Philosopher on the Throne. Edvard Beneš and the Philosophical Foundations of Practical Activity*

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The following article is to be understood as a case study of political idealism. But what kind of idealism? Here, idealism is neither a philosophical position of the priority of self-consciousness in the Hegelian sense, nor any kind of trivial idealism of political naïveté or optimism. What we mean by idealism is the standpoint of a practical politician, a philosopher on the throne, who strives to actualise ideas in social life. The first Czechoslovak Republic was created in this idealistic manner as the philosophical project of the philosophers on the throne. I shall deal with the case of the lesser known member of the Masaryk and Beneš duo. I shall focus on how Beneš's political thinking builds on his understanding of individualism as freedom, as the self-actualisation of man as an autonomous and harmonious being, self-determined by reason.

As far as an assessment of Beneš's political activity is concerned, this study concentrates only on Beneš's views and stances: it is not for me to judge his particular political decisions. The analysis that follows offers evidence of the coherency of Beneš's political thinking, or rather it presents Beneš's own reflections upon his political activity. However, the study does not deal with how and in what sense these stances can be grasped as interpretive contexts, or even the reasons for Beneš's political standpoints. Due to space constraints, we will only focus on the period of the First Republic, prior to the Munich agreement.

Firstly, we shall study how the idea of a crisis of European humanity served as a point of departure for the political and philosophical thought of both Czechoslovak philosophers on the throne, Masaryk and Beneš. Second-

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ly, we will focus on Edvard Beneš's understanding of the crisis. Thirdly, I shall show that Beneš, at least in some cardinal aspects, had formed his interpretive position and worldview already before the First World War and that the opinions of later Beneš, the politician and stateman, can be traced back to his dissertation of 1909, *The Origin and Development of Modern Political Individualism* (*Původ a vývoj moderního politického individualismu*).[1] Finally, I shall conclude the study with a reflection upon the relationship between philosophy and politics, an idealistic relationship, in which a philosopher really *should be* on the throne, since, for Beneš, the crisis of European humanity is a crisis of ideals, and its solution thus lies in the actualisation of humanistic ideals, the implementation of moral education and, most of all, in working towards a new type of man, a harmonious individual.

A key role in the whole study is played by the thesis that Beneš's opinions, and even his philosophical stances, are consistent. Beneš the politician is determined by Beneš the philosopher, the sociologist. And as for his philosophical opinions, Beneš's dissertation of 1909 is of essential significance. In the interwar period, these principles of his thinking, which are the principles of his politics, are consistent. After all, Beneš himself declares this consistency publicly:

> "In such tremendously grave and deeply revolutionary circumstance, throughout my thirty years in public life I have proceeded steadfastly and without compromise and in accordance with my philosophical and moral attitude towards and belief in law and justice, spiritual progress and social good; never did I betray this […]"[2]

It remains to be seen whether his philosophical-political thinking really was consequential, maintaining a steady course; whether Beneš's political beliefs remain consistent throughout the period studied. Beneš's manuscripts from the Masaryk Archive were used to support this thesis.

1 Beneš, E., *The Origin and Development of Political Individualism in the History of Modern Philosophy* (*until French Revolution*) – (*Vznik a vývoj politického individualismu v dějinách moderní filosofie /až do francouzské revoluce/*), dissertation thesis, manuscript, 1909 (in the archives of the Masaryk Institute: EB IV/1, 123 R 10A/3 [R43], folder No. 12). Pagination taken from the manuscript in the Masaryk Institute Archive.

2 Beneš, E., *The World Crisis, Continuity of the Law and a New Revolutionary Law* (*Světová krise, kontinuita práva a nové právo revoluční*). Praha, V. Linhart 1946, p. 7. This is the speech Beneš gave at the official ceremony of accepting *doctor honoris causa* he was granted by Prague's Faculty of Law.

