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CELEBRATING SLAVIC PRAGUE:
FESTIVALS AND THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT, 1891-1912

Prague was transformed in the course of the nineteenth century, in the words of Emanuel Poche “chang[ing] both territorially and panoramically.”¹ Industrialization caused the population of the city and its surrounding suburbs to explode from 146,418 in 1843 to 616,631 in 1910.² Although rapid growth occurred elsewhere in Europe in the age of industrialization, it was complicated in areas of East Central Europe by ethnic and historical issues that made some cities into places where “nation-states were imagined.”³ Prague was ten times larger than the next largest city in Bohemia, a ratio that remained unchanged until World War I, making it the only true metropolitan agglomeration in the Bohemian Crownlands.⁴ Its significance to the region made Prague the center of contention between Czechs and Germans, at a time when economic and demographic changes were shifting its ethnic balance. In 1857, German-speakers claimed to comprise over one-third of the population of Prague, but by 1910 only 7 per cent counted themselves as German.⁵ While this transformation was fueled by economic and demographic changes, as well as by new notions of identity, it was also manipulated by the emerging Czech leadership. In the years leading up to World War I, these leaders undertook to showcase the new face of their city, staging elaborate festivals that attracted international attention. The last event of this sort before the war occurred in 1912, when Prague hosted a huge gymnastic festival that attracted thousands of visitors to the city to admire its progress and witness its transformation from a provincial German city into a modern Czech metropolis.

The Modernization of Prague

The revolutionary year 1848 marked the beginning of Prague’s transformation. Although the 1848 revolution was relatively short-lived in Prague, weakened by dis-

¹ Poche, Emanuel: Úvodem [Introduction]. In: Poche, Emmanuel / Libal, Dobroslav / Reitbarová, Eva / Wittlich, Petr: Praha národního probuzení: čtvero knih o Praze: architektura, sochařství, malířství, užité umění [Prague of the national awakening: A four-part book about Prague: architecture, sculpture, painting, decorative arts]. Praha 1980, 7-32, 15.

² Šolle, Zdeněk: Praha v období 1848-1918 [Prague in the period 1848-1918]. In: Janáček, Josef (ed.): Dějiny Prahy [A history of Prague]. Praha 1964, 451-536, 452 and 520.

³ Lees, Andrew / Lees, Lynn Hollen: Cities and the Making of Modern Europe, 1750-1914. Cambridge 2007, 2.

⁴ Látník, Jaroslav: Urbanisierung in Böhmen und die Entwicklung der Prager Agglomeration. In: Melinz, Gerhard / Zimmermann, Susan (eds.): Wien – Prag – Budapest: Blütezeit der Habsburgermetropolen: Urbanisierung, Kommunalpolitik, gesellschaftliche Konflikte (1867-1918). Wien 1996, 46-57, 48 and 56.

⁵ These percentages include the population of Prague and its inner suburbs. Cohen, Gary G.: The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague 1861-1914. Princeton 1981, 10.

putes between its Czech and German leaders and crushed by military force in June 1848, its long-term impact remade the city. The abolition of serfdom laid the foundations for industrial development in the Empire, and the neo-absolutist regime imposed after the revolution put in place liberal economic policies that fueled the expansion of business. As the economy grew, peasants from the Czech-speaking countryside migrated to the growing city, shifting its ethnic balance at a time when national movements were challenging traditional loyalties and creating new societal fault lines based on language and ethnicity.

Prague in 1848 appeared to be a German city. German was the lingua franca of higher education, business, and government, and the only language spoken in polite society. Although most residents spoke some German, only the highest strata spoke it exclusively since the majority of the population was bilingual. Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to describe Prague as a German city at this time. Language was a marker of class and a means of social advancement, and identity was regional rather than ethnic. In the ensuing decades, however, as industrial development was transforming the city, modern conceptions of identity appeared that elevated language into the “touchstone of belonging to the nation.”⁶

The introduction of a constitution in the Empire in 1860 gave cities wide, if still circumscribed, autonomy.⁷ The first municipal election in Prague following these changes took place in 1861, based on a curial electoral system that favored wealthy male tax-payers. Signaling the rise in Czech economic power, a factory owner named František Pštroš became the first Czech mayor of the city, launching an era of Czech domination of city government that lasted until the end of the monarchy. The Czech mayors of Prague undertook to remake their city into a modern metropolis and cultural center with a distinctive Czech character. Like other municipal authorities at this time, they focused much of their effort on modernizing the city.⁸ One of the first steps in this process began following the Austro-Prussian War, when Prague suffered defeat and occupation at the hands of the Prussians. Recognizing that the walls around the city were obsolete, Emperor Francis Joseph offered to donate them to the city as well as to compensate the city financially for its wartime suffering. In the end, the city had to pay for the fortifications, and did not receive all the funds the emperor had promised. As a result, dismantling the walls stretched from 1873 to 1911.⁹ Despite the long-drawn-out process and financial burdens, the

⁶ Agnew, Hugh LeCaine: *Origins of the Czech National Renaissance*. Pittsburgh 1993, 171.

⁷ On the changes in municipal government at this time, see King, Jeremy: *The Municipal and the National in the Bohemian Lands, 1848-1914*. In: *Austrian History Yearbook* 42 (2011) 89-109.

⁸ On similar urban modernization projects elsewhere in Europe, see Lees/Lees: *Cities and the Making of Modern Europe* 169-205 (cf. fn. 3).

⁹ Over the years, the purpose of the city walls had changed from protection to policing the inhabitants to toll-collecting. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the walls had become largely ceremonial, their tops used for promenades and cafes and their gates styled like triumphal arches. Kobout, Jiří/Vančura, Jiří: *Praha 19. a 20. století: Technické proměny [Prague of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Technological Changes]*. Praha 1986, 66, and 73-74. – On the purchase of the walls, see Pešek, Jiří: *Od aglomerace ke velkoměstu:*

demolition of the city walls opened up new urban spaces, as well as facilitating communication between Prague and its growing industrial suburbs. The effort to annex these suburbs to the core city, creating Greater Prague, was part of a trend in urban development that produced Greater Vienna, Greater Berlin, and other urban conglomerations. This project was less successful in Prague, as suburban officials balked at sacrificing their local power and advantageous tax structures to join the core city. As a result, Greater Prague was only fully realized after the First World War in the new Czechoslovak Republic.¹⁰

The most spectacular example of urban renewal in Prague was the project to raze one of the oldest sections of the city, the area of the former Jewish ghetto known as Josefov.¹¹ Directly adjacent to the Old Town Square, the site of Prague's city hall, Josefov was a densely inhabited slum in which disease and crime were rampant. A major impetus for the program was the desire to bring Prague up to the standards of other European cities, as mayor Jindřich Šolc promised at his installation in 1887, to "make our Prague wealthy and rich, so that, as she is beautiful, she will be healthy and pleasant and will resemble the other great municipalities of Europe."¹² The initial plan envisaged the destruction of the ghetto, as well as buildings outside it, including such Prague landmarks as the Clam-Gallas Palace, the Estates Theater, and the St. Agnes Convent. In the end, a scaled-down project was undertaken that did not extend beyond the area of the ghetto itself. Nevertheless, it was one of the most ambitious urban modernization projects in nineteenth-century Europe, entailing the destruction of 463 buildings.¹³ Begun in 1896 and completed in 1912, it produced a sparkling new region of the city with luxury housing, centered around a broad new boulevard that stretched from the Old Town Square to the Vltava River.

