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## CZECH MEMORY OF AUSTRIAN CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES, 1860–1861

### I MEMORY AND HISTORY

In his memoirs written in the late 1860s and early 1870s, which sometimes closely resemble the genre of agitational sociopolitical press, the conservative journalist and literary critic Jakub Malý (1811–85), thus described the ‘universal’ response of the Czech nation to the Imperial Diploma decreed on October 20, 1860:

in the Czech homeland, joy and noise resounded; the hopes of a nation severely tried have risen again and kept growing; the final salvation seemed to be coming with the newly inaugurated times.<sup>1</sup>

Similar ideas were enunciated by the writer Adolf Heyduk (1835–1923), in his official memoirs on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary (1863–93) of the Czech Artistic Club (*Umělecká beseda*) in Prague:

who cannot remember the time of the October Diploma from his own experience but based instead on a common legend or subjective accounts of the others, he may find it rather tough to figure out that sudden breakthrough across the aspects of life.<sup>2</sup>

A number of later Czech historical narrations concerning the latter half of the nineteenth century emphasised especially the upheaval-based inauguration of new times, as seized in such memoirs, finding the Austrian constitutional changes from the years 1860–1 to be a very important watershed.

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<sup>1</sup> Jakub Malý, *Vzpomínky a úvahy starého vlastence* (Prague, 1872), 140.

<sup>2</sup> Jaromír Hrubý, *Vzpomínky na paměť třicetileté činnosti Umělecké besedy 1863–1893* (Prague, 1893), 6.

However, the more private diary of the same author, Adolf Heyduk, published a dozen-or-so years later (in 1911) brings no evaluations, opinions or emotions related to the late 1850s and early 1860s, which would be indicative of an euphoric acceptance of the occurring transformations.<sup>3</sup> Hence, my goal will be to present this event, doubtlessly significant for the Habsburg monarchy, and the development of nineteenth-century nationalisms of Central Europe, from the individual perspectives of the participants of the historical process, in the spirit of Michel Foucault's *genealogical project*. I shall seek to juxtapose the local, non-continuous, unsafe, or subjective knowledge against the functional and formal systematisations laying claim to hierarchising, organising and arranging in the name of the so-called true cognition.<sup>4</sup>

I will try to reconstruct the former type of knowledge based upon Czech memoirs written in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, referring to the period of our present interest. I understand individual memories as a cultural construct, which constitutes a part of wider collective memory.<sup>5</sup> They, therefore, constitute a product of an individual and subjective interpretation of reality, which is, however, set within the framework of certain social structures, which means they are laden with the risk of various distortions – lies, mistakes or concealments by individuals or groups.<sup>6</sup> Taking a look at the constitutional changes from the standpoint of memoirist narratives enables one to focus on the individual as a participant of 'objective' and structural historical processes, so-called great history, whilst also taking into consideration

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<sup>3</sup> Adolf Heyduk, *Vzpomínky literární* (Prague, 1911), 10–22.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société: Cours au Collège de France (1975–1976)*; the edition I have used for the present purpose is: *idem, Trzeba bronić społeczeństwa. Wykłady w Collège de France, 1976*, trans. Małgorzata Kowalska (Warsaw, 1998), 19–23, also, cf. José Medina, 'Toward a Foucaultian Epistemology of Resistance: Counter-Memory, Epistemic Friction, and *Guerilla Pluralism*', *Foucault Studies*, 12 (2011), 12–16.

<sup>5</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*; I have used the Polish edition: *Spoleczne ramy pamięci*, trans. Marcin Król (Warsaw, 1969), 66–127.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Florian Znaniecki, 'Znaczenie dokumentów autobiograficznych dla badań socjologicznych', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, xiv, 3 (1970), 119. Also, cf. Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (London, 1960); Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, trans. Katherine Leary, foreword Paul John Eakin (Theory and History of Literature, 52, Minneapolis, 1989); H. Porter Abbott, *Diary Fiction: Writing as Action* (Ithaca and London, 1984).

a dual perspective in the perception of these processes – from the top (formalised, systematised) and rank-and-file (subjective, incomplete).<sup>7</sup>

Such a method of presenting history may, to an extent, take the shape of a kind of deconstruction: first, people in reality tend not to act in compliance with their social roles as determined or described retroactively by central discourses. Second, a reconstruction of events or occurrences in the memory, as subsequently transposed to the memoirist text, may also cross them over. It has to be remarked, however, that such revisions do not in any radical way change the image of the main stream of history; yet, they may critically complement it.<sup>8</sup> In the case in question, first of all, it is primarily about the memory of various Czech feelings in response to the issuing of the October Diploma and the February Patent, and the related alteration of the social-political climate.

## Memoir

The research material for the present considerations consists of thirty-three works published in volume form. A definite majority (twenty-seven) of the memoirs under research come from before 1918, a few were written and issued after Czechoslovakia emerged. For the latter ones, their authors' introductions sometimes declare the tendency accompanying their making, with the objective to preserve in the posterity's memory the events preceding, and consequently leading to, the formation of a new state.<sup>9</sup> The exact time of writing cannot be defined for most of the memoirs. It can only be assumed that they were written retrospectively at the end of their authors' lives. The body being researched comprises however a few texts compiled

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<sup>7</sup> Richard van Dülmen, *Historische Anthropologie. Entwicklung, Probleme, Aufgaben*; for my present purpose, I have used the Czech edition: *Historická antropologie. Vývoj, problémy, úkoly*, trans. Josef Boček (Prague, 2002), 13 and 39–40.

<sup>8</sup> Jan Horský, 'Místo (velkých) teorií v historických vědách v době narativistické kritiky a mikrohistorických bádání', in Lucie Storchová (ed.), *Conditio humana – konstanta či historická proměnná? Koncepty historické antropologie a teoretická reflexe v současné historiografii. Sborník příspěvků z workshopu 'Antropologie – Historie – Teorie' konaného na FHS UK v Praze dne 17.11.2005* (Prague, 2007), 33.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Eliška Krásnohorská, *Z mého mládí. Vzpomínky životopisné* (Prague, 1920), 7; Karel Mattuš, *Paměti* (Prague, 1921), 4; Josef Holeček, *Pero. Román – paměti* (Prague, 1976), 10; Renata Tyršová, *Jindřich Fügner. Paměti a vzpomínky na mého otce*, 2 vols. (Prague, 1926), i, 7.

based upon notes taken on an ongoing basis, as openly declared by the authors<sup>10</sup> – or, as may be alleged from the degree of detail, apparently unattainable with use of regular human memory. This concerns, mainly, the works titled *Paměti z mého života* [Recollections from my life] by Václav-Vladivoj Tomek (1818–1905), a historian and politician, and *Paměti starého učitele – vlastence, perzekucí postiženého* [Recollections of an old teacher who has been chicaned] by Antonín Víták (1835–1906), a provincial teacher, each running about a thousand pages. The main function of the memoirs under analysis is informative. There is, however, a rather considerable group of novelised or fictionalised diaries/memoirs, being primarily artistic texts, essentially with an aesthetical function. These are represented, first of all, by the memoirs of the leading Czech nineteenth-century men-of-letters: Karolína Světlá (1830–99), Adolf Heyduk, Eliška Krásnohorská (1847–1926), Svatopluk Čech (1846–1908), or Josef Holeček (1853–1929). The latter’s recollective work *Pero. Román – paměti* [The pen. A novel – memoirs] is in a novelistic form.<sup>11</sup>

The selection of texts I have made in view of this analysis is obviously potentially exposed to charges of arbitrariness and incompleteness. However, are there any unbiased criteria at work when it comes to memoirs not forming part of a literary canon and official narrations? There is no way to take into account all the works or texts falling within a defined category; moreover, once we have decided they are situated on the margins of a national literary output, every text seems to be equally significant. A further difficulty lies in the fact that despite a long temporal distance, the memoirs do not form a closed body. Many texts are still concealed in the archives, and from time to time new ones enter the pool of published texts. In fact, they are often groundbreaking, throwing a different light on the nineteenth-century reality.<sup>12</sup> As Stanislav Holubec has noticed,

<sup>10</sup> Mattuš, *Paměti*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Jaroslava Janáčková, ‘Doslov’, in Holeček, *Pero*, 385–91.