1. Patočka, Masaryk, Beneš and the European crisis

We begin with Patočka's early Masarykean studies. In them, Patočka highlights the idea of a deep European crisis as being in the centre of Masaryk's thinking. After all, Patočka himself, as well as his teacher Husserl and also, as we shall see, Edvard Beneš, to whom this paper is dedicated, are all diagnosticians of the European crisis. According to Patočka, the crisis is of historical origin, it is a crisis of the European man of the late Modern era. Masaryk's study of suicide is nothing else than his attempt at analysis of a critical condition, a symptom of which is suicidality.

So where does this crisis originate? Patočka claims that

> "Both Masaryk's sociology and his philosophy of history are mainly an analysis of the potential and real effect of ideas and beliefs on the individual and on society."[3]

What ideas and effects are we talking about in terms of the crisis? In Patočka's interpretation, Masaryk thinks that the origins of the crisis lie in secularism, rationalism – and a naïve faith in progress – of the 19th century. In other words, the methodism of the natural sciences and secularist thinking are *symptoms* of the critical condition. It logically follows that Masaryk's philosophical and political praxis will necessarily consist of efforts to put a renewed emphasis on the Christian foundations of Europeanhood and on the concept of providence and its role in history. In this way, Masaryk strives to motivate towards action, and rid people of scepsis and subjectivism. Because what man needs most is supraindividual support.

> "… [Masaryk] saw the crisis of modern man in scepsis and nihilism, i.e. in a malaise of a metaphysical character."[4]

And, to repeat Patočka's thesis, what is at question here is the effect of ideas on the individual.

We shall devote more attention to the theme of political idealism understood in this way in the second half of this paper. We begin with a closer look

3 Patočka, J., Masaryk's and Husserl's View of the Spiritual Crisis of European Humanity (Masarykovo a Husserlovo pojetí duševní krize evropského lidstva). See *The Czechs I. Complete works of Jan Patočka, Vol. 12* (*Češi I. Sebrané spisy 12*). Praha, Oikoymenh 2006, p. 23.

4 Patočka, J., Masaryk Yesterday and Today (Masaryk včera a dnes). See *The Czechs I. Complete works of Jan Patočka, Vol. 12*, p. 98.

at how Beneš approaches the crisis of Europeanhood, or the crisis of modern man. First of all, it is beyond doubt that the second Czechoslovak president occupies himself with the problem of deep crisis explicitly and repeatedly throughout the interwar period. We cannot claim that Beneš, unlike Masaryk, analysed the crisis in the pre-war period, on the other hand, however, we have evidence for his long-held standpoint that the crisis is "a world crisis of contemporary humanity in general".[5] Let us have a closer look at how Beneš specifies the nature of the crisis. He notices that it concerns the particular predominant worldviews of the time:

On the one hand, it is a crisis of nationalism. Beneš considers the nationalist movements proliferating in the interwar period to be ideological currents offering identity and an identification effect, similar to that previously provided by religion. What nationalism suppresses, however, is individuality. Yet, Beneš assigns a positive meaning to nationalism, too, insofar as national culture is in accordance with the ideals of humanity. Beneš is a supporter of cultural relativism, respect for other cultures, where no culture is superior to another.

Secondly, it is a crisis of democracy. Beneš notes that democracy was working as a destructive power, since it challenged the certainties of the old regime. Democracy will continue to retain this disintegrating effect unless we realise that "democracy is first of all a moral problem, and especially a problem of moral education guided by the philosophy of humanness."[6] Therefore "democracy essentially is, or at least should be, a regime of a true spiritual and moral nobility."[7]

Thirdly, it is a crisis of scientific socialism, i.e. a crisis of Marxism. Beneš refuses the simplifying Marxist interpretation of the antagonism of two classes, refuses the idea of the inevitable road to revolution, and, conversely, emphasizes the plurality of various social groups and classes, and the consolidation of the state.[8]

Fourthly, it is a crisis of science. What is meant here by crisis – and we can juxtapose Beneš's stance in this matter, for instance, to Husserl's famous account of the late 1930's – is a diminishing faith in reason. For Beneš, this is

5 Beneš, E., *Moral Crisis of the Afterwar World* (*Mravní krise poválečného světa*), manuscript, 1928, p. 9 (in the archives of the Masaryk Institute, EB IV/1; R 48/5A, 252 R 48/5a [R 67, R 68], folder No. 78). Pagination taken from the manuscript.