The drive to make Prague into a modern city, equal to the other great cities of Europe, was part of a broader effort to advance the agenda of Czech nationalism. As part of this larger project, city leaders undertook to give the city an undisputably Czech identity, a goal heralded by the inauguration of an attorney named Tomáš Černý as mayor of Prague in 1882. At his installation, Černý caused a storm of protest when he referred to Prague as "this old beloved Golden Slavic Prague of 100

Praha a středoevropské metropole 1850-1920 [From an agglomeration to a big city: Prague and Central European metropolises 1850-1920]. Praha 1999, 136-137 (Documenta Pragensia Monographia 9). – The projects to demolish the city walls in Prague and Vienna are contrasted in *Svatošová*, Hana: *Od napodobování k soupeření: Praha a Vídeň v letech 1861-1918 z pohledu pražské samosprávy* [From imitation to rivalry: Prague and Vienna in the years 1861-1918 from the perspective of the Prague government]. In: *Fasora*, Lukáš/*Hanuš*, Jiří/*Malíř*, Jiří (eds.): *Brno Vídeň, Vídeň Brno: Zemské metropole a centrum říše* [Brno to Vienna, Vienna to Brno: Provincial metropolises and the center of the Empire]. Brno 2008, 157-171, 161.

¹⁰ This process is examined in *Pešek*: *Od aglomerace ke velkoměstu 143-202* (cf. fn. 9).

¹¹ This program is the subject of *Giustino*, Cathleen M.: *Tearing Down Prague's Jewish Town: Ghetto Clearance and the Legacy of Middle-Class Politics around 1900*. Boulder 2003. – See also, *Kobout/Vančura*: *Praha 19. a 20. století 86-90* (cf. fn. 9).

¹² Quoted in *Giustino*: *Tearing Down Prague's Jewish Town* 126 (cf. fn. 11).

¹³ *Storck*, Christopher P.: *Kulturnation und Nationalkunst: Strategien und Mechanismen tschechischer Nationsbildung von 1860 bis 1914*. Köln 2001, 194. – *Giustino*: *Tearing Down Prague's Jewish Town* 7 (cf. fn. 11).

spires [...].¹⁴ While the term “golden” as an attribute of the city dated back centuries, the reference to “Slavic” Prague was controversial, and prompted the few German-speakers on the city council to resign *en masse*.¹⁵ A central element of Czech identity, Slavism set the nation apart from the Germans in Bohemia and joined it to the greater Slavic world.¹⁶

The effort to turn Prague into a Czech city occurred at a time when erecting large, new public buildings and grand monuments was part of a modernization process for European cities seeking to shed their medieval and baroque appearances.¹⁷ In Prague, these new structures served the additional purpose of expressing national identity through their architecture and decor, a form of “symbolic politics” that instrumentalized art to compensate for political and social weakness.¹⁸ The first structure to embody this vision was the National Theater, and the laying of its foundation stone in 1868 was the first grand national celebration in the city. In the keynote address on this occasion, the nationalist writer Karel Sladkovský “created a core for the crystallization of the Czech national political program” when he declared the Czechs to be the legitimate heirs to the Kingdom of Bohemia.¹⁹ Decorated with scenes from

¹⁴ Instalace purkmistra pražského dra. Tomáše Černého [Installation of the Prague mayor Dr. Tomáš Černý]. In: *Národní listy: odpolední vydání*, 9 October 1882, 1.

¹⁵ The term “Golden Prague” has been ascribed to the sixteenth-century humanist poet, Peter Capella, whose references to “aurea” described the wealth of the city that the Habsburg Emperor Rudolf II had made the seat of his empire. *Svatošová*, Hana: “Zlatá slovanská Praha”: Slovanství ve slovech a skutcích pražské obecní samosprávy 1880-1914 [“Golden Slavic Prague”: Slavism in the words and deeds of the Prague municipal government 1880-1914]. In: *Hojda, Zdeněk/Ottlová, Marta/Prabl, Roman* (eds.): “Slavme slavně slávu Slávův slavných”: Slovanství a česká kultura 19. století [“Let us celebrate with flags flying the renown of the glorious Slavs”: Slavism in Czech culture in the nineteenth century]. Praha 2006, 160-171, 160-161. – There were only five Germans on the city council in 1882, all of them Jews. The last German to hold a seat on the city council left it in 1888. *Giustino*: Tearing Down Prague’s Jewish Town 40-44 (cf. fn. 11) and *Svatošová*, Hana: Slavnostní instalace pražského starosty v letech 1784-1949 [The ceremonial installation of the mayor of Prague in the years 1784-1949]. In: *Pražské slavnosti a velké výstavy: Sborník příspěvků z konferencí Archivu hlavního města Prahy 1989 a 1991*. Praha 1995, 229-259, 242 (Documenta Pragensia 12).

¹⁶ On the place of Slavism in Czech identity see *Macura*, Vladimír: Znamení zrodu: České národní obrození jako kulturní typ [The meaning of origins: The Czech national awakening as a cultural type]. 2nd edition. Jinočany 1995, 156-168. – *Rak*, Jiří: Bývali Čechové: České historické mýty a stereotypy [They were Czechs: Czech historical myths and stereotypes]. Jinočany 1994, 113-126. – See also the essays in *Hojda/Ottlová/Prabl* (eds.): “Slavme slavně slávu Slávův slavných” (cf. fn. 15).

¹⁷ *Lees/Lees*: Cities and the Making of Modern Europe 209 (cf. fn. 3). – *Hojda, Zdeněk/Pokorný, Jiří*: Pomníky a zapomínání [Memorials and Forgetting]. 2nd edition. Praha 1997, 16.

¹⁸ “Dank ihrer visuellen Qualität waren Werke der Architektur und der Bildkünste imstande, abstrakte politische Konzepte und Inhalte gleichsam zu materialisieren, unmittelbar begreiflich zu machen.” *Marek*, Michaela: Kunst und Identitätspolitik: Architektur und Bildkünste im Prozess der tschechischen Nationsbildung. Köln 2004, 12.

¹⁹ *Marek*, Michaela: “Monumentalbauten” und Städtebau als Spiegel des gesellschaftlichen Wandels in der 2. Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts. In: *Seibt*, Ferdinand (ed.): Böhmen im 19. Jahrhundert: Vom Klassizismus zur Moderne. Frankfurt/Main 1995, 149-233, 179.