<sup>12</sup> In the last few years, three important texts have been published: (i) one focusing on the development of national life in Moravia, written by a local writer and journalist Matěj Mikšíček and entitled *Bublínka ze života moravského. Paměti Matěje Mikšíčka*, ed. Zdeněk Fišer (Brno, 2007); (ii) another one shows the transformations in the Czech national life in the south-Bohemian town of Vodňany, as perceived by a pharmacist František Herites, *Vodňanské paměti a vzpomínky* (Brno, 2009); and, (iii) yet another one, which admittedly concerns a later period and

the picture of the nineteenth century has been conveyed to us mostly by the middle class,<sup>13</sup> who have contributed to most of the written output; in the Czech case, exponents of the class's middle and lower substrata. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that it is mainly texts of representatives of this social group that constitute the subject of my study. Descent-wise, all the authors form a rather homogeneous group whose representatives, resulting from diverse conditionings, could achieve extremely different positions in the social hierarchy during their lifetimes. Hence, we shall deal, on the one hand, with the memoirs of František Palacký (1798–1876), son of a rural teacher who with time became the main exponent of Prague-based intellectual and political national elite. On the other, the present considerations have been extended to the memoirs of Alois Beer (1833–97), a native of the east-Czech small town of Dobruška, son of a carpenter and coachman who later himself became an artisan and a homespun chronicler and painter, incomprehensible to his parochial milieu.<sup>14</sup>

Among the authors of memoirs, there is a definite overrepresentation of people with literary experience or having some kind of artistic or intellectual work. There is nothing weird about it, since answering the question 'Who was I?' calls for an effort and constitutes a certain kind of spiritual act, which mostly intellectually active individuals resolve to undertake. The result is that the above-average interest in political and national issues appears present in the texts under study. All the more so that, due to no well-developed political representation, it was the literary-artistic milieu that acted as the main exponents of the Czech national idea. The ethnic Czechness and adherence to the middle class, which showed intellectual aspirations, are thus the determinants of a social structure as part of which individual memory was taking shape.

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shows the development of Czech nationalism from the point of view of a representative of the working class: Václav Holec, *Paměti. Společná cesta české a německé sociální demokracie koncem devatenáctého století*, trans. from German into Czech by Miroslav Šumavský and Stanislav Holubec (Prague, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Stanislav Holubec, *Svět Václava Holka*, in Holec, *Paměti*, 239.

<sup>14</sup> As per the official documents, Alois Beer described himself as a lathe operator, stonemason, glasses-maker, and goldsmith. His literary and painting art, not broadly known in his lifetime, was discovered and popularised only in the 1930s. Cf. Karel Michl, 'Doslov', in Alois Beer, *Památosti mého podomování* (Hradec Králové, 1978), 163; and, Karel Michl, *Život v úzkostech a posměchu*, in Alois Beer, *Na vandru*, ed. Karel Michl (Prague, 1973), 243–5.

Within the limits of such social framework, I have nonetheless done my best to make a selection of relevant texts so they could reflect the regional diversity in the dynamism of development of the Czech national movement, caused by diverse intensity of settlement of the German populaces and by the differing influential powers of the Vienna and Prague centres. To rephrase, the focus is on memoirs written by the Prague elite: political, scientific and artistic, as well as those written by teachers, clerks or journalists from provincial areas. What it allows to do is grasp the differences or similarities in the responses to the introduction of a new constitutional order between the centre of the Czech national life and its peripheries. A half of the texts under study refers to Prague-related memories. Southern and Western Bohemia is quite strongly represented in these memoirs – with a total of nine texts of this kind, of which as many as six concern the town of Písek. Six texts were written by authors coming from Central and Eastern Bohemia. To compare, there is a very small number of texts – I have only found four of them – picturing the lives of people identifying themselves with ethnic Czechness (Slavdom) in Moravia, which well demonstrates the aforesaid diversities.

An essential factor informing the image of the late 1850s and early 1860s as painted in these texts is the perspective of time and of the later events which defined the author's perception. Most of them were written in the last three decades of the nineteenth century whilst some come from the first two decades of the twentieth century. In general terms, the period was key to the development of Czech memoirs: it was only in the middle of the nineteenth century that the custom of memoirs writing was gradually popularised, while the need to recollect in a literary spirit escalated only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>15</sup>

According to a theory developed in the 1920s by Ernst Theodor Krueger, writing down of memories may come as a response to the individual's inner tension caused by external circumstances, such as traumatic experiences. Such tension may lead to disintegrated human psyche, which compilation of a recollective text helps reintegrate. The need to retrospect emerges, in particular, at the moment the old social structures become destroyed and new ones replace them – something

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<sup>15</sup> Marcin Filipowicz, *„Panowie bądźmy Czechami, ale nikt nie musi o tym wiedzieć...” Wzorce męskości w kulturze czeskiej XIX wieku* (Cracow, 2013), 204–5.

for the people to cope with. Krueger's statement could, at least to some extent, explain the fact that it is in the periods of great social upheavals and unrests – wars, revolutions, downfalls of old states and emergences of new ones – that recollective texts are produced on a mass scale.<sup>16</sup> For the authors of the texts written in the late nineteenth century, such psychically disintegrating occurrences that have strongly penetrated into their memory must have been: the Spring-of-Nations events, the constitutional change period, with the Austrian-Prussian war interval of 1866, concluded with the introduction of a dualistic division of the monarchy in 1867, unfavourable for the Czechs; and the nationalisation of the people of the Czech lands, gaining momentum from the 1860s onwards. With the authors of the texts written in the early years of the twentieth century, the memory of the events is, clearly, transposed, as the late 1840s and the early 1850s happened to occur, at most, in their early childhood, whilst their life experience of the later years was enriched with the events related to the decomposition of the monarchy, the emergence of a new, Czechoslovak state, and the related escalation of the Czech-German ethnic conflict.

The memorised image of the constitutional change has therefore to be, perforce, filtered through the memory of the earlier or later events or occurrences – and thus should be read in their context.

## II

### HISTORIOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE

Let us then first have a look at the way in which events of interest to us are presented in historiographic narration on the political history of the Czech lands in the second half of the nineteenth century. Used to this end will be the major and synthetic works of Czech historiographers written between the end of the nineteenth century and our day:<sup>17</sup> it is literature of this particular type that proves most

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ernst T. Krueger, *Autobiographical Documents and Personality* (Ph.D. dissertation, Chicago, 1925); quoted after Andrzej Cieński, *Pamiętniki i autobiografie świątowe* (Wrocław *et al.*, 1992), 54–5.