6 Ibid., p. 23.

7 Ibid., p. 25.

8 Here as well as in other instances of Beneš' comments and reflections of political movements or authors, we do not occupy ourselves with evaluation of adequacy of Beneš' interpretation. It is not the goal of the study to give an account of Beneš' qualities as a philosopher.

caused by the cold rationalism of positivism which, in his opinion, inevitably leads to materialism, moral neutrality or indifference, and utilitarianism. Science, as he says, should be "moralised", it should adopt

> "a new feature, an intuitive and emotional feature. This is what is at stake now. This is where the crisis of today's scientific worldview lies; this is the crisis of the same ideology that turned science into a fetish."[9]

The crisis of science leads to resorting to occultism, mysticism, but also to worldviews founded on nationalism and will.

> "Should [modern man] be an aristocrat of spirit, he must possess firmness, decisiveness and clarity of reason just as he should possess empathy, openness and tenderness of heart."[10]

Finally, it is the crisis of religion in the sense that – as Beneš says – instead of sincere and true religious sentiment we have a rash of sectarianism, mysticism and occultism.

It appears that the starting point of all these particular crises is the individual's relationship towards collective pillars, be it a nation, Church or political system.

> "… In all great social crises [we can see] the primordial struggle between two huge tendencies that exist within society, between an individual's analytical desire for freedom, and an effort to maintain the unity of society by exercising a certain degree of authority and collective discipline…"[11]

Due to the world war, Europe found itself at a crossroads. Beneš is not indifferent to this crisis, but he is a politician who practically implements his principles in political life. The crisis that we are discussing is the result of political and social development and at its core there lies, as I have said above, a conflict between two tendencies, individualist and collectivist. Beneš believes that he understands the crisis, for he studied the historical prerequisites for individualism as well as its relationship to the collectivities that

9 Ibid., p. 44.
10 Ibid., p. 47.
11 Ibid., p. 11.

form social cohesion. Therefore, his political activity can find support in this theoretical base.

Although Beneš assesses the crisis of modern man only in the interwar period, he builds on his basic opinions in his dissertation thesis on the origin and development of political individualism, to which we shall now turn our attention. Our aim here is not to discuss the problem of the development of political (or philosophical) individualism as such, but to focus solely on the emphasis that Beneš places on certain themes, through which he reveals his own standpoint.

2. Beneš's Dissertation on *The Origin and Development of Modern Political Individualism*

The interpretation Beneš offers in his dissertation thesis is historical, limited solely to a period of the European Modern Age of less than three hundred years, beginning with the Reformation and ending with the French Revolution. Beneš therefore speaks of *the origin* and *development* of individualism because, in his opinion, an individualist concept of humanity played no role at the beginning of the late Medieval Period. Beneš sees Christianity critically, as a denial of the Ancient Greek and Roman view of life, which was strongly individualistic. In his opinion, Christian morality is indeed "strongly anti-individualistic",[12] and indifferent towards injustice (render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, render unto God the things that are God's). It is even a type of mysticism, dogmatism, a monopoly on explanation of the phenomena of the world, i.e. an esoteric interpretation that must be relied on.

As I have said, here is the beginning of development culminating in practical implementation of individualism in political space. The starting point, according to Beneš, is in the development of science that furnishes man with reasons, explains the world around him, and thus founds in him a feeling of self-respect. This is the first turning point. The second is reformational schism within Christianity and the demand for freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and a right to criticism, which are all raised by Protestantism.