Czech history and legends painted by Czech artists, the neo-Renaissance building was more than a theater in its early years; rather, it was a national shrine and a site of pilgrimage for Czechs both inside and outside the Empire.²⁰ The most important Czech architectural and artistic accomplishment after the National Theater was the National Museum, opened in 1890 on a site formerly occupied by the old city walls. Its huge size and prominent location at the top of Wenceslas Square expressed Czech claims for political equality with their German neighbors.²¹

The second half of the nineteenth century was the “classic period” of monument building, when the ascendant bourgeoisie in Europe’s expanding cities erected statues and memorials representing their values and ideology.²² In Prague, Czech leaders imprinted their identity on the growing city with monuments to famous Czechs, especially those who advanced the national agenda, creating a “Czech monument cult, which a nation demanding its rights found tasteful.”²³ The first monument, erected in 1878, honored the linguist and patriot, Josef Jungmann, and others followed, commemorating such disparate figures as the Romantic poet Karel Hynek Mácha, and the actress Hana Kvapilová. Not all monuments honored actual historical figures. When the city administration opened a competition for the decoration of a new bridge in 1881, the winning entry, by the sculptor Josef Myslbek, featured figures from Czech mythology, including some from the spurious medieval manuscripts, purportedly discovered at Králové Dvůr (Queen’s Court) and Zelená Hora (Green Mountain).²⁴ In this way, the new “Czech” bridge with statues from the “sacred” Manuscripts competed with the older “German” Charles Bridge, featuring statues of saints, most of which dated from the Counter-Reformation.²⁵ On the other hand, the proposal to erect a statue to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, a world-

²⁰ A mass expedition of American Czechs traveled to Prague in 1885 to visit the new National Theater. Nolte, Claire E.: Our Brothers Across the Ocean: The Czech Sokol in America to 1914. In: *International Journal of the History of Sport* 26 (October 2009) no. 13, 1963-1982, 1974. – These pilgrimages died down in the 1890s, as theaters were built in other Czech cities. *Storck*: Kulturnation und Nationalkunst 225-226 (cf. fn. 13).

²¹ “Dass das Museum als einziges landesoffizielles Großprojekt gleichsam einen Staatsbau ersetzen sollte, stand [...] außer Zweifel. Ebensoeindeutig war aber, dass der Repräsentation des Landes im Sinne des böhmischen Staatsrechtes ein tschechisch-nationaler Akzent unterlegt werden sollte.” *Marek*: Kunst und Identitätspolitik 332 (cf. fn. 18).

²² *Hojda/Pokorný*: Pomníky a zapomínky 16 (cf. fn. 17).

²³ *Wittlich*, Petr: Sochařství [Sculpture]. In: *Poche/Líbal/Reitharová/Wittlich*: Praha národního probuzení 205-278, 243 (cf. fn. 1). – See also *Nekula*, Marek: Die nationale Kodierung des öffentlichen Raums in Prag. In: *Becher, Peter/Knechtel, Anna* (eds.): *Praha-Prag 1900-1945: Literaturstadt zweier Sprachen*. Passau 2010, 63-88.

²⁴ Allegedly discovered by the Czech romantic poet Václav Hanka in 1817 and 1818, the manuscripts were discredited as forgeries in the 1880s. An analysis of this incident in the context of Czech culture of the time is in *Macura*: Znamení zrodu 109-113 (cf. fn. 16). – On the competition and Myslbek’s successful entry, see *Wittlich*: Sochařství 254-259 (cf. fn. 23).

²⁵ The symbolic role of these bridges is explored in *Nekula*, Marek: Pražské mosty a národní diskurz [Prague bridges and the national discourse]. In: *Zajac, Peter/Tureček, Dalibor/Urválková, Zuzana* (eds.): *Mezi texty a metodami: Národní a univerzální v české literatuře 19. století* [Between texts and methods: the national and the universal in Czech literature of the nineteenth century]. Olomouc 2006, 323-344.

famous figure with an important connection to the city, was rebuffed by city leaders on nationalist grounds.²⁶

In addition to monuments and statues, smaller busts and plaques on the homes of Czech leaders as well as elaborate grave markers, often featuring statues, “helped to complete Prague in its representative configuration [...]”²⁷ In a controversial move that ended up in the courts, the city leaders in 1893 replaced the city’s bilingual street signs with signs in Czech featuring the national colors, in an attempt to anchor the national ideology in the public space.²⁸

The 1891 Jubilee Exhibition

In the second half of the nineteenth century, elaborate festivals such as world’s fairs and economic exhibitions became popular ways to advance a nation’s political and economic agenda at the international level. From their origins as trade shows promoting economic progress, these events had been steeped in the language of modernity and progress. By the end of the century, they had evolved into grand spectacles, representing a new “megagenre of cultural performance” that engaged the work of artists and architects, directors and musicians, and turned entire cities into staging areas.²⁹ Mounting events of this magnitude demanded a high level of coordination to accommodate the hordes of visitors and participants, and their success enhanced the reputation of the host city as a modern urban center. This was especially important for cities like Prague, as Andreas R. Hofmann has pointed out: “the modernizing potential of the grand exhibitions is incalculable in the context of East Central Europe. The work done on the grounds and the perimeter was a strong impetus for the host cities to develop their technical, administrative, and tourist infrastructures.”³⁰ In Prague, three events exemplified this trend: the 1891 Jubilee Exhibition, the first great triumph for Czech Prague; the 1895 Ethnographic Exhibition, a celebration of national identity; and the 1912 festival of the nationalist gymnastic society Sokol, one of the largest celebrations up until that time in the history of the city.

²⁶ *Hojda/Pokorný*: Pomníky a zapomníky 127-133 (cf. fn. 17). – See also *Nekula*: Die nationale Kodierung des öffentlichen Raums in Prag 78 and 82 (cf. fn. 23).

²⁷ *Wittlich*: Sochařství 278 (cf. fn. 23).

²⁸ The signs featured white letters on a red background with blue or white frames, a reference to the Czech nationalist colors from 1848. *Nekula*: Die nationale Kodierung des öffentlichen Raums in Prag 75 (cf. fn. 23). – *Nekula*, Marek: Hus–Husova, Žižka–Žižkov...: Toponyma a ideologie [Hus–Husova, Žižka–Žižkov...: Toponyms and ideology] In: *Čornejová, Michaela/Kosek, Pavel* (eds.): Jazyk a jeho proměny: Prof. Jane Pleskalové k životnímu jubileu [Language and its changes: In honor of the milestone birthday of Prof. Jana Pleskalové]. Brno 2008, 178-194, 184.

²⁹ *MacAloon*, John J.: Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies. In: *MacAloon*, John M. (ed.): Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance. Philadelphia 1984, 241-280, 250. – Background on these exhibitions is provided in *Greenhalgh*, Paul: Ephemeral vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World’s Fairs, 1815-1939. Manchester 1988, 3-26.

³⁰ *Hofmann*, Andreas R.: Utopien der Nation: Landes- und Nationalausstellungen in Ostmitteleuropa vor und nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. In: Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung 58 (2009) no. 1-2, 5-32, 30.