<sup>17</sup> Adolf Srb, *Politické dějiny národa českého od roku 1861 až do nastoupení ministerstva Badenova r. 1895* (Prague, 1899); Jan Obšil, *Politické dějiny národa československého od r. 1848. Zvláště války světové a události poválečných* (Velké Meziříčí, 1922); Zdeněk V. Tobolka, *Politické dějiny československého národa od r. 1848*

influential on the shaping of the common Czech historical awareness. The 1850s decade is, on the one hand, considered to be a period of sweeping economic modernisation of the western part of the Habsburg monarchy, and on the other hand, a time of intensified political oppression, which did not allow the undesirable lower social classes and emancipating national movements to make decisions on public matters. The defeat of the Austrian army in a war in northern Italy and the financial crisis connected with it, which was caused by a wrong fiscal policy is commonly considered the end of this period. At this time authorities in Vienna realised that the idea to introduce greater civil liberties based on a constitutional order should inevitably be resumed. In brief, on October 20, 1860, Franz Joseph I passed the October Diploma prepared by count Agenor Romuald Gołuchowski. The Diploma was a harbinger of turning to a constitutional system; it acknowledged the right of representatives of the people to take part in the decision-making process as well as confirmed historical autonomy of particular parts of the monarchy. The main legislative power was transferred to country parliaments, which were to send their representatives to the Parliament in Vienna.

The October Diploma aroused a wave of discontentment in many milieus. The liberals would not stand its 'federalist' bias; the centralists were at odds with the principle of autonomy of individual historical constituent parts of the monarchy; the dualistic accent contained in the constitution disconcerted the federalists, in turn, who intuited that the Hungarians would have gained by virtue of it an advantage over the other non-German nations. As for the Hungarians themselves, they were not quite satisfied with the Diploma either, as they had expected to have their 1848 Constitution reinstated. Therefore, the emperor, willing to gain internal stability in face of the country's tough financial situation, had Count Gołuchowski dismissed.<sup>18</sup> A few months later, Anton von Schmerling, the new Prime Minister of the Austrian Government, proposed a specification

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*až do dnešní doby*, ii: 1860–1879 (Prague, 1933); Otto Urban, *Česká společnost 1848–1918* (Prague, 1982); Marcela C. Efmertová, *České země v letech 1848–1918* (Prague, 1998); Václav Veber, Milan Hlavačka *et al.*, *Dějiny Rakouska* (Prague, 2002); Ladislav Vojáček, Karel Schelle, and Vilém Knoll, *České právní dějiny* (2nd edn, Plzeň, 2010); Michal Borovička *et al.*, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české*, xii.a: 1860–1890 (Prague and Litomyšl, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Borovička *et al.*, *Velké dějiny*, 38.



of the October Diploma, which was named February Patent, issued on February 26, 1861. It was passed along with an entire list of laws, including the most important one, that is the electoral law. In practice, it was this legislation that determined the political character of the state. While the October Diploma, according to historians, offered an opportunity for a real decentralisation of political life in the monarchy, the February Patent was written in the spirit of centralism – although from the standpoint of liberalisation and development of parliamentarianism it was a step forward compared to the former act. Especially, the way the electoral law was structured, with privileges offered to the German and Austrian bourgeoisie, triggered considerable disappointment among the Czech political elite.<sup>19</sup>

Although the Diploma and the Patent were the first constitutional acts brought into effect in the western part of the monarchy and were turning points as such, historiographic narrations regard them as thoroughly disappointing for representatives of the Czech national movement. The reason for this view is that they are interpreted as a direct harbinger of the dualistic division of the monarchy, which was introduced a few years later and was discriminatory towards the Czechs. Nevertheless, the fact that they were issued visibly stimulated the Czech public opinion, which began a critical discussion<sup>20</sup> over the shape of the political system in Austria, the character of the future civil society, its structures and, finally, the relations between the emancipation of the citizen and of the nation.<sup>21</sup> The Czech historiographic tradition has tended to describe this period as one of

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, 41; Vojáček, Schelle, and Knoll, *České právní dějiny*, 231; Urban, *Česká společnost*, 142–65; Efmertová, *České země*, 50–1; Veber, Hlavačka *et al.*, *Dějiny Rakouska*, 418. Also, cf. Henryk Wereszycki, *Pod berłem Habsburgów. Zagadnienia narodowościowe* (Cracow, 1986), 181–2.

<sup>20</sup> Gustav Pflieger-Moravský's *Ztracený život* [The lost life], the first serious Czech social novel, published in 1862 (and somewhat forgotten today), proves that this discussion was common and very open. It is the history of a young Czech patriot, set in the sociopolitical reality of the 1850s. The work was written between 1859 and 1861, so it came as a direct response to the political events of the period. What is surprising about it is that the stance is openly critical and uncompromisingly and bravely evaluates all areas of the functioning of the Austrian state: social structure, mechanisms of power, intellectual and cultural backwardness.

<sup>21</sup> Jiří Pokorný, *Volby 1861 jako potvrzení nového systému*, in Kristina Kaiserová and Jiří Rak (eds.), *Nacionalizace společnosti v Čechách 1848–1914* (Acta Universitatis Purkynianae / Facultatis Philosophicae. Studia Slovogermanica, Ústí nad Labem, 2008), 8.

eruption of the Czech national movement, triggered by liberalised political situation and, indeed, constitutional transformations.<sup>22</sup> It is only the most recent comprehensive history of the Czech lands in the latter half of the nineteenth century that has proposed a more continent valuation of the Czech response. As these authors put it:

the image of the Czech national community in the late 1850s and early 1860s was rather ambivalent. This community was successful in some aspects whilst, on the other hand, remaining meanwhile tacit in the political dimension, which aroused astonishment even in Vienna. ... The changes that took place afterwards were nonetheless top-down, neglecting the public opinion.<sup>23</sup>

All the same, this study also considers the period of constitutional change as a caesura in the development of a modern political nation: its opening sentence goes, “In the years 1860–90, the modern Czech nation was getting formed and the nature of its existence was eventually determined.”<sup>24</sup>

### III INDIVIDUAL MEMORY

What is, then, the individual memory of these events? Is it fundamentally different from the historical one, or does it modify it only to a small degree? In the body of texts under study, we can observe very different responses and stances towards the issued constitutional acts and the associated general changes of the political and social climate. Let us try and organise them, using the strength of emotions and expressions, revealed in the memoirs, as a somewhat conventional clue.

#### Silence

First of all, taking into account the purport of the historical moment, there is the surprising stance of indifference, which appears in almost a half of the memoirs and consists in focusing on the author’s own

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Srb, *Politické dějiny*, 1–8; Obšil, *Politické dějiny*; Urban, *Česká společnost*, 142–65; Efmertová, *České země*, 50–1.

<sup>23</sup> Borovička *et al.*, *Velké dějiny*, 29.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, 11.

life in accounts of this period, in its private or public sphere – without much, or almost any, interest in the constitutional and political changes.

