

GALA RECEPTIONS FOR BOOK OF SETON-WATSON DOCUMENTS

Rarely has a book on the Czechs and Slovaks received a multinational welcome comparable to that accorded *R. W. Seton-Watson and His Relations with the Czechs and Slovaks. Documents/Dokumenty 1906–1951* between September 1996 and January 1997. Its publication was celebrated at festive meetings in Prague, Bratislava, Martin, and London attended by Seton-Watson's surviving son Christopher, the editors of its two volumes and well-wishers and dignitaries. This wide acclaim was primarily due to the long and trustworthy relationship between R. W. Seton-Watson (1879–1951), the Scottish historian, publicist, editor, and educator, and leading founders and officials of interwar Czechoslovakia such as T. G. Masaryk, Edvard Beneš, Milan Hodža, and Anton Štefánek. Then there is the book's high quality. Its 228 carefully edited letters and other documents in volume I and the informative indexes of names and places in volume II show Seton-Watson's intimate involvement with the political and nationality problems of the Czechs and Slovaks from their rule by Austria-Hungary until the communist takeover in 1948.

The book was the product of an impressive institutional and personal collaboration. It was jointly published by the *Ústav T. G. Masaryk* in Prague and the *Matica slovenská* in Martin, with financial support from the Czech *Komerční banka* and the French *Fondation pour le progrès de l'homme*. Thomas D. Marzik of St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia and Jan Rychlík of the *Ústav TGM* were its editors, assisted by Miroslav Bielik of the *Matica slovenská*. Christopher Seton-Watson provided many of his father's personal papers and wrote an introductory essay on his career.

The first of the four receptions or "launches" was held on 17 September at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in downtown Prague. It was cosponsored by

the Czech Academy, the British Embassy, and the Ústav TGM, with Václav Pačes, Vice President of the Academy, officiating. The speakers included His Excellency Sir Michael Burton, KCVO, CMG, the British Ambassador; Jaroslav Opat, Director of the Ústav TGM, and Christopher Seton-Watson, with remarks by Jan Rychlík and Thomas Marzik. The Ambassador quoted approvingly from the documents in the book as evidence of Great Britain's solicitude for the Czechs and Slovaks from early in this century – apart from the Munich Agreement – and into the Second World War and beyond.

After dining with Sir Michael at the British Embassy in Malá Strana, Dr. Rychlík and Professors Marzik and Seton-Watson motored to Slovakia. In Bratislava, they presented their book to the Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences at a meeting chaired by Dušan Kováč, Director of the Institute. Present in the audience was Ondrej A. Halaga, archivist and historian from Košice, whose letter of 27 February 1951 to R. W. Seton-Watson is the last document to be reprinted in the book.

The travelers then went to Martin, where they were warmly greeted by their colleague Miroslav Bielik, Administrative Director of the *Matica slovenská*. On 19 September, he bestowed on each of them the "Pamätná medalia Matice slovenskej." There they met Mrs. Želmíra Bellušová, the daughter of Anton Štefánek, who had attended the prior reception in Prague. Ružomberok was the next stop, where they placed flowers at a bust of Seton-Watson, the only memorial to him in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. At Bystrička, a village near Martin, they saw the house in which the family of T. G. Masaryk summered from the 1880s onward, and where Alice Masaryková had a small villa.

The trip to Slovakia became a sentimental journey for Christopher Seton-Watson. He revisited places he had seen as a lad, when traveling to them in 1929 with his parents and brother Hugh. In Topoľčianky, he met a young woman whose grandfather had been Masaryk's butler. He recalled having sat next to Masaryk at the president's country retreat in Topoľčianky during a screening of a Russian film about Cossacks. The grandnephew of Vavro Šrobár treated him and his two companions to a tour of the local château. Going on to Bradlo, they paid their respects to Milan Rastislav Štefánik at his memorial monument.

The final reception was held at Senate House, the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, on 10 January 1997. It was sponsored by Michael Branch, Director of the School, and chaired by Robert B. Pynsent, Professor of Czech and Slovak Literature. Jan Dömök, Chargé d'Affaires of the Slovak Embassy, and Milan Jakobec, Minister-Counsellor of the Czech Embassy, extended greetings and congratulations to those responsible for the book. Christopher Seton-Watson described the effect of him of retracing his father's steps. Along with the three editors and guests, those attending included Mrs. Mary R. Seton-Watson, Hugh's widow; her two daughters-in-law and a son-in-law.

Dr. Rychlík and Prof. Marzik used the occasion to explain how their enterprise began and the shoals they had to navigate so as to finance it, arrange its delicate bi-national aegis, gather and edit the documents, monitor the proofreading and printing, and stay in close contact despite the ocean, the continents, and the time zones bet-

ween them. Prof. Marzik observed the appropriateness of their meeting at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, with its connections to Seton-Watson, Masaryk, and the interwar republic that had endowed the Masaryk Chair of Central European History, of which Seton-Watson was the first occupant.

This concluded a fascinating chapter not only in Slavic-Anglo-American cooperation, to which Seton-Watson had devoted his life, but also in the recent history of scholarly book publishing.

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