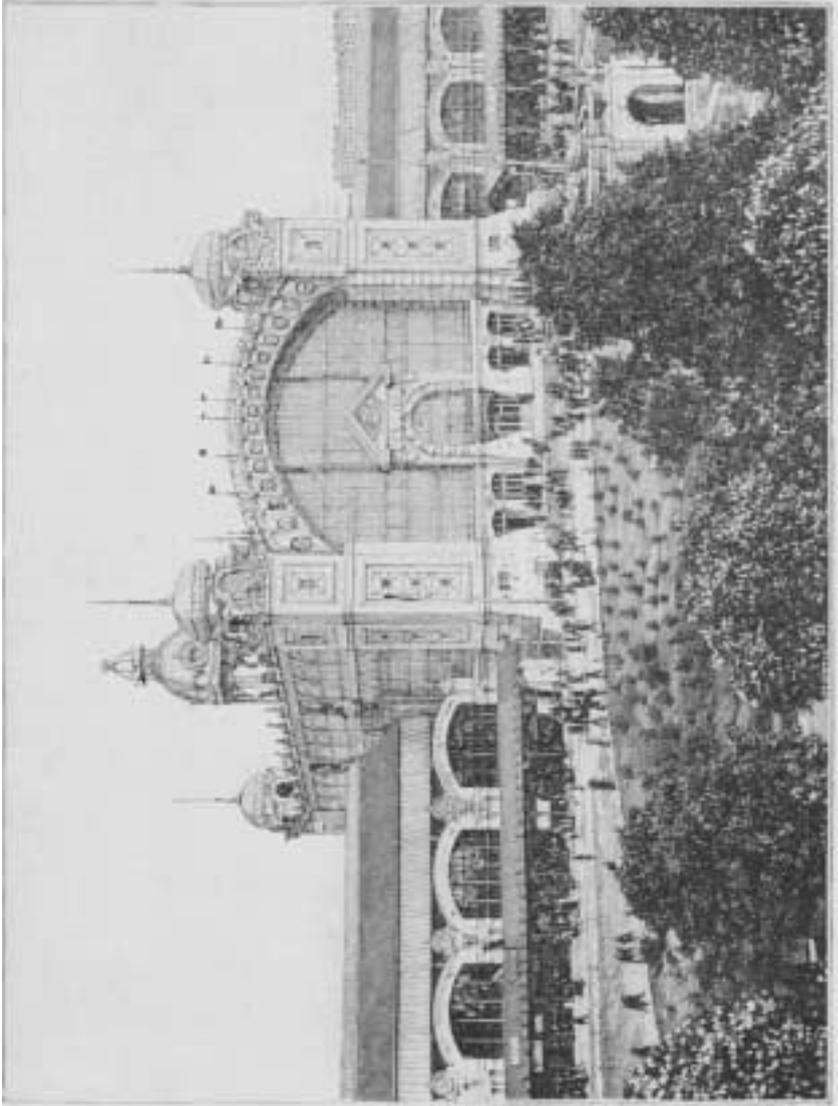


Fig. 1: The Industrial Palace with the Křižík Fountain, 1891

The 1891 Jubilee Exhibition was undertaken to showcase the achievements of the province of Bohemia and to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of a much smaller display that had accompanied the elevation of Leopold II to the Bohemian throne. Originally intended as a joint venture of the Czech and German communities in the province, it became a solely Czech venture after the Germans opted to boycott it. Similar exhibitions had been mounted elsewhere in the region, most importantly a provincial exhibition in Budapest in 1885.³¹ Open from May to October 1891, the Jubilee Exhibition in Prague attracted 2.5 million paying visitors, far beyond the expectations of its organizers, who had hoped for 1 million, and outstripping the Budapest exhibition, which lasted 31 days longer, but attracted only 1,750,000.³² Described by Jiří Pešek as a “Gesamtkunstwerk,” which combined commercial and artistic elements into “a form of national devotion,” it was a triumph for the city of Prague, and, thanks to the German boycott, also a victory for Slavic Prague.³³ 146 buildings were erected in the Stromovka section of Prague’s north side to house exhibits ranging from Czech industrial and craft products, to fine arts, to wares produced on aristocratic estates. The centerpiece was a giant exhibition hall called the Industrial Palace built of wrought iron and glass in emulation of the buildings at the 1889 World’s Fair in Paris. While most of the exhibition buildings were dismantled after the event, the Industrial Palace became a permanent part of the city’s landscape, along with the so-called Křižík fountain, named for its creator, František Křižík, the inventor and industrialist who was one of the driving forces behind the exhibition. Although not the first illuminated fountain to grace an urban exhibition, the water in the Prague fountain, powered by steam engines, rose higher than its predecessors at the World’s Fairs in Vienna in 1873 and Paris in 1889.³⁴ Another homage to the recent Paris fair was the “little Eiffel tower” on Petřín Hill, whose views of the city still lure the intrepid to scale its heights. The outlook from the

³¹ A letter by a Czech visitor at the 1885 exhibition in Budapest highlights its connection with the Prague exhibition, “Neid und Kummer bemächtigten sich unserer, als wir sahen, daß selbst schon die Magyaren mit ihrer jungen, zweitklassigen Industrie es zu einer großen Ausstellung bringen [...] allgemein stellte man sich die Frage: und was ist mit uns, dem altehrwürdigen Königreich und seiner mächtigen Industrie, rafften wir uns nicht einmal jetzt auf, wenn sogar schon unsere Lehrlinge – die Magyaren – Industriebetriebe einrichten, davon ein Großteil nach böhmischem Muster, mit böhmischen Technikern und Meistern, und sich vor der Welt brüsten, was für Kerle sie sind?” Quoted in *Kolář, František/Hlavačka, Milan: Tschechen, Deutsche und die Jubiläumsausstellung 1891*. In: *Bohemia* 32 (1991) no. 2, 380-411, 384. The commemorative album of the exhibition describes its inception; *Jubilejní výstava zemská království českého v Praze 1891* [The Provincial Jubilee Exhibition of the Bohemian kingdom in Prague 1891]. Praha 1894, 1-72.

³² *Novotný, Jan: Návštěvníci Zemské jubilejní výstavy v Praze 1891* [Visitors to the Provincial Jubilee Exhibition in Prague in 1891]. In: *Pražské slavnosti a velké výstavy 345-354, 345-346* (cf. fn. 15). – *Kolář, František/Hlavačka, Milan: Jubilejní výstava 1891* [The Jubilee Exhibition 1891]. Praha 1991, 37-38 (Slovo k historii 28).

³³ *Pešek, Jiří: Slavnost jako téma dějepisného zkoumání* [The festival as a subject of historical study]. In: *Pražské slavnosti a velké výstavy 7-28, 26-27* (cf. fn. 15). – See also *Svatošová, Hana: Podíl zastupitelstva města Prahy na Jubilejní výstavě roku 1891* [The contribution of the Prague Municipal Government to the Jubilee Exhibition of 1891]. In: *Pražské slavnosti a velké výstavy 393-405, 404* (cf. fn. 15).