The next step of his interpretation deals with the concept of natural rights. He believes that natural rights are, to begin with, a result of theoretical thinking, and so their theoretical background comes years before their actual implementation in political space.

Beneš centres his analysis around the classic (and quite simplistically understood) Modern Age idea of the social contract that can be found in all

12 Beneš, E., *The Origin and Development of Political Individualism*, p. 5.

Modern Age political thinkers, almost without exception. A political community is founded only by a social contract and in this respect – as most of these thinkers believe – political rights are the result of a contractual state and are therefore positive, i.e. based solely on a shared agreement.

However, Beneš does not agree with this way of thinking about society and refuses the idea that one can just as easily be stripped of one's rights within the social space as one can be granted them. This is why Beneš appreciates Locke as the most thorough thinker as far as a clear formulation of natural human rights as something preceding the social contract is concerned. People enter these contractual relations[13] free and equal. Therefore, the contract cannot deny people their original and fundamental freedom and equality. Locke is certainly not the first thinker to address natural rights, but his elaboration is the most successful one in Beneš's eyes. He considers Locke's position to be one of "pure individualism", because Locke creates a basic spectrum of natural rights, such as the right to possession, since he defines property as the result of life-sustaining work and sustaining one's life is a natural right. Similarly, Locke ascribes individual rights also to children and the wife to combat domestic tyranny.

Civil society was created as a means of protection against the iniquity of strong individuals, and so society is, in fact, a third party in intersubjectivity. This third party is delegated with the resolution of conflicts. In this sense, the point of civil society is the defence of natural rights. The field of jurisdiction of natural law is delineated by the bounds of irrevocable natural rights.

We are dedicating such an amount of space to Locke (in Beneš's rendition, of course!) intentionally, because Beneš links his version of Locke with classical individualist liberalism while, at the same time, distinguishing it from the rejected and criticised liberalism of the 19th century.

Two things hold true for Beneš's interpretation of later individualism of the 18th century:

Beneš claims that this position is better than the liberalism of the 19th century. First of all, the thinkers of the period prior to the French Revolution believed that, paradoxically enough, it is impossible to safeguard individual rights without the power of the state. The moment that there comes a demand for complete emancipation and equality of individuals with respect to one another, the uncontrollable and exploitative liberalism of the 19th century will follow. The state is required as a guarantor of individual rights.[14]

13 Here *contract* is understood in analytical terms, not historical ones.

14 Such is the case with, for example, Adam Smith or Montesquieu. See Beneš, E., *The Origin and Development of Political Individualism*, p. 100.

Secondly, he shows, in the cases of the two most important political thinkers of the 18th century, how such a conflict leads to a situation where, for the sake of defending individual rights, an almost socialist conception of the state can emerge. Beneš considers Rousseau to be a socialist, because if the state is a political body that answers to the people, represents the people, then such a state is denying individuals of their rights. Instead of "I am the state" there is "the state is everybody and nobody" – after all, how could one protest against the government of the people that one is a part of? "In Rousseau, we can best see how close a practically absolutist idea of the state comes close to the idea of socialism."[15] Beneš passes a similar judgement on Kant as well.

The result is that "a society cannot be understood solely in socialist or individualist terms"[16] and Beneš's own position is somewhere around the moderate centre. It is an attempt at maintaining a balance and mutual co-dependence between the subjective and the supraindividual, collective aspects.

Now to ask the question more specifically: what, in the end, is individualism for Beneš?