Let us accept that it is not overly surprising in the aforesaid case of Alois Beer, whose memoirs focus around practical business such as his settlement in Dobruška after several years of wandering and apprenticeship in the southern outskirts of the monarchy, setting up a family, and the birth of his son.<sup>25</sup> This type of recollecting is firmly imbedded in ‘commonsensicality’ typical to common thinking and characterised by non-susceptibility to utopias, factual and argumentative proposing of problems or issues and taking into account mainly the tangible facts.<sup>26</sup> As observed by Karel Michl, propagator of Beer’s literary and painting output, this memoirist wrote his work in his late years, in the 1890s, when living on so-called perpetuity, ailing and misunderstood by his closest relatives and by his local milieu of Dobruška. In Michl’s opinion, Beer was mainly focused then on contemplating the resentments and failures of his life.<sup>27</sup> Hence, there was simply no room in the text he wrote for matters as ‘transient’ as changes in the constitutional order in Austria and their importance for a community more abstract than the Dobruška community, such as the ethnic nation. Interestingly, however, such ‘indifference’ also appears in memoirs of the individuals whom one would not suspect of a lack of interest in the fate of the nation in the context of the discussion about the shape of the Habsburg monarchy’s political system. The memoirs of e.g. the writer Karolína Světlá,<sup>28</sup> who was involved in matters of the nation, the author Karel Klostermann (1848–1923),<sup>29</sup> physician Josef Thomayer (1853–1927),<sup>30</sup> provincial teacher Vincenc Paulus (1840–1913),<sup>31</sup> historian August Sedláček (1843–1926),<sup>32</sup> or Moravian archivist and historian Vincenc Brandl (1834–1901),<sup>33</sup> are

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<sup>25</sup> Alois Beer, *Lituji, že nejsem básník* (Prague, 1970), 26.

<sup>26</sup> Teresa Hołowka, *Myślenie potoczne. Heterogeniczność zdrowego rozsądku* (Warsaw, 1986), 14.

<sup>27</sup> Michl, ‘Doslov’, 163.

<sup>28</sup> Karolína Světlá, ‘Upomínky’, in *eadem, Z literárního soukromí, i: Vzpomínky, paměti, literární dokumenty* (Prague, 1959), 93–236.

<sup>29</sup> Karel Klostermann, *Červánky mého mládí*, 2 vols. (Prague, 1926), i, 82–122.

<sup>30</sup> Josef Thomayer, *Ze zápisů lékaře* (Prague, 1977), 32–41.

<sup>31</sup> Vincenc Paulus, *Vzpomínky starého kantora* (Nový Bydžov, 1923), 42–75.

<sup>32</sup> August Sedláček, *Paměti z mého života* (Prague, 1997), 35–47.

<sup>33</sup> Vincenc Brandl, *Vzpomínky* (Velké Meziříčí, 1882), 83–141.

silent on the topic of the October Diploma and February Patent as well as the entire mood resulting from their being issued. It is worth remarking here that none of these memoirs remains tacit with respect to the other events and aspects of the national life.

Actors, of both sexes, formed a specific group of those neglecting the political developments of the late 1850s and early 1860s. The memoirs of representatives of this profession, who were associated with the Prague artistic milieu: Jiří Bittner (1846–1903),<sup>34</sup> František Pokorný (1833–93),<sup>35</sup> Jindřich Mošna (1837–1911),<sup>36</sup> Otýlie Sklenářová-Malá (1844–1912),<sup>37</sup> and Adéla Volfová (1846–1940)<sup>38</sup> account for an essential part (a sixth) of the body of texts under research, all five remaining silent as far as the topic of our interest is concerned. One might naturally assume that while recollecting things in their later years, such established and successful artistic personalities would, as a natural tendency, focus exclusively on their own theatrical experiences – as in the case of e.g. J. Mošna – or their artistic ripening – as was the case with O. Sklenářová-Malá. Negligence of any matters outside of the sphere of art could be seen as rather obvious for this specific group, and not perceived as related to a general memory of the Czech reactions to the constitutional change. Yet, public affairs do at times appear in the reminiscences of these actors – but never in connection with the Austrian constitutional transformations. The Bittner's text offers us an example, with its considerably extensive account on the Czechs' reactions to the outbreak of the Polish January Insurrection in 1863;<sup>39</sup> nothing is said, in turn, of the responses to the occurrences of merely two years earlier. This allows to conclude that from the standpoint of this memoirist, those latter events were less important or perhaps less spectacular; apparently, the recall of his juvenile and romantic spurts of heart in his identification with the combating Poles bore more importance for him than a memory of a perplexed and, perhaps, incomprehensible Austrian constitutionalism.

As to certain instances of this silence, it might be implied that the age of some of these authors, who at that period were adolescent

<sup>34</sup> Jiří Bittner, *Z mých pamětí* (Prague, 1894), 18–29.

<sup>35</sup> František Pokorný, *Vzpomínky a upomínky* (Prague, 1895), 27–72.

<sup>36</sup> Jindřich Mošna, *Jak jsem se měl na světě* (Prague, 1954), 126–58.

<sup>37</sup> Otýlie Sklenářová-Malá, *Z mých vzpomínek* (Prague, 1912), 22–7.

<sup>38</sup> Adéla Volfová, *Svému rodišti* (Prague, 1913), 60–86.

<sup>39</sup> Bittner, *Z mých pamětí*, 30–53.

children, could have caused that the issues of our interest were omitted in the memoirs. While this is plainly possible, let us bear in mind that these authors all recollect things being adult people, aware, in a way, of the importance of political developments; hence, their silence is interpretable as expression of a peculiarly neutral attitude. This supposition appears even more legitimate if we consider that the other recollecting individuals, such as, for instance, the writer Svatopluk Čech or the ethnographer Renata Tyršová (1854–1937), daughter of Jindřich Fügner, later on married to Miroslav Tyrš – Fügner and Tyrš being the founders of ‘Sokol’, the Czech gymnastics society – wrote in their memoirs a relatively good deal about the constitutional transformation, both said authors being peers age-wise. It is of course difficult to decide whether this silence resulted from a lack of emotional engagement in the events as they occurred, or from an ex-post selection done in the course of writing. Perhaps the effect of those constitutional changes on individuals was not considerable enough to surface above the more important events from private life, whose importance was much higher (deaths of relatives,<sup>40</sup> sicknesses, elemental disasters or catastrophes<sup>41</sup>) and which many years later still evoked private emotions to the recollecting people, pushing aside any social or political events.

Nonetheless, all the instances of silence quoted above came from individuals not involved directly in political activities, be it on a local or national level. The muteness of those actively dealing with some political activity is definitely more telling and testifying, all in all, to a rather restrained evaluation of the changes from the late fifties and early sixties, as seen from a time perspective by exponents of Czech national elite. The body of texts under study contains three such examples: the memoirs of Matěj Mikšíček (1815–92), a local Moravian writer and journalist, and of two leading Czech politicians: Karel Matuší (1836–1919) and František Palacký.

In his memoirs of over five hundred pages, Mikšíček devoted much room to his political involvement in the Czech national movement. Among other roles, he was a delegate to the Pan-Slav Congress in Prague, which he narrates in detail. Although at the end of the fifties and beginning of the sixties he was a man of well over forty and

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<sup>40</sup> Paulus, *Vzpomínky*, 71–2.