³⁴ *Hlavačka, Milan: Jubilejní výstava 1891* [The Jubilee Exhibition of 1891]. Praha 1991, 62.

tower during the day, along with the nightly illumination of Prague's landmarks by electric lights, including a large painting of a statue of Jan Žižka, 22 meters high, erected for the exhibition in Vítkov Hill in Žižkov, shows how the city itself was part of the exhibition.³⁵

The large numbers of visitors transformed the city, which had been decorated especially for the occasion, lending it a “completely new face.”³⁶ Many visitors came for the other events and celebrations that had been scheduled to coincide with the exhibition, among them the inauguration of the Bohemian Academy of the Emperor Francis Joseph for Sciences, Literature, and Art; the official opening of the National Museum, where the new Academy was to be housed; and the ceremony for the trooping of the colors of the student club Slavia. But the “largest assault of foreign and domestic visitors” arrived for the second festival, called a “Slet”, of the nationalist gymnastic society Sokol, which attracted an estimated 20,000 spectators, including a group of French gymnasts along with contingents from other Slavic nations, and featured a parade through Prague of 5,530 members.³⁷ Foreign visitors, many arriving on special trains, were greeted with formal ceremonies featuring triumphal marches through Prague. Since the majority of these visitors were Slavic, these events took on political overtones, with the singing of the Slavic anthem, “Hej Slovane” (Hail the Slavs) amid shouts of “Ať žijí Rusové!” (Long live the Russians!) and “Na zdar” (Good luck), outbursts that prompted government officials in August to ban all celebratory greetings and marches.³⁸ To prevent any circumvention of this ban, the special exhibition trains from Slavic areas were rescheduled to arrive at night or in the early hours of the morning. Just as the exhibition itself presented a “linear view of Czech history by telling a concrete story of Czech economic progress,” the tours of Prague for foreign visitors emphasized its Czech identity and the central role it played in Slavic history.³⁹ These views were also on display in the National Theater, where a special repertory was created for the exhibition of highlighting

³⁵ *Hlavačka*: Jubilejní výstava 63 and 85 (cf. fn. 34) – *Janatková*, Alena: Modernisierung und Metropole: Architektur und Repräsentation auf den Landesausstellungen in Prag 1891 und Brünn 1928. Stuttgart 2008, 42-43.

³⁶ *Kolář/Hlavačka*: Jubilejní výstava 1891, 35 (cf. fn. 32). – Buildings, including those in German areas of the city, were bedecked with flags and banners featuring imperial and royal colors: Jubilejní výstava zemská království českého v Praze 1891, 82 (cf. fn. 31).

³⁷ *Hlavačka*: Jubilejní výstava 1891, 94 (cf. fn. 34). – The Slet is described in *Nolte*, Claire E.: The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914: Training for the Nation. Basingstoke, UK 2002, 121-123.

³⁸ *Soukupová-Svobodová*, Blanka: Jubilejní výstava 1891 jako zrcadlo slovanství českého měšťanstva [The Jubilee Exhibition as a mirror of the slavism of the Czech bourgeoisie]. In: *Pražské slavnosti a velké výstavy 333-343, 340-341* (cf. fn. 15). – *Novotný*: Návštěvníci Zemské jubilejní výstavy v Praze 349-350 (cf. fn. 32). – An analysis of the visitors and their role in the exhibitions at this time is provided by *Stübner*, Jos: Nationsbildung durch symbolische Interaktion: Der Besuch von Prager Ausstellungen um 1900 als Praxis nationaler Anerkennung. In: *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 58 (2009) no. 1-2, 33-76.

³⁹ *Albrecht*, Catherine: Pride in Production: The Jubilee Exhibition of 1891 and Economic Competition between Czechs and Germans in Bohemia. In: *Austrian History Yearbook* 24 (1993) 101-118, 102. – See also *Soukupová-Svobodová*: Jubilejní výstava 1891 jako zrcadlo slovanství českého měšťanstva 338 (cf. fn. 38).

works by Czech composers and playwrights. In addition to the regular performances, twenty-three special theatrical evenings honored various guests, including one for the Emperor Francis Joseph himself, many featuring a *tableau vivant* of the exhibition.⁴⁰

On the opening day of the exhibition in May 1891, its daily newspaper predicted that “after the exhibition, the name of the Czechs will not be allowed to be missing on the reckoning of modern nations, of enlightened nations, of the first nations of the world.”⁴¹ Although the exhibition celebrated progress, it also showed how far Prague lagged behind the European metropolises to whose ranks it aspired. Prague in 1891 was in many ways an historic city only beginning to shed its Old World appearance. The center of the city still housed small craft workshops, whose smoky emanations clouded the sky, the bridges across the Vltava were inadequate for modern transportation, the sewage system was only in the planning stages, and clean drinking water was not universally available.⁴² These shortcomings caused critics to warn of disaster should the exhibition go forward. While exhibition planners and city leaders managed to find accommodation for the visitors, the city’s outdated transportation system remained its “Achilles heel.”⁴³ With the exception of one electric tram built especially to bring visitors up to the exhibition grounds, the trams were horse-drawn, prompting a comment in the exhibition newspaper that “the Prague tram system is one of the most fearsome exhibition items of the city of Prague.”⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the overall success of the exhibition, without the participation of the Bohemian Germans, was a powerful affirmation of the progress the Czech nation had made over the century. Like most grand exhibitions, it helped to reshape its host city, leaving behind, among other things, a large exhibition hall, the Industrial Palace, the final piece of an “emancipatory triangle” including the National Theater and the National Museum, which marked the “emergence of the Czech nation to the elite societies of the most advanced European nations.”⁴⁵

The 1895 Ethnographic Exhibition

In accordance with its purpose, the Jubilee Exhibition focused on displays of modern technology, especially in Czech-owned industries such as machine manufacture and sugar production. However, one exhibit that diverged from this narrative, a

⁴⁰ *Pechoušková*, Jana: Národní divadlo a Jubilejní zemská výstava v Praze [The National Theater and the Provincial Jubilee Exhibition in Prague]. In: Pražské slavnosti a velké výstavy 365-387 (cf. fn. 15). – The emperor’s visit to the exhibition is described in Jubilejní výstava zemská království českého v Praze 1891, 235-276 (cf. fn. 31). – *Hlavačka*: Jubilejní výstava 1891, 100-108 (cf. fn. 34).

⁴¹ Quoted in *Giustino*: Tearing Down Prague’s Jewish Town 67 (cf. fn. 11).

⁴² These conditions are described in *Kohout/Vančura*: Praha 19. a 20. století 41, and 75-78 (cf. fn. 9) and *Hlavačka*: Jubilejní výstava 1891, 59-60, and 86-92 (cf. fn. 34).

⁴³ *Hlavačka*: Jubilejní výstava 1891, 75 (cf. fn. 34).

⁴⁴ Quoted in *Novotný*: Návštěvníci Zemské jubilejní výstavy v Praze 1891, 346 (cf. fn. 32). – See also, *Kohout/Vančura*: Praha 19. a 20. století 80-81 (cf. fn. 9).

