A CZECH THINKER IN TERMS OF CRISIS
Emanuel Rádl (1873-1942)
Bedřich Loewenstein

This contribution, an expanded version of a lecture, deals with the public life of the Czech biologist, philosopher, and theorist on the emergence of nations, Emanuel Rádl, and with his interpretation of history. In many ways, Rádl was influenced by T. G. Masaryk, and in certain respects he continued the latter's intellectual work. During the crisis-laden interwar period, Rádl attacked both neo-romantic irrationalism and the naturalist neglecting of the intellectual sphere by subsuming it under natural history. Rádl's anti-positivist understanding of philosophy was determined by an ethos of responsibility. Consequently, according to him reason must prove itself in any given situation, not act as an exponent of a certain logic of development, a community of nationally-determined interests or a closed system of values. Just like nation was an open project, an “offer to join and contribute,” so was history not a quasi-natural process approaching a predetermined goal, but a legacy to be acquired by means of dialogue and “elective affinity.” Rádl’s efforts in favor of a non-nationalist Czechoslovakia, of the primacy of primordial truth vis-à-vis whatever personal experience and custom there may be, and of a concept of nation as “plebiscite on a daily basis” merit to be recalled by all of us. Moreover, Rádl anticipated findings of today’s “cultural turn,” as well as the theory of “imagined communities.”

“THEY WILL REMAIN SILENT AND WAIT FOR ‘BETTER’ TIMES”
Paralyzing and Dismantling the Czechoslovak Writers’ Union at the Beginning of the “Normalization Period” (1968-1970)
Ines Koeltzsch

The present contribution deals with the relationship between writers and politics, examining how the Czechoslovak, respectively Czech, writers’ union was paralyzed and finally dismantled after the “Prague Spring” had failed to deliver. The author takes a closer look first at the mutual dependency of a change of methods as far as “politics proper” was concerned, and a change of assessment on the ideological level which the CPCz leadership made with regard to the Prague Spring and its protagonists as the year 1970 drew to a close. The other focus is on the writers’ reactions towards the “normalization policy” which represented an ever greater threat to their professional subsistence. While the CP leadership did not succeed in winning prominent writers over for an active support of the “normalization” cause, by enforcing a ban on certain journals or individual writers and by finally, in late 1970, even disbanding the union it did manage to bring lots of pressure to bear on the writers and to make them silent, at least for the time being.