3. The Concept of Individualism in E. Beneš

Now we are able to formulate Beneš's understanding of individuality and individualism more accurately. It is important to note that individuality is not understood here as an extreme position, but rather as a happy medium *between* two extreme alternatives. The first extreme is collectivism, i.e. allegiance to a group and its shared identity and to its system of values. The second extreme alternative is subjectivism in the sense of an emphasis on the individual's own self-determination, regardless of shared values. Collectivism is the absence of individuality, whereas the standpoint of subjectivism promotes formal, negative individualism in an almost Hegelian sense. Therefore, Beneš rejects them both and gives preference to his happy medium:

Beneš criticises the extreme of the absence of individuality, where one is a member of a collectivity within which it is unclear what the reasons for one's actions are. These reasons are mystical in the sense that they are given to the individual simply to believe in, and one then acts in accordance with this belief without actually (individually) participating in the decision-making. One is not free, as one has no control over the reasons for one's actions

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 115.

and is thus acting at the behest of somebody else's conviction. In this sense, one is not an individuality. Such is the case of the aforementioned religious or nationalist collectivities.

At the other end of the scale we have extreme individuality which Beneš links to Nietzsche and Stirner. To be more precise, Beneš talks of the "will to power" as a characteristic trait of modern man which expresses the desire of such man to be the sole ruler of his own free self-determination. However, such will has at its source simply individual wanting driven to its extreme, which means nothing more than "that's mine". In this sense, this extreme is subjectivism.

Nevertheless, Beneš avoids both extremes. Beneš himself establishes his own position in the centre as he strives for harmonious individuality, i.e. a rational, moderate, self-controlled individuality. What Beneš means by this is neither a dogmatic and, "obscurantist" person as this type of person is governed by irrationality, nor a purely individualistic, subjectivist person, whose only principle of action is his own particularity. Rational action is somewhere in between these two – on the one hand, it means submitting to rational reason, but it also means personal identification with the public, common reason. The key to the individual is will, i.e. freedom in the sense that man is to be the source of his own determination, man is to rid himself of obscure reasons and accept rational reasons that will help one to be the master of his own will and purpose.[17]

Thus, individualism for Beneš is the ideal of moderation, of "nothing in excess", as both extremes lead to repression of the individual, either by force or power, as is the case with extreme individuality, or by suppression and dissolution in the ideology to which that individual adheres.

Yet, individualism is not merely a negative position, a sort of "neither-nor". On the contrary, Beneš takes it to be the completion of man, his perfection

17 Beneš's vision of man's possibilities of self-determination is somehow "moderate" in the sense that, on the one hand, one should be the originator of one's own destiny, but such possibility at the same time reaches the external boundaries of global history that restrict the formability of individuality. He speaks of a "fatalism of historical development": "Thus, I do not preach a blind fatalism of unleashed social forces; after all, I did reject theories of Marxist historical materialism. On the contrary, I believe there is a certain logic in history, which is determined by human will, emotions, and endeavour. That is why I see leading individualities as significant agents that govern and deeply influence the direction of social development. However, the moment that social forces reach a certain intensity – a single individual's will ceases to be capable of controlling them. And it is in this individual action and free influence of individuals and masses that the logic of history unveils and often takes shape of historical justice, reward, and historical judgement…" Beneš, E., *The World War and Our Revolution: A Selection of Texts* (*Světová válka a naše revoluce: výbor z díla*). Praha, Společnost Edvarda Beneše 1994, p. 61.

and finalisation. What is man supposed to be? Beneš's advice to the members of the YMCA is:

> "…to transform oneself into a harmonious, even-tempered man, into a modern man of synthesis of both heart and reason."[18]

Let us name a couple of similar instances in other works and manuscripts written by Beneš. In his preliminary notes to a lecture on moral crisis, which we cited from above, Beneš drafts a version of new morality in points:

> "A calm, even-tempered man – the goal of today's struggle – the *struggle for individuality* in times of regimentation of the state and implementation of mass democracy and collectivism."[19]

In the same lecture, he speaks of a new, harmonious man, a new humanity that is "underpinned by metaphysics and religion." And finally: "what makes each great individuality great [?]," is the question Beneš raises in his lecture titled *Personality, Worldview, Politics* (*Osobnost, světový názor, politika*).

> "A great figure is great due to his distinctiveness of feeling and reason, a sophisticated harmony of both rational and emotional qualities, an indefatigable energy of will, and a fineness of intuitive knowledge of people and life's realities."[20]

I believe that it is on the basis of such formulations that Patočka claims Beneš was influenced by Herder.[21] Individuality is a singular, qualitatively unique actualisation of the rational and emotional basis of man. Although this basis is common to all humanity, its actualisation and harmonious completion is not. However, becoming a person is a human task and in this sense it is a task for humanity. Beneš's humanism, Patočka says,

18 Beneš, E., *The Conditions for a Successful Life* (*Podmínky úspěšného života*). Praha, Vydavatelské oddělení YMCA 1929, p. 12–13.

19 Passage 7. "The consequence is: *new morality*." („7. Důsledkem bude: *nová morálka.*"), point b) and c) of the manuscript notes to the lecture on moral crisis, in the Masaryk Institute Archives EB IV/1, 265 R 66–69 (R 57, 70), folder No. 102.

20 Lecture *Personality, Worldview, Politics* (*Osobnost, světový názor, politika*) delivered in Vinohrady theatre on December 15, 1929. In the Masaryk Institute Archives EB IV/1 247 R 48/3/1, folder No. 75.

21 Patočka, J., *Philosophical Prerequisities of Practical Activity* (*Filosofické předpoklady praktické činnosti*). See *The Czechs I. Complete works of Jan Patočka, Vol. 12*, p. 81.

"lies in the original, fundamental decision to achieve a specific, therefore irrational, content of life, whereas the Enlightenment retreats from it and hides behind abstract rational axioms and moral principles."[22]

4. A Philosopher on the Throne. On the Philosophical Prerequisites of Practical Activity

The goal of politics is to help actualise humanity. In this last step of my paper I will focus shortly on the problem of an idealistic understanding of history that was implied in Masaryk's case at the beginning of this paper, but that plays an equally important role in Beneš's thinking. It is the notion that ideas are the driving force behind history. The owl of Beneš spreads its wings at daybreak: "… public political and social institutions always lag behind the development of ideas…"[23] For instance, *the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* has been theoretically influencing political space for five centuries. It is the philosophers, the theoreticians who are the driving force of history. In case of the French Revolution, they even become actively involved: "All those philosophers are preachers, announcers of new life…"[24]

The shortcoming or one-sidedness of the aforementioned origin of individualist politics is that philosophers cared, first of all, for intellectual freedom – let's take Kant's *"An answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?"* which locates freedom of the individual in the freedom of public scholarly speech, of rational criticism in the society of scholars. It is the following 19th century that brings with it the problem of *material* conditions of life.

In the end, it is the philosopher's job to make sure that humanity in the form of the "modern harmonious man who seeks his individuality in the synthesis of both reason and heart"[25] is actualised in political space. In Beneš's opinion, a politician must also be a philosopher, as well as an artist and sci-

22 For Beneš, the ideal of actualising a really great personality also entails the attainment of "*objectivity and the state of not taking things personally at every step of one's activity…*" (emphasis by JM). The quotation is from *Five Stages of Masaryk's Life* (*Pět fází Masarykova života*), a lecture that is part of a larger text titled *Masaryk's Struggle for Liberation. The Concept of Nation and Its Role* (Masarykův boj o osvobození. Pojetí národa a jeho poslání). In the Masaryk Institute Archives EB IV/1 259 R 57–61/a (R 66, R 67, R 69, R 70, R 91), folder No. 92–97.

23 Beneš, E., *The Origin and Development of Political Individualism*, p. 17–18. With allusion to Hegel's famous definition of philosophy that reflects the reality ex post, see Hegel, G. W. F., *The Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Transl. H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 23.