⁴⁵ *Kolář/Hlavačka*: Jubilejní výstava 1891, 39 (cf. fn. 32). – A similar assessment is in *Svatošová*: Podíl zastupitelstva města Prahy na Jubilejní výstavě roku 1891, 404 (cf. fn. 33).

peasant cottage built in a supposedly Czech style, attracted a wide array of visitors, including “wealthy urban dwellers and rich foreigners [...] even personages of the highest nobility.”⁴⁶ As one of the few folkloric elements in an event focused on the future, the cottage exemplified the tension between the drive to be both modern and authentic that characterized provincial fairs in this part of Europe, which were carried out “in the shadow of western fairs.”⁴⁷ Added because of the impetus of Czech writers and artists in Prague, it inspired the Director of the National Theater in Prague, František Adolf Šubert, to envision a second exhibition, which would focus on Czech folk culture.⁴⁸ In July 1891, he assembled a committee to prepare a proposal and by September 1891, while the Jubilee Exhibition was still going on, a proclamation appeared in the national press. Written by the Czech nationalist writer Eliška Krásnohorská and signed by several Czech leaders, it asserted that since the Jubilee Exhibition had featured only “a small piece of original soil,” the new project would show “everything that can illuminate its character, talents, struggles, thoughts and feelings, trade and artisan work, artistic tastes and striving, poetic and intellectual instincts, life needs and family relations, the condition of its property, and the level of its culture [...]” At a time of growing political divisions, the ethnographic exhibition, according to Krásnohorská, would promote “the natural love of Czech to Czech, to the Czech identity, which brings together the powerful with the modest, the simple person with the most adept, the rich with the poor.”⁴⁹ The organizers anticipated scheduling the event in 1893, and using the same exhibition grounds, and even some of the same buildings, as the Jubilee Exhibition. But political events, namely the government crackdown on the Progressive student movement, which put Prague under a state of emergency in September 1893, caused the exhibition to be postponed until May 1895.

Fueled by the growing popularity of the new field of ethnographic studies, which had given rise to similar exhibitions in Central Europe, the 1895 exhibition was also a reaction against the emphasis on modernity and internationalism of the Jubilee Exhibition of 1891. The fact that signs for the Jubilee Exhibition had been in several languages, including German, for the benefit of visiting foreigners, concerned some

⁴⁶ Jubilejní výstava zemská království českého v Praze 1891, 121 (cf. fn. 31). – The cottage incorporated elements of peasant architecture from various regions of the Bohemian countryside. *Hlavačka*: Jubilejní výstava 1891, 68 (cf. fn. 34).

⁴⁷ *Neuburger*, Mary: Introduction: Exhibiting Eastern Europe. In: *Slavic Review* 69 (Fall 2010) no. 3, 539-546, 541.

⁴⁸ *Brouček*, Stanislav: Národopisná výstava československá a česká společnost [The Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition and Czech society]. In: *Brouček*, Stanislav/*Pargač*, Jan/*Sochorová*, Ludmila/*Štěpánová*, Irena: Mýtus českého národa aneb Národopisná výstava československá 1895 [The myth of the Czech nation or The Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition 1895]. Praha 1996, 11-13.

⁴⁹ Krásnohorská's proclamation is reproduced in *Šubert*, F. A.: Doklady a poznámky k dějinám Národopisné výstavy československé v Praze [Documents and comments about the history of the Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague]. In: *Klusáček*, K./*Kovář*, Em./*Niederle*, L./*Schlaffer*, Fr./*Šubert*, F. A. (eds.): Národopisná výstava československá v Praze 1895 [The Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague in 1895]. Praha n.d. [1895], addendum [I-XLVII], V-VI.

Czech nationalists. Indeed, the commemorative album of the Ethnographic Exhibition proudly noted, “At the exhibition [...] the Czech language alone officially held sway. For the first time at a large enterprise, which could not fail to attract the attention of the wider world, our usual bilingualism was dispensed with.”⁵⁰ Incorporating an expansive notion of ethnography that encompassed folk culture as well as elements of urban culture, archeology, literature, history, and other fields, the exhibition featured, among other things, a reconstructed Czech village, examples of embroidery, vitrines with mannequins in national costume, and a “typical” Czech-American house. Despite low attendance at the beginning, over two million visitors had come to the exhibition by the time it closed on October 20.⁵¹

Like the Jubilee Exhibition, visitors arriving on reserved trains were welcomed at the Prague station and treated to special dinners and theatrical evenings. Clubs and organizations held meetings in Prague to coincide with the event, among them the third Slet of the Czech Sokol Union featuring a parade of 7,500 uniformed members.⁵² Unlike the Jubilee Exhibition, however, this exhibition was more inward-looking, with fewer international visitors. The largest contingents from outside the Czech lands were fellow Slavs, leading one speaker to reformulate the slogan over the door of the Old Town Hall, “Praga caput regni” to “Praga caput Slaviae.”⁵³ Although focused on village life, the exhibition was mostly an urban phenomenon, reflecting efforts of traditionalists to entice urban elites to adopt a national style of dress in place of Parisian styles, and to decorate their city apartments in a Czech style that was often little more than kitsch.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, there was one display at the exhibition specifically devoted to urban life, a reconstruction of a town square from the time of Rudolf II called “Old Prague.”⁵⁵ At a time when many nationalists were criticizing the widespread demolition of the city undertaken in the name of ghetto clearance, it was intended to show “the meaning of old Prague as a national monument.”⁵⁶

⁵⁰ *Jacubec, J.*: Význam Národopisné výstavy československé [The meaning of the Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition]. In: *Klusáček/Kovář/Niederle/Schlaffer/Subert* (eds.): Národopisná výstava československá v Praze 1895, 540-545, 542 (cf. fn. 49).

⁵¹ *Štěpánová, Irena*: Kalendárium Národopisné výstavy [The calendar of the Ethnographic Exhibition]. In: *Brouček/Pargač/Sochorová/Štěpánová*: Mýtus českého národa 31-81, 73 (cf. fn. 48).

⁵² *Nolte*: The Sokol in the Czech Lands 129-130 (cf. fn. 37).

⁵³ Quoted in *Brouček*: Národopisná výstava československá a česká společnost 29 (cf. fn. 48). – The inscription “Praga caput regni” on the Old Town Hall dates from the reign of the Habsburg king Ferdinand in the sixteenth century. Praga caput regni. In: *Národní listy*, 28 April 1912, 1.

⁵⁴ Almost one-third of the album of the Ethnographic Exhibition is devoted to peasant life and customs. This does not include the sections in the album describing the exhibits of Czech towns and provinces, many of which also included scenes from peasant life. *Klusáček/Kovář/Niederle/Schlaffer/Subert* (eds.): Národopisná výstava československá v Praze 1895, passim (cf. fn. 49). – See also *Štěpánová*: Kalendárium Národopisné výstavy 57-59 (cf. fn. 51).

⁵⁵ An explanation of this display is provided by *Herain, J./Winter, Z.*: Stará Praha. In: *Klusáček/Kovář/Niederle/Schlaffer/Subert* (eds.): Národopisná výstava československá v Praze 1895, 396-408 (cf. fn. 49).

