

# MOURNING BECOMES THE NATION: THE FUNERAL OF TOMÁŠ G. MASARYK IN 1937

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"I don't know how many theories there are about what a nation is and how it arises, but I know that in the last few days we've seen the nation, that we've seen it as clearly as one can see a material object." Thus wrote the journalist Ferdinand Peroutka after the elaborate state funeral of former Czechoslovak president Tomáš G. Masaryk in September 1937. In this article, based on an extensive review of contemporary press accounts, the author traces the treatment of the enormous crowds at Masaryk's funeral, showing how commentators like Peroutka, Karel Čapek and others represented these multitudes as an orderly, disciplined, solemn, and silent nation that could both feel its loss deeply and remain resolute in the face of external threats. The author examines how the route of the funeral procession superimposed multiple images from Czech history, uniting the "nevermore" of Masaryk's death to the "always" of memory, and thus enacting a pledge to remain faithful to Masaryk's ideals (which themselves were variously interpreted). A final consideration of Communist press accounts, some of the few that departed from the quickly established discourse of a subdued and disciplined crowd-nation, shows how indeterminate and unresolved the meaning of these multitudes could become.