24 Beneš, E., *The Origin and Development of Political Individualism*, p. 129.

25 Beneš, E., Rede an die Deutschen in der ČSR 1935. In: Werner, A. (ed.), *Edvard Beneš, Geist und Werk*, manuscript, 1935 (in the Masaryk Institute Archives, EB IV/1, 678 R 227B/7, folder No. 154).

entist, but first and foremost a philosopher, since after all his standpoint, i.e. that which serves as a foundation for his politics, is the ideality mediated to him by philosophy.

Beneš, the humanist, understands his task as a struggle for democracy, yet not a democracy reduced to liberal parliamentarism. Democracy is no specific "institutionalism, [but] a philosophical and moral attitude, [democracy] strives for actualisation of freedom, equality of rights, law, justice, and brotherhood…"[26] To be more precise, democracy involves the "problem of moral education of the masses and leaders",[27] democracy raises the question

> "how, by what political means and methods is it possible to maintain the highest level of individual freedom, and, at the same time, reconcile it with the collectivist tendencies of modern societies, states, and nations?"[28]

To conclude: Firstly, I claim that Beneš is a politician-philosopher in the sense that he declares his philosophical standpoints to be the ultimate motives of his practical activity. This means, most importantly, that Beneš respects the concept of individualism as a happy medium between two extremes, collectivism and subjectivism, and that this concept remains the fundamental conviction he keeps throughout the whole period of our focus. Secondly, I also claim that Beneš is convinced of the significant influence of ideas on history and therefore that ideas are the real battleground of politics, since they form human society. Finally, I claim that Beneš maintained his position constantly ever since writing his dissertation thesis on the origin and development of political individualism. In this respect, it is necessary to take into consideration his ideas drafted already in 1909 to be able to assess the principles and standpoints that form the context of Beneš's political work. In 1923, then Minister of foreign affairs and recently elected Prime minister of Czechoslovak government, Dr. Edvard Beneš said:

> "…humanist philosophy, which builds on the natural rights of man, is something absolute. Every other philosophy that gives different rea-

26 In an interview titled *Minister Beneš on Dynamics of Democracy* (Ministr Beneš o dynamičnosti demokracie). Manuscript, 1935 (in the Masaryk Institute Archives, EB IV/1, 259 R 57–61/a [66, R 67, R 69, R 70, R 91], folder No. 92–97).

27 From the already quoted manuscript notes in the Masaryk Institute Archives, EB IV/1, 265 R 66–69 (R 57, 70), folder No. 102 (The Moral Crisis of the Afterwar World).

28 From Beneš's opening speech at Prague's Philosophical congress, September 2, 1934. Manuscript in the Masaryk Institute Archives, EB IV/1, 258 R 55–56 (R 65, R 66, R 62, R 70).

> sons for national rights is relative. I shall hold on to the philosophy which has absolute value for me."[29]

His politics were guided by philosophy, it was a diagnosis of and a therapy for a deep philosophical-moral crisis[30] of the period. To end this study, I shall yield the floor to Beneš himself:

> "Everything I have said about the crisis of democracy is, in fact, the struggle for a new Europe, a new European, a new person. Therefore, the Czechoslovak ideal is the ideal of a new Europe."[31]

29 An article for journals *Prager Presse* and *Tribuna*, March 2, 1923, Beneš, E., Das Humanitätsideal und das Nationalitätsideal. *Prager Presse*, 3, 1923, No. 59, 2. 3., evening edition, p. 1.

30 Beneš talks about philosophical-moral crisis in an article prepared for *Prager Presse* journal, titled *The World Crisis and Its Solution* (Světová krise a její řešení). The manuscript is from 1923 and was never actually published in *Prager Presse*. In the Masaryk Institute Archives, EB IV/1, 247 R 48/3/1, folder No. 75.

31 From a lecture titled *The Crisis of Democracy and the Fight for Autoritative Regimes* (Krise demokracie a boj o autoritativní režimy) wich was delivered in Jihlava in 1935. Manuscript in the Masaryk Institute Archives, EB IV/1 259 R 57–61/a (R 66, R 67, R 69, R 70, R 91), folder 92–97.