⁵⁶ *Janatková, Alena*: Inszenierung der Nation und staatliche Repräsentation: Architekto-

The 1912 All-Slav Slet

The program of Prague's leaders to transform their city into a modern capital for the Czech nation reached its apogee in 1912, when the last pre-war Slet attracted thousands of visitors from inside and outside the Empire. Held to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Sokol's founding, the Slet was also the first gymnastic festival of the newly-formed Federation of Slavic Sokols, a union of Slavic Sokol clubs that had been founded in 1908 at the height of the Neo-Slav enthusiasm.⁵⁷ A reformulation of old-style Pan-Slavism with its overtones of tsarist imperialism, Neo-Slavism emphasized cultural cooperation among the Slavic nations. The city of Prague had a central role, making the Slet into a celebration of the city itself. Joint planning between Sokol leaders and the city authorities began early. In February 1911, leaders of the Czech Sokol Union, or Č.O.S., informed the city authorities that they were planning a Slet as a "spectacular display of Slavic strength, ability, and common consciousness" and were inviting city leaders first

[...] as a sign [...] of the respect and devotion of all the Slavic lands for our beautiful city, for golden Slavic Prague, which will always be known as a wellspring of, and a refuge for, Slavic sentiment [...]. We are convinced that with this event we will again dress up our royal city of Prague, it will shine again in its sumptuous dress to the pride and the pleasure of all Slavdom and the admiration of the entire civilized world.⁵⁸

Slet organizers chose fifth-century B. C. Greece as a theme for the event, decorating the exercise-field with statues of Greek athletes in heroic poses, and placing statues of Greek soldiers atop Doric columns at the main entrance. Prague was redefined as the "Slavic Athens," the center of the Slavic world.⁵⁹ Indeed, the mayor of Prague at this time, Karel Groš, had expressed a similar sentiment in a 1911 newspaper article when he referred to Prague as "an important center of all of western Slavdom [...]." ⁶⁰

In January 1912, a joint committee made up of Č.O.S. leaders and city officials was formed to coordinate the preparations for the Slet and to dedicate a monument to František Palacký, the historian celebrated as the "Father of the Czech

nische Programmatik in Prag 1895 und Brünn 1928. In: *Die alte Stadt: Vierteljahrzeitschrift für Stadtgeschichte, Stadtsoziologie und Denkmalpflege* 25 (1999) no. 2, 100-116, 107.

⁵⁷ The Federation is the subject of *Nolte, Claire E.: All for One! One for All! The Federation of Slavic Sokols and the Failure of Neo-Slavism*. In: *Judson, Pieter M./ Rozenblit, Marsha L. (eds.): Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe*. New York 2005, 126-140.

⁵⁸ *Archiv hlavního města Prahy [Archive of the Capital City of Prague, AHMP], Prague. Praesidium rady a magistrátu král. hlav. města Prahy [Executive Office of the Council and the Administration of the Royal Capital City of Prague, MHMP] I, 1906-1913, Box 442, Sign 15/161: VI. Executive Committee of Č.O.S. to Prague City Council, 6 February 1911.*

⁵⁹ *Dryák, Al.: Architektonická úprava sletového cvičiště [The architectural layout of the exercise field]*. In: *Očenášek, August (ed.): Památník sletu slovanského Sokolstva roku 1912 v Praze [Memorial Album of the Slet of the Slavic Sokol Movement in 1912 in Prague]*. Praha n.d. [1919], 41-58, 58.

⁶⁰ *Groš, K.: Velká Praha [Greater Prague]*. In: *Národní listy*, 16 May 1911, supplement. Groš repeated these ideas in the speech he gave at his installation as mayor in 1912. *Praga caput regni*, 1 (cf. fn. 53) – See also *Svatošová: "Zlatá slovanská Praha"* 162 (cf. fn. 15).

Nation,” which was to take place during the main Slet days.⁶¹ Among other events scheduled to take advantage of the many visitors coming to Prague for the Slet was the first-ever meeting of the Society of Slavic Hoteliers of Austria, with more than 600 delegates, and the 11th Congress of the Association of Slavic Journalists.⁶² All this activity challenged Prague’s leaders, who had to coordinate a variety of events, secure accommodation for the visitors, distribute invitations to receptions and dinners, and ensure public safety at a time of rising national tensions.

Prague had been transformed between 1891 and 1912. Gone were the horse-drawn trams of the 1890s, new bridges spanned the Vltava, modern sewage and water systems had improved public hygiene, and electricity illuminated more than just the exhibition grounds.⁶³ The demolition of the city’s walls was complete, and the reconstruction of its former ghetto was underway. Despite the failure to create a legal entity in the pre-war years, Greater Prague had become a de facto reality as a common police administration covered the region, water and sewage systems served both the city and its suburbs, and an expanding railroad network connected it to the outside world.⁶⁴ In 1911, the last major representational building of the pre-war period, the Municipal House, opened in the heart of what had once been the German section of the city, signaling the final stage of the Czech conquest of the city.⁶⁵ A secessionist fantasy housing a huge concert hall complete with an organ, six restaurants, fourteen shops, six meeting rooms, three exhibition halls, and a billiard room, all decorated with scenes from Czech history and mythology, it exuded a Czech national self-confidence that, according to one account, “spilled over into arrogance.”⁶⁶

⁶¹ Přípravy ke slety všesokolskému a slavnosti Palackého [Preparations for the All-Sokol Slet and the Palacký celebration]. In: Věstník obecní královského hl. města Prahy (in the following: Věstník Prahy) 19 (25 January 1912) 29. – Slavnost Palackého v Praze [The Palacký celebration in Prague]. In: Věstník Prahy 19 (22 February 1912) 78. – See also Národní archiv [National Archive], Prague. Č.O.S. Collection, Notebook of the Festival Committee of the V. All-Sokol Slet, inv. čís. 2386, Box 754. Record of the joint meeting of the municipal authorities and the Č.O.S. on Monday, 22 January 1912.

⁶² The meeting of Slavic journalists had originally been scheduled to be held in Zagreb, but due to political tensions there, the Croat authorities asked to have it moved to Prague: Sjezd slovanských novinářů v Praze [Meeting of the Slavic journalists in Prague] In: Věstník Prahy 19 (22 February 1912) 78. – See also I. slet slovanského Sokolstva a slavnost odhalení pomníku Fr. Palackého [First Slet of the Slavic Sokol movement and the celebration to dedicate the monument to Fr. Palacký]. In: Věstník Prahy 19 (13 July 1912) 310-311.

⁶³ The last horse-drawn tram ceased operation in 1905. The modernization of the city’s infrastructure before World War I is described in *Kobout/Vančura: Praha 19. a 20. století* 110-120 (cf. fn. 9).

⁶⁴ The first railroad arrived in Prague in 1845. On the development of the city’s railroad network, see *Kobout/Vančura: Praha 19. a 20. století* 42-44, and 69-74 (cf. fn. 9). – On the links between Prague and its suburbs, see *Pešek: Od aglomerace k velkoměstu* 35-41, and 155-157 (cf. fn. 10).

⁶⁵ *Poche, Emanuel: Architektura* [Architecture]. In: *Poche/Líbal/Reitharova/Wittlich: Praha národního probuzení* 122-204, 170 (cf. fn. 1). – *Kobout/Vančura: Praha 19. a 20. století* 130 (cf. fn. 9). – The building and its meaning are the subject of *Svatošová, Hana/Ledvínka, Václav* (eds.): *Město a jeho dům: Kapitoly ze stoleté historie Obecního domu hlavního města Prahy (1901-2001)* [The city and its house: Chapters from the hundred-year history of the Municipal House of the capital city of Prague]. Praha 2002.