<sup>41</sup> Klostermann, *Červánky*, i, 120.

possibly was already weary of the hardships of family and professional life,<sup>42</sup> yet it should not exclude his interest in public matters. The content of his memoirs suggests, however, that all he remembered from the period of constitutional reforms is his unstable position at work. He writes profusely mainly about being transferred from one station to another on the northern railway line leading from Vienna to Bochnia as well as numerous intrigues connected with it. He does not note any changes in the social mood, let alone the issuing of constitutional acts.<sup>43</sup>

Equally surprising is the silence on the constitutional changes in Karel Mattuš, a lawyer and politician who, among other things, contributed in the 1880s to the development of Austrian financial, social and transport legislation. Thus, he was a person with above-the-average consciousness of the law. The October Diploma and the February Patent appear in his memoirs only in the context of the description of an emotion-imbued event of extreme importance to the author, that is, his defence of the degree of a Doctor of Law. It took place exactly in 1861. The theses Mattuš was defending dealt with a comparison of the two constitutional acts. Yet his description did not focus on the content of the defence, but on the fact that Mattuš was the first and for a long time yet the only one to have had the courage to speak exclusively in Czech during his defence, which was in accordance with regulations, as Czech was one of the official languages, but which infuriated the German professors. Clearly, it must have been more important to him than the constitutional acts themselves as he is virtually silent on that topic. Neither does he write anything about his impressions of the general social and political changes of the period.<sup>44</sup>

The topic of constitutional changes of the years 1860–1 is also as if ‘put off’ in the autobiography of František Palacký, the main Czech

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<sup>42</sup> I have based this conjecture upon analysis of numerous nineteenth-century Czech literary texts rendering the readers reassured that mature man cannot reconcile his family-and-professional sphere of activities with active patriotic involvement, whereas only a juvenile not burdened with responsibilities and commitments may be a patriot. Cf. Marcin Filipowicz, ‘Naród, rodina, męskość: literackie wizje życia czeskiego patrioty w XIX wieku’, *Pamiętnik Słowiański*, lxii, 1–2 (2012), 43–58.

<sup>43</sup> Mikšiček, *Bublínka ze života*, 510–20.

<sup>44</sup> Mattuš, *Paměti*, 20–2.

inspirational figure and politician from the period of the Spring of Nations. He limits himself to making a perfunctory remark: “What subsequently happened in my life after the return of constitutional life to Austria, seems to me not necessary to tell.”<sup>45</sup> It can, of course, be explained by the life circumstances, in which Palacký found himself at the time. On August 18, 1860, his wife, Terézie Palacká, passed away, and it is mainly this event and the illness that preceded it that the part of the memoirs dealing with this period is devoted to. Moreover, as Jiří Štaif has observed, Palacký at the time saw himself already more as the main Czech historian and cultural authority than an active politician.<sup>46</sup> Yet it can make one wonder that in this place the proportions in talking about the private and public spheres are different. Members of Palacký’s family rarely appear in the text as a whole. The author writes about his wife Terézie only in the context of her illness and death, completely leaving her out as the person with whom he had shared his life. There is not a single word about his son Jan in the text, while his daughter Marie is noticed as if indirectly, in the context of her father uniting political forces with František Ladislav Rieger, who became his son-in-law: “In the summer of 1853, doctor Rieger, who on political matters agrees with me the most, became my son-in-law, and since that time we have been living together until today.”<sup>47</sup> In the text as a whole the focus is mainly on the sphere of public activity of the author. Is the change in perspective, in this particular place, only a matter of the death of his spouse being very hard to bear for him? Palacký writes the main part of his autobiography in 1865, that is after enough time has passed for him to be able to soothe emotions after the death of his wife. Perhaps it is thus a sign of not treating the constitutional changes as especially significant for the Czech nation, and also for him personally. In his text, like in the texts of the other authors that have been mentioned, a clear restraint as regards the return of constitutional life can be sensed – a response much deviating from the enthusiasm which Jakub Malý and Adolf Heyduk wrote about in the passage quoted at the beginning of this article.

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<sup>45</sup> František Palacký, *Vlastní životopis Františka Palackého*, ed. Marie Červinková-Riegrová (Prague, 1885), 38.

<sup>46</sup> Jiří Štaif, *František Palacký. Život, dílo, mýtus* (Prague, 2009), 230.

<sup>47</sup> Palacký, *Vlastní životopis*, 38.

## Noticing the changes

The next group is texts whose authors note a general transformation of the political climate in Bohemia, but do not tie it to any constitutional act. They usually describe the moment of change with considerable pathos, which suggests that it was engraved in their awareness as a real ‘inauguration of new times’, sensed particularly strongly by people entering upon adulthood at the time. Let us remark here that this was true with respect to both Prague-based and provincial authors. It is perhaps best illustrated by a passage from the memoirs of a literary critic and writer Eliška Krásnohorská, who wrote:

The fresh patriotic enthusiasm of the early sixties blew a magical energy also into our circle. Whoever among us, Czech souls, lived the time with a young and receptive thought, would never forget its charming impressions and excitements.<sup>48</sup>

Other authors of memoirs, as for instance, the journalist Josef Barák (1833–83), the writers Josef Holeček and Ladislav Quis (1846–1913), or František Herites (1851–1929), a pharmacist from Vodňany in South Bohemia, also did not hold back emotional descriptions of the time: “A new, merrier life has supervened”;<sup>49</sup> “the movement that meant a national and social awakening has not, by any means, bypassed Písek”;<sup>50</sup> “a new energy and a new spirit grew firm within us”;<sup>51</sup> “the Czech hearts were raising again”.<sup>52</sup> They mention the general liberalisation of political and social life, the demonstrations, the persecutions from the hands of police, associating it rather with a ‘natural’, as it were, process of emancipation of the Czech nation, which was hardly influenced by any Viennese government and the constitutional acts issued by it. The memoirs of the writer Svatopluk Čech seem to be quite characteristic in this context: in describing all the aforementioned events, this author is very careful to avoid setting the Austrian state structures within their context, implicating that the state’s constitutional or political-systemic problems have always remained completely out of the scope of his interest.

<sup>48</sup> Krásnohorská, *Z mého mládí*, 7.

<sup>49</sup> Josef Barák, *Vzpomínky* (Prague, 1904), 72.

<sup>50</sup> Holeček, *Pero*, 52.

<sup>51</sup> Ladislav Quis, *Knih vzpomínek* (Prague, 1902), 120.

<sup>52</sup> František Herites, *Vodňanské vzpomínky* (Prague, 1958), 20.



The affairs took place in Bohemia; judging from Čech's narrative, this country did not have much in common with Austria or Vienna.<sup>53</sup> While this might be approached as a specific trait of just one among the many memoirs, this author's position in the collective Czech awareness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was of a special sort. According to the literary historian Karel Krejčí, the writings of Svatopluk Čech acted as the ideological keystone for the Czech society which was increasingly diversifying politically, and are deemed representative for the period's collective sentiments and perceptions.<sup>54</sup> Hence, the memoirs could potentially be read as an emanation of the attitude, then increasingly common, of shunning identification with the monarchy.

Of importance is also the fact that with the moment of change, an ever more pronounced polarisation of the universe into the Czech 'us' and Austrian 'them' begins to be realised – as very clearly shown in the memoirs of Renata Tyršová:

I can remember that since the year [eighteen]-sixty, ... sounds of external happenings were more and more present in my infant soul. ... After all, every day Daddy talked about it at the table with Novotný and with Mum, that Czechs are being wronged, and that the 'Habsburg rascals' or the 'Black-and-Yellows' are the ones who are inflicting the harm.<sup>55</sup>

The views planted in the child's mind very quickly take on actual shape, as in another place Tyršová writes that from that time on, she stopped playing with German-speaking children:

Like my mother, who broke off in the early sixties her contacts with the ladies from the German circles of Prague, with whom she had been meeting before then from time to time, I also broke with my German female friends.<sup>56</sup>

This sentence may be interpreted, in a broader context of Tyršová's memoirs, as affirmation of her mother's decision. A similar motif appears in other memoirs too. Svatopluk Čech, for instance, writes of a conflict increasing at that time between him and his German schoolmate,

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<sup>53</sup> Svatopluk Čech, *Sebrané spisy*, i: *Druhý květ* (Prague, 1899), 50–130.

<sup>54</sup> Karel Krejčí, *Česká literatura a kulturní proudy evropské* (Prague, 1975), 260.

<sup>55</sup> Tyršová, *Jindřich Fügner*, i, 78.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, 93.

which finally led to a split-up between the former friends.<sup>57</sup> Karel Ninger (1827–1913), a professor with the Písek secondary school, describes, in turn, how the relationships between the locals polarised resulting from the election for the town's council in 1861, with the later takeover of the 'Ressource' bourgeois association by the Czechs and its renaming into a Commonalty Club (*Měšťanská beseda*). Although Ninger was an outspoken Czech patriot, the tone of his memoirs does not resound with a euphoria implied by the altered balance of power. Instead, he quite often remarks adverse aspects of this change: the town's community being split into two camps oppugning each other, their reciprocal anger and hatred, and the resulting frequent brawls and dissatisfaction.<sup>58</sup> Viewed against the texts under study, Ninger's narration appears unique. Most of these authors wrote their memoirs in the period of intensifying Czech-German antagonism, which suggests that they adapted their considerations to the ongoing situation – with the resultant prevalently unambiguous assessment of the ethnic conflict. In Ninger's memorial, we come across a footprint of 'unobvious' opinions, not dominated by the force of national discourse, with their discernible anxieties of a progressive polarisation of the society as the Vienna Government relaxed its national policies.

The time of transition is by some narrators seen as a period of very intense politicisation, permeating through the private sphere ("my father and his pharmacy assistant talked politics and argued at the lunch table"<sup>59</sup>) as well as the public sphere. The climate of intensified interest in political matters pervading the public venues is described in the school life recollections of the already quoted authors Svatopluk Čech and Ladislav Quis. The former makes a general comment that "politics was pursued intensely. ... The movement, roused in the nation, permeated beyond the walls of our seminary".<sup>60</sup> The latter author is more precise: after the October Diploma was issued, municipal election and subsequently election for the country parliament was held in Bohemia; he and his colleagues actively witnessed both. As he reports, the spring of 1861 was a never-ending political festival.

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<sup>57</sup> Čech, *Sebrané spisy*, i, 117.

<sup>58</sup> Karel Ninger, *Paměti prof. Karla Ningra. Písecké vzpomínky* (Písek, 1932), 123–32.

<sup>59</sup> Herites, *Vodňanské vzpomínky*, 17.

<sup>60</sup> Čech, *Sebrané spisy*, i, 103.

The Czech school students focused almost entirely on chairing political debates, participating in manifestations, group visits to sessions of Prague municipal council, or shared readings of Czech newspapers during breaks at school.<sup>61</sup>

The noticing of political changes related to transformations in the monarchy's constitutional system is not always perspicacious or full of pathos. Sometimes it is limited to observing external signs of changes, mainly new features of men's fashion – the chamarres and Slavic hats, as tokens of publicly showing that one belongs to the Czech national movement: “the winter of absolutism over, they blossomed as the first flowers of a novel national springtime”.<sup>62</sup> As Václav Julius Kavka (1840–1912), a civil servant at the Prague town-hall, recalls:

Also we, the Czechs, awoke all of a sudden, withdrew from the hideous associations, and put on our chamarres ... . And yes, once I had a chamarre, never again was I preoccupied with anything.<sup>63</sup>

In individual narratives of this kind, we are not likely to find accounts of personal impressions related to the constitutional acts issued in Vienna.

### **Bewilderment and distrust**

Despite the fact that in the period we are focusing on, many events were clear harbingers of a political change (the lost war in Italy, political manifestations in Prague, the emperor's manifesto being issued in 1860, followed a year later by the two constitutional acts), a strong feeling of disorientation and a complete lack of trust towards all signals and declarations coming out of Vienna are taking shape in many texts. These must have been commonly shared sentiments, because they were remembered by many authors of memoirs, who described them in a rather extensive fashion. The developments taking place on the political arena obviously sparked the feeling that constitutional changes were inevitable: “A feeling was waking that now it would be different ...”.<sup>64</sup> “The old Austria shook in its

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<sup>61</sup> Quis, *Kniha vzpomínek*, 123–5.

<sup>62</sup> Čech, *Sebrané spisy*, i, 211.

<sup>63</sup> Václav J. Kavka, *Mé paměti* (Prague, 1906), 42.

<sup>64</sup> Quis, *Kniha vzpomínek*, 119.

foundations, ... in the air you could hear the words: ‘a Constitution will come’. It sounded like a sweet fairy-tale”.<sup>65</sup> Yet, everything remained in the general atmosphere of disinformation and uncertainty. Renata Tyršová’s recollection is characteristic in this context as she writes that her father “correctly sensed that the events in Lombardy would influence the internal relations, and could hardly bear it that the Czech public opinion did not feel it as it should”.<sup>66</sup> Inhabitants of Czech lands were influenced more by gossip than objective information. As the writer Servác Heller recalls, a gossip circulated in Prague until the October Diploma was issued whereby the emperor had allegedly said: “While I sit on the Austrian throne, no constitution will be proclaimed in Austria whatsoever.”<sup>67</sup> There was deep suspicion, on the other hand, towards officially distributed information, caused by the most enigmatic way in which pieces of it were served. About the manifesto issued by the emperor in 1860, Heller wrote: “This passage of the emperor’s manifesto proclaimed a new time in Austria, but in a way so hesitant and unsure yet.”<sup>68</sup> He writes in a similar vein about an article in an official Viennese newspaper, which was taken to be the programming document of the new government and about legal solutions set forth by the October Diploma:

while there has appeared an article ... of a Viennese circular, which was to be considered as the programmatic address of the new government and which was described as the interpretation of the upheaval having been recently carried out, and of its meaning, but the upheaval was some sort of *oraculum* [Lat., oracle] in itself, which constituted a difficult riddle even for professional politicians; the promised representation of the estates in the different Crown Countries could have possibly become anything but not what the enlightened men of all nations desired.<sup>69</sup>

Even the historian and politician Václav Vladivoj Tomek, the most restrained of all in disclosing his reactions and evaluations, who in the 1850s worked with the Viennese Ministry of Education, noted that: “On July 15, the famous manifesto of the emperor was issued ... .

<sup>65</sup> Antal Stašek, *Vzpomínky* (Paměti. knihovna liter. vzpomínek, Prague, 1925), 78.

<sup>66</sup> Tyršová, *Jindřich Fügner*, i, 74.

<sup>67</sup> Servác Heller, *Z minulé doby našeho života národního, kulturního a politického. Vzpomínky a zápisky*, 5 vols. (Prague, 1916–23), ii, 287.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, ii, 286.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, ii, 288–9.

But the effects were not seen for a long time yet.”<sup>70</sup> The prevalent attitude towards government declarations and publications in the official press was perhaps best described by Jakub Malý in his memoirs: “This could only deceive someone who did not know the Austrian Government from his own experience.”<sup>71</sup> What is more, the distrust at the time the October Diploma was issued was later justified through the issuance of the February Patent. Karel Ninger’s reminiscences bring the following evaluation of the events from the early sixties:

Through the issuance of the irrevocable October Diploma, Austria promised to set a more prudent direction for itself. We hoped that the Czech nation’s demands to acknowledge the Crown law would be met, but we have been misinformed. Vienna can make beautiful promises but proves incapable of keeping them.<sup>72</sup>

One could claim, therefore, that the lack of trust in the Viennese centre, as demonstrated by the memoirs, is indicated by the fact that while the authors remembered the announcements of changes and reforms to come, they also remembered that they did not really believe they would lead to a political liberalism.<sup>73</sup> They thought instead that the Government would limit itself to administrative and economic reforms of small significance:

the promise of “immediate reforms in legislation and administration” did not spark much hope anywhere and in general did not make almost any impression. ... The absolutism of the Bachian system may have been defeated and removed, but what was to be introduced in its place was emerging without precedence and for a long time, and the spirit of fallen authoritarianism still remained prevalent. ... The Schmerling Constitution did not satisfy us.<sup>74</sup>

In the body of texts under study, one can also find responses that are characterised by a very shrew legal analysis and the skill of

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<sup>70</sup> Václav V. Tomek, *Paměti z mého života*, 2 vol. (Prague, 1904–5), i, 453.

<sup>71</sup> Malý, *Vzpomínky*, 142.

<sup>72</sup> Ninger, *Paměti*, 132.

<sup>73</sup> It is worth noting that the only memoirist referring to the constitutional change period as an era of liberalism was Alois Pražák, a Moravian politician and long-standing member of the Viennese parliament; cf. *idem*, *Paměti a listář Dra. Aloise Pražáka*, 2 vols. (Prague, 1926–7), i, 26.

<sup>74</sup> Heller, *Z minulé doby*, ii, 286 and 289.

reading between the lines. They emphasise above all the discrepancy between the October Diploma and the February Patent, as well as the electoral law, which was disadvantageous for the Czechs. They do not focus, however, on the moment the Diploma and the Patent were accepted, but evaluate their significance from the perspective of the monarchy's dualistic division established in 1867. As can be seen, both acts are approached as the beginning of a new era – one which leads to the introduction of the Austro-Hungarian dualism that went against the Czech interest.<sup>75</sup> Thus, the responses in question correspond with the evaluations found in later historiography. Some narrators, demonstrating wide political knowledge and the skill of thorough analysis, marginalise, in a way, the constitutional acts issued in Vienna – most probably because in their view, they had illusory significance for the Czech national movement.

Josef Richard Vilímek (1835–1911), a Prague journalist and publisher, recalls that the slow introduction of the dualism was excellently grasped in a summer 1861 issue of the satirical magazine *Humoristické listy* [Humorous Papers] where a cartoon was published:

the Austrian eagle with his legs still shackled with a chain, which symbolised the remnants of absolutism functioning till this day, his two heads being dragged by a German on the one side and a Hungarian on the other, at which a Slav standing aside stared stupidly.<sup>76</sup>

The ambience of cumulating sense of disorientation and exclusion of the Czechs from the state-wide politics, clearly remembered, comes to the fore here.

Most of the texts under discussion fail to notice that certain important acts of dissatisfaction or protest against the authorities occurred on the Czech side resulting from the imposition of the February Patent. Such events are only mentioned in two memoirs. Vilímek makes a general observation whereby

over the governmental and German-centralistic announcement of the Schmerlingian free-thought, of an allegedly German character, everyone but laughed and, to the extent practicable, did his or her best to protest against the February Constitution.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Tomek, *Paměti z mého života*, i, 460–6, ii, 9; Malý, *Vzpomínky*, 140–3.

<sup>76</sup> Josef R. Vilímek, *Ze zašlých dob. Vzpomínky* (Prague, 1908), 25.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*, 24.

He is not quite specific, however, about what those protests possibly consisted in. The journalist Adolf Srb (1850–1933), makes it more precise by stating that the anniversary of the October Diploma was celebrated in Prague with a parade with lampions, whilst the Government's decree ordaining official celebration of the February Patent anniversary was boycotted and requiem masses were held across Bohemia and Moravia as a token of protest. A Czech parish-priest was said to have published in a newspaper a letter confessing: "There is verily no reason for us, the Czechs, to rejoice of February 16; rather than that, we ought to sing one of the Psalms of David."<sup>78</sup> There appear doubts, however, as to how far such specific recollections could be trusted, and whether they should not be regarded as instances of confabulation, on the verge of canvassing journalism meant to solidify a specified image of history. It is all the more plausible that Srb has authored one of the first historical studies on the Czech lands in the latter half of the nineteenth century. No description of such occurrences may be found in any other memoir whatsoever. Adolf was merely eleven at that time, and thus probably could not quite remember and consciously evaluate the pieces of information coming from all over the country. *Národní listy* [The National Newspaper], the leading daily of the Czech liberals, remains tacit about the events Srb describes. Insofar as the newspaper might have not mentioned the boycott of the celebrations, its issue of October 21, 1861 published on its front page a piece of news covering an October Diploma anniversary celebration similar to the one described by Srb – the difference being that the scene was Turnov, a provincial town in Northern Bohemia, rather than Prague.<sup>79</sup> This makes one believe that this particular reminiscence ought to be approached at a distance and read as a retrograde projection of the resistance against, and disaffection for, the monarchy, which strongly intensified in the late years of the nineteenth century.

In several memoirs, a far greater significance is assigned to the petition to the emperor regarding Czech rights, submitted on June 14, 1860 by František Ladislav Rieger, which seems to acquire in these narrations the character of the actual constitutional act.<sup>80</sup> Unbeatable

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<sup>78</sup> Adolf Srb, *Z půl století. Vzpomínky* (Prague, 1913), 45.

<sup>79</sup> *Národní listy*, no. 289 (21 Oct. 1861), 1.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Čech, *Sebrané spisy*, i, 112–13, and Srb, *Z půl století*, 44.

in detailed descriptions of past events, Antonín Víták cites the petition in its entirety, analysing it carefully for over thirty pages. On the other hand, he is very reserved in talking about the constitutional acts issued in Vienna, and mentions only the October Diploma, to which he devotes all of the eight lines in his text.

The bewilderment and lack of trust for the Viennese hub of power observable in the texts under study point to the conclusion that according to their contemporaries, the two constitutional acts were not major turning points – or, their significance was diminished on a retrograde basis, from the perspective of the later developments of political relationships in the monarchy, resulting, in particular, from the final version of the constitutional dualism in 1867.

#### IV BLURRED TURNING POINT

Basing on a reconstruction of the individual memory, an interesting image is formed, which to a certain degree deforms the historical narrative that highlights the eruption of the Czech national movement caused by constitutional changes. What is portrayed as a turning point especially in the earlier historiography, the individual memory shapes into a long process whose effects were unpredictable to the narrators: “The transformation was being prepared with indecision”;<sup>81</sup> “Nothing came out of that at all, and at school and at home it all kept its old course for a long, long time yet ...”.<sup>82</sup>

Transformations are like small steps taken forward and back. Despite the belief, ‘floating somewhere in the air’, that a liberalisation of political and national life was at hand, the narrators recall that they experienced repressions even harsher than before. With regard to the situation in Prague, Svatopluk Čech wrote:

in the constitutional period, the police did not behave much better, in a way, towards us, the Czechs. ... They gave unfriendly look to every manifestation of the national spirit ..., always ready to detain and punish. The police’s secret antennae penetrated, first of all, into cafés and taverns, or even into meetings held at private houses; the police, impersonated by one of the

<sup>81</sup> Heller, *Z minulé doby*, ii, 289.

<sup>82</sup> Quis, *Knihá vzpomínek*, 119.



[attending] members, be it, at times, the most radical one, attended the most secret reunions of one or the other patriotic organisation.<sup>83</sup>

The same story was true for the provincial town of Rokycany near Plzeň, where – as Adolf Srb recollected – the activity of the state apparatus assumed an almost grotesque form:

some k.u.k. officials also took part in the national movement. ... My father, who was a treasury clerk at the time, ... was denounced, and a higher-ranking official came over from Plzeň in order to carry out a severe explanatory procedure. The grave delinquency of my father was that he had acquiesced for a set of red chairs to be acquired for the volunteer theatre.<sup>84</sup>

Václav Vladivoj Tomek recalls as follows, in turn: “Freedom of the press was awaited as well; instead, however, the [political] course turned even more repressive.”<sup>85</sup> This is confirmed as well by Antonín Víták’s reminiscence of the lot of František Ladislav Rieger’s petition to the emperor, which at first allegedly met with the emperor’s warm response:

Yet, the expectations of the demands expressed in the petition being satisfied were in vain; the petition did not have any effect: when, sometime afterwards, the newspaper *Posel z Prahy* [Messenger from Prague] reprinted it, the police ordered a confiscation of the copies and brought the publisher to court.<sup>86</sup>

In Ladislav Quis’s diary, we find a passage telling of mass expulsions from the school of those university students who participated in Czech demonstrations of 1860, precipitated by the chief of Prague police Päumann:

he threatened with the most severe punishments, up to expulsion from school, everyone who would in the future dare participate in a gathering of this kind. In the end, the chief of police ... managed to have many a student from our school experience it firsthand.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Čech, *Sebrané spisy*, i, 79.

<sup>84</sup> Srb, *Z půl století*, 11.

<sup>85</sup> Tomek, *Paměti z mého života*, i, 453.

<sup>86</sup> Antonín K. Víták, *Paměti starého učitele – vlastence, persekucí postiženého*, 2 vols. (Prague, 1902), i, 583.

<sup>87</sup> Quis, *Kniha vzpomínek*, 119.

While the memory of direct repressions concerns the transitional period of 1859 and 1860, the transformation of mentality, especially in the provinces, took much longer and began to withdraw after a wave of national enthusiasm. Josef Holeček writes about it in relation to Písek, where he attended a secondary school at the time:

the condition of the national movement a few years later did not mean progress. ... The early eruption of joy has passed and all social elements returned to their places, to their prejudices and habits. Those who before were ... indifferent, lukewarm, weak, unbelieving, distrustful were like that again.<sup>88</sup>

What Holeček described is reconfirmed, with a greater accuracy, in the memoirs of Karel Ninger, then a professor with the 'real gymnasium' in Písek. In the town which indeed witnessed a rather remarkable eruption of the Czech national movement, incited in particular by Czech secondary-school professors, the county warden Milner was dismissed and a new one, named Urban, sent over, tasked with pursuance of a severer antinational policy:

the purpose behind his mission very soon became apparent to us. He was wont to say that Písek fell spiritually ill, whilst he has come onto this place in order to heal and cure it; and once he so does, he shall be made court councillor. It had been in Prague or in Vienna that the task was entrusted to him, I should believe. He regarded the town's national emancipation as an illness, and endeavoured to everywhere suppress and eradicate it.<sup>89</sup>

The descriptions quoted so far clearly show that the freedom brought about by the October Diploma was assessed in the later years as a rather theoretical category, since everything remained as it had been before for a long time afterwards, especially in the provincial authority structures. It can therefore infer that a rigid turning point of the transition, as present in the historical narrative, is simply absent in the individual memory of those who participated in the historical process.

The goal of the present analysis was to find out whether the portrayal of constitutional changes in the Habsburg monarchy in the years 1860–1, as recorded in individual memories of participants in the historical process, is considerably different from the one present

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<sup>88</sup> Holeček, *Pero*, 55.

<sup>89</sup> Ninger, *Paměti*, 149.

in historical narrations or only modifies and complements it to a small extent. First of all, let it be emphasised that the description of the events which are presented in the memoirs is basically consistent with the historiographical descriptions; no significant fundamental differences can be found. However, the reconstructed responses, evaluations and impressions modify in some way the image of a fundamental turning point and development of the national movement as shaped by historiography.

First of all, the fact comes of a surprise that in spite of a rather considerable sensitivity of the authors to matters political and national, which is identifiable elsewhere, nearly half of them remain completely tacit about the constitutional acts issued and the related changes. The silence is kept by authors of diverse social position: Palacký and Beer are similarly tacit; and, regardless of where they are situated at the centre or in the peripheries of national life: Paulus of Eastern Bohemia or Mikšíček in Moravia are silent along with a host of individuals from Prague. As for the remaining texts, it could be observed that the portrayal of constitutional changes might have been reduced, perceived through the prism of external and cursory emblems, or described in terms of disorientation and lack of trust toward the Vienna-based authority centre. Also, memoirist records could have been expected to be more enthusiastic when it comes to recollecting the earliest intense developments of the national movement. Instead, we encounter rather conventional descriptions, not infrequently making use of clichés, or – as with the Ninger text – traces of anxiety about the progressing Czech-German polarisation of life. There is more focus on the constitutional acts only in case they are assessed critically from the standpoint of the political dualism introduced in 1867.

Are the responses presented above, as traceable in the texts under discussion, only a product of the individual memories, or of a later influence of official discourses shaping the frames of collective memory on the memory of each of these authors? It is difficult to give an unambiguous answer to this question. The image of the 1860–1 constitutional change as depicted by the memoirists must have been filtered through the awareness of the earlier or later developments – and should be interpreted thus. What may this image testify to, then? Perhaps it reconfirms a general trend of reducing in the individual memory the occurrences in the public sphere from relatively peaceful periods, and the period in question ought to be deemed as such,

in any case. The portrayal is also interpretable in terms that it expresses the insignificance, realised with time, of those Austrian acts to the formation of Czech identity and national life. The petition of leading Czech politicians to the emperor has appeared more important and better remembered by the recollecting authors. In my estimation, the picture in question is also a manifestation of lack of identification of members of the Czech society with the country they lived in – the situation they grew increasingly aware of at the century's end whilst not as yet overtly expressing it. In turn, no enthusiasm expressed in face of the changes taking place in the national life, as observable in most of the texts under study, confirms, I believe, the statement formulated in the most recent historiographical study by Borovička, Kaše, Kučera, and Bělina, whereby the Czech society was rather moderately prepared for such transition. One thing seems obvious, though. The historiographical turning point believed to have taken place in the years 1860–1 loses its crucial character in individual Czech narrations.

*trans. Aleksandra Michalska, Tristan Korecki*