligent and that he only pretended his stupidity. There is no other way. Švejk is a Czech and therefore he has to be intelligent. Stupidity, according to Czechs, is designated for other nations or ethnic groups.<sup>90</sup>

The typical feature of Czech people is disappointment with everything. It indicates that they are too demanding (if they were not, they would not have to be disappointed). They are also very envious, jealous and they hate authorities (there are only few cases in which they accept anyone, e.g. they can be proud of some historical personalities which mostly do not live any longer – like Karel IV, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Václav Havel, Jan

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>89</sup> CS Magazin, <http://www.cs-magazin.com/2006-03/view.php?article=articles/cs060327.htm> (accessed October 17, 2010).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

Ámos Komenský, Jan Žižka, Jan Werich, Jan Hus, Antonín Dvořák, Karel Čapek or Božena Němcová. Czechs do not accept their own responsibility, and they are very good liars, gossipers and doubters.<sup>91</sup>

According to the research conducted in 1992, most Czechs attributed to themselves 76% bad characteristics and 24% good characteristics. The bad ones were predominantly envy, cunningness, selfishness, pessimism and laziness. On the other hand, the Czechs claim about themselves that they are hard-working, skillful and they have a good sense of humor.<sup>92</sup>

As a summarising term for a typical Czech person with bad habits, the Czechs themselves invented the term 'čecháček' or 'malý čecháček – the little Czech', which is someone who is petty, intolerant to other opinions, attitudes and behaviour, envious and convinced that he does the best possible things and people who do not, have to be admonished at least.<sup>93</sup>

The Czechs like to recall their national traditions, by which they do not mean the attitudes, features and inclinations handed down from generation to generation as it is common in the West, but the image of a democratic, educated and highly cultural nation, which they are duly proud of. Even in the professional literature, this approach to the tradition is accepted as an objective reality although it is a myth.<sup>94</sup>

The highly positive idea of the Czechs about their nation contradicts how they see themselves – as envious, annoyed, conformist, sly and egoistic people. They consider themselves as democratic nationals endowed with gold hands, meek nature, the most beautiful girls, and the best beer, bread, and ice-hockey players in the world, which they are excessively proud of. They do not worry much that they perceive themselves as individuals without any big goals, big horizons and as average. They find their level of cultivation and education higher than the majority of other nations. The Czech national pride often develops into an uncritical enthusiasm, big illusions, which rapidly turn into passivity, scepticism, whining and moaning about strokes of fate when any obstacles appear. Czechs have the feeling that no other nations are better than them.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

There is one more thing typical for the Czechs: nothing is their fault. One's own failures are usually understood as a result of betrayal and oppression by foreigners. The significance of Czech history does not consist of what happened in the past, but of the projection what could or might have happened if Czechs were let alone in their commenced way. In order to get the Czech history back to its original way, the consequences of the historical events, which led to the deflection from the commenced way of the Czech nation, have to be redressed.<sup>96</sup>

The Czechs harshly distinguish patriotism and nationalism. However, they refuse to confess to their own nationalism. Patriotism is a positive love for country without the feeling of hostility to other countries or nations, and without feelings of superiority towards other nations. When the impression of hostility, hatred and superiority to other nations appears, then it is nationalism. It shows the exceptional characteristics of one's own nation and disparages the quality of the others. Those, who want to claim that Czechs are nationalists, should think about how they judge the other nations, especially Vietnamese, Slovaks, Russians, Poles and Germans.<sup>97</sup>

Simply, the Czechs consider Czechs to be those people who can speak Czech because it is quite unlikely that any foreigner would learn to speak fluent Czech since it is esteemed as one of the hardest languages in the world to learn.

### 3.3 Surveys, researches of the Czech people

The topic of the relationship to the nation was in the years after 1990 a subject of extensive sociological research. Those connected directly with nationalism are shown below.<sup>98</sup>

When asking Czech people what makes a person being a real Czech, most people agreed with the arguments: to speak Czech (94%), to feel Czech (91%), to have Czech citizenship (82%), to respect political institutions and norms in the Czech Republic (81%), to live the majority of life in the Czech Republic (78%), to be born in the Czech Republic (67%), and to be a Christian (21%).<sup>99</sup>

It is usually true that most of these characteristics of Czechness occur in a cluster: people who think that a Czech can be only the one who can speak Czech are also

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Libor Prudký, *Přínáležitost k národu, vztahy k jiným národnostem a k cizincům v České republice* (Brno; Akademické nakladatelství CERM s.r.o., 2004), 13.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

convinced that he or she must feel being a Czech, have a Czech citizenship, live the majority of his/her life in the Czech Republic, respect the laws and rules of conduct effective in our country and be born in the Czech Republic at the same time.<sup>100</sup>

The main reasons why Czechs are proud of their country are natural beauties (90%), sports achievements (77%), culture, art and science (76%), the past times (37%), characteristics of Czech people (25%), political system in the Czech Republic (16%) and economical outcomes of the Czech Republic (5%). 77% of respondents were ashamed of the economic results in the Czech Republic in 1997.<sup>101</sup>

The research also implies that there is a high rate of national unification in our country. We are one of the most nationally homogenous countries in Europe, historically as well (especially after the resettlement of the Germans after World War II). As opposed to the most European countries, we are quite stable, settled, we do not move and are evidently not so favourable to changing place of residence. We have a negligible experience with social mobility. We are relatively not so much linguistically equipped for the communication with other nations and nationalities.<sup>102</sup>

When asking to what kind of unit do they feel affiliation to at first place (in 1999), the most frequent answers were city, town or village (42%), district (13%), Czech Republic (35%), Europe (3%) and world (8%). This shows that our sense of belonging to Europe and world is infinitesimal and does not develop significantly (the fact of accepting to join the European Union does not necessarily mean the acceptance ourselves as Europeans). All this clearly proves that Czechs are nationally a very homogenous and stable nationality with small dispositions to opening toward foreigners. At the same time, Czechs do not believe themselves. An overwhelming majority of Czech citizens is convinced that Czechs cannot be trusted. Only few people think that the world would be better if people from elsewhere would be like Czechs. On the other hand, three quarters of the population would be Czechs rather than citizens of any other country.<sup>103</sup>

Another interesting question was to evaluate immigrants in the Czech Republic. Czechs think that they increase occurrence of crimes (66% agree, 15% disagree), they took job from local people (41% agree, 32% disagree), they bring new ideas and culture (21%

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

agree, 46% disagree) and that they are benefit for Czech economy (8% agree, 63% disagree). This is another evidence of the high rate of reclusiveness of Czech society towards foreigners, immigrants and other nationalities – to other people out of Czech stable and homogenous unity withdrawing against the world. The rate of tolerance towards other ethnic groups in the Czech Republic does not increase. Czechs tolerate only socially disadvantaged or different people; there is also margin for age extremes, but not for ethnically different.<sup>104</sup>

96% of the respondents profess Czech nationality and feel being Czechs. The rest were mostly Slovaks and gypsies. People, whose parents were not Czechs, usually feel as being Czechs, too. The feeling of affiliation to the Czech nation is because of the influence of the common language, history, culture and home feeling.<sup>105</sup>

Czechs agree that people can gain nationality by birth or upbringing. One third of the respondents think that without spending childhood in the Czech Republic and without national experience people cannot gain Czech nationality. Some of them suppose that people can gain nationality by their own choice, but a lot of people do not think so.<sup>106</sup>

Half of the asked understand their nationality as something obvious, for which they do not have any evaluating attitude. 36% expressed pride of their nation. 5% state that they do not care about their nationality and only 1% understand their nationality negatively and are ashamed about it. Only 15% of people would rather be citizens of any other state than the Czech Republic.<sup>107</sup>

Another finding is that nationalism and patriotism are not very strong in the Czech Republic. Compared to other nations (like Slovaks, Magyars, Poles, Germans, Americans, Russians, Chinese, British and French) the relationship is much less intensive. The Czech attitude to Czechness is also less confident. Beside other things this may signify that it can strengthen in the moment of danger.<sup>108</sup>

People mostly agree with the presence of Slovaks (86,8%), Slovenians (63,4%), Germans (59,7%), Croatians (58,4%), Bulgarians (44,6%), Serbians (41,3%), Russians (41%), Nigerians (39,7%), Chinese (39,7%), Belarusians (39,3%), Ukrainians (36,3%), Vietnamese (34,9%), Romanians (32,3%), Arabians (29,4%), Gypsies (28,3%), Albanians

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 16-18.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 20

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 21

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 23

(26,9%) and Afghans (25,5%) in the Czech Republic. Surprisingly, people do not agree with the presence of Poles, Austrians, Scandinavians and Magyars.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 25



## CONCLUSION

Nationalism is an ideological construct, and it means different things to different people. This is the reason why it is so hard to judge if this or that thing or act is nationalistic or not. Everyone has their own truth and opinion based on some kind of evidence, and everyone can be partly right, for truth is relative. It can be argued that the Czech nationalism is quite weak, because of the historical events described in this thesis. There were some nationalist efforts in the past: the revivalists trying to save the Czech language, Masaryk and Beneš successfully creating a separate Czechoslovakian state, Václav Havel fighting against communism and for democracy. But at present, Czech nationalism is not so evident. Czech children do not sing the national anthem every day in school like American children do, and Czechs are mostly atheists. In fact, it might be because Czechs do not believe in God and, by extension, they do not believe in anything at all, other than themselves.

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