⁶⁶ *Storck: Kulturnation und Nationalkunst* 179 (cf. fn. 13).



Fig. 2: The Sokol Parade in the Old Town Square in Prague, 1912

The massive Slet took place over several weekends, beginning in May and continuing through the first week in July, with the main events scheduled for the end of June, and it attracted record-breaking crowds, estimated as high as 300,000.⁶⁷ City leaders were seemingly ubiquitous, greeting over 180 visiting dignitaries, among them a high-level delegation from the city of Paris along with the mayors of Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade, hosting dinners and receptions, and reviewing the giant Slet parade of almost 18,000 marchers in the Old Town Square.⁶⁸ But the main event of the celebration for the city was the dedication of the Palacký monument. Located in a large open plaza by the Vltava River, the monument featured a granite likeness of a seated Palacký surrounded by bronze allegorical figures representing turning-points in the nation's history. The effect was truly "monumental", in accordance with the desire of its sculptor Stanislav Sucharda to erect the largest statue in Prague.⁶⁹ The dedication ceremony featured the usual bombastic rhetoric, choral singing, the presence of high-level government officials, and the participation of all major Czech national organizations. In his keynote speech, the Young Czech politician Karel Kramář highlighted Palacký's relevance to current events, proudly declaring, "Today we are strong enough to resist any domination, today the Germans fear our political and economic growth."⁷⁰ The festival ended with a banquet for 425 guests in the newly-opened Municipal House hosted by the Prague City Hall. The toasts at this closing dinner compared Prague to Paris, as one of "two cities in Europe, which grew up with its nation," and also likened Prague to Mecca, because it was the place Slavs regarded as "the birthplace of all the great ideas which govern Slavdom."⁷¹

In a celebratory article after the Slet, Prague officials proudly declared that their city, "the topographic center of Europe, became the center of public interest and

⁶⁷ The Slet is described in *Nolte*: The Sokol in the Czech Lands 174-178 (cf. fn. 37). – See also I. slet slovanského Sokolstva a slavnost odhalení pomníku Fr. Palackého 292 (cf. fn. 62).

⁶⁸ Pavla Horská claims that the 1912 festival was the high point of the foreign outreach of Prague City Hall. *Horská, Pavla: Praha-Paříž (K zahraničně politické orientaci pražské městské rady na přelomu 19. a 20. století)* [Prague-Paris (Concerning the foreign policy orientation of Prague City Council at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries)]. In: *Pražský sborník historický* 20 (1987) 97-137, 134. – There were 17,712 in the Slet parade. *Mašek, František: Průvod Sokolstva a hold jeho král. hlav. městu Praze* [The Sokol parade and its homage to the Capital City of Prague]. In: *Očenašek* (ed.): *Památník sletu 1912*, 283-293, 284 (cf. fn. 59).

⁶⁹ *Sucharda, Stanislav: Pomník Františka Palackého v Praze, jeho vznik a význam* [The monument to František Palacký: its origin and meaning]. Praha 1912, 6. – The Palacký monument became a site of pilgrimage, and a place for annual wreath-laying ceremonies by Czech politicians. *Storck: Kulturnation und Nationalkunst* 152-153 (cf. fn. 13).

⁷⁰ The speech is recorded in: I. slet slovanského Sokolstva a slavnost odhalení pomníku Fr. Palackého 298-301 (cf. fn. 62). – See also *Hojda/Pokorný: Pomníky a zapomínky* 101-103 (cf. fn. 17).

⁷¹ I. slet slovanského Sokolstva a slavnost odhalení pomníku Fr. Palackého 302-306 (cf. fn. 62). In his speech at the concluding ceremonies of the Jubilee Exhibition in 1891, Prague's mayor made a similar analogy, "As Bethlehem was not last among the Jewish cities, so also Prague has not been last among the Central European cities." *Jubilejní výstava zemská království českého v Praze 1891*, 814 (cf. fn. 31).

attention of almost all Europe. This small city, for many years neglected and vilified, became a center of Czech power, Slavic reciprocity, and European hospitality.”⁷² Their assessment reflected the goals of the Czech leaders of Prague dating back to mid-century; to modernize the city and make it Czech. The Slet provided an excellent opportunity to show off the new town center that was now nearly complete. The reviewing stands for the Slet parade on Old Town Square no longer looked out on the slums of Josefov; rather visitors saw a broad new boulevard, lined with grand apartment houses and luxury shops that ended with a new bridge over the Vltava river. Dinners and concerts took place in the bright new quarters of the Municipal House, where participants were surrounded with murals from Czech history and mythology. Tours of the city highlighted its Czech identity, from its historic core to its new representational buildings and monuments.

For many visitors, the 1912 Slet and its celebration of Prague had the desired impact. The French correspondent for the newspaper “Le Temps” declared that he “had come to Prague as an observer and left as an admirer,” an Italian journalist described the city as “Golden Prague, Prague of a hundred spires [...] animated by the Great Spirit of the Czech nation,” while the London “Times” concluded that “The city of Prague has become the capital of the western Slavic world.”⁷³ In his official report on the event, the French consul in Prague echoed this assessment: “Prague is not just a second or third city in the Austro-Hungarian empire, comparable in our country to Lyons or Marseilles; rather in reality the capital city, ‘Praga caput regni’ as the slogan reads above the coat of arms on the city hall.”⁷⁴

Conclusion

While the Czech leaders of Prague succeeded in imprinting a Czech identity on their city, it was less certain whether it was, as one account has claimed, “undoubtedly a modern European metropolis.”⁷⁵ City officials themselves appeared to doubt this when they ordered city workers in June 1912, “to take care that in the plazas, on the main avenues and streets, where the festival and the festival parades will be held and where lines of the spectators will go, that there is no business activity and that everything is removed that could stand in the way of the celebration, of open communication, and of the *big city character* of the city.”⁷⁶ Although Prague had undergone dramatic changes in the course of the nineteenth century, it still retained remnants of

⁷² I. slet slovanského Sokolstva a slavnost odhalení pomníku Fr. Palackého 289 (cf. fn. 62).

⁷³ Posudky ciziny o sletu [Opinions about the slet from foreign countries]. In: *Očenášek* (ed.): *Památník sletu 1912*, 379-392, 381, 385, and 387 (cf. fn. 59).

⁷⁴ French Consul to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 6 July 1912. Quoted in *Horská*, Pavla: *Praha-1900-Paříž* [Prague-1900-Paris]. Praha 1991, 23 (Slovo k historii 36).

⁷⁵ *Bělina*, Pavel/*Vlk*, Jan: *Dějiny Prahy* [A history of Prague]. Vol. 2. Prague 1998, 210.

⁷⁶ Emphasis added. Opatření praesidia k slavnostem všesokolským [Measures taken by the magistrate for the all-Sokol celebration]. In: *Věstník Prahy* 19 (13 July 1912) 280. Another article in the official journal proudly noted that during the Slet the city “had a big city character everywhere.” I. slet slovanského Sokolstva a slavnost odhalení pomníku Fr. