

ON THE SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND ROLE-
CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE CZECHS:
NATIONAL IDEOLOGIES BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

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During their self-constitution as a modern nation (Risorgimento), the Czechs — like other peoples in the same situation — felt the need to affirm their national consciousness and right to existence via an ideology that assigned them (in the sense of J. G. Herder and idealistic philosophy) a special historical achievement or mission in world history. Palacký and Masaryk saw these in the struggle for humanity and democracy in a differently (German) oriented environment and thus were able to surmount the doubts that repeatedly surfaced among the Czechs, as a small nation, about the meaning of their national existence. Though positivistic historiography (Pekař and Goll) criticized this myth, it nevertheless did contribute, albeit in a much more matter-of-fact form, to a self-justification based on the historic cultural achievement. Even the national self-interpretation of E. Rádl, who shifted the accent from the national perspective to the role of European-wide conflicts, and the Communist Z. Nejedlý, who, like Masaryk, celebrated Hussitism (rein-

terpreted, to be sure, along social-revolutionary lines) as a Czech contribution to world history, moved in a „Western“ sphere.

Only the second wave of communism which followed the Soviet invasion of 1968 has set out to counter „bourgeois“ historical science with a deliberate pedagogical self-interpretation and historical interpretation in a dogmatic Marxist sense.