

THE INTELLECTUAL CRISIS: THE DEBATE ABOUT THE  
ROLE OF CZECH INTELLECTUALS IN *PŘÍTOMNOST*  
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Not only did the First Czechoslovak Republic emerge in a period in which there existed heated argument about the role of the intellectuals throughout Europe;

T. G. Masaryk, founder and President of the First Republic, was an intellectual himself. Throughout the interwar period, both these aspects gave rise to a periodically resurfacing debate concerning the relationship between intellect and politics. It was the journal *Přítomnost*, loyal to the state though it was, which devoted the greatest attention to this problem. Between 1918 and 1938, many intellectuals discussed their position with respect to nation, state and society in its pages, seeking to come to terms with the change from opposition to a position of loyalty. Their perception of their place in society bore a direct relationship to Masaryk's concept of democracy. After the Munich Agreement, this notion and with it the new role of the Czech intellectuals, was deprived of its foundations. Had they, in particular the editor Ferdinand Peroutka, hitherto championed active political participation and involvement in the struggle for democracy, after Munich there remained nothing but to choose from the following: exile, cooperating with the Nazi dictatorship, retreating into the realm of seemingly apolitical culture, or accepting the incalculable risk of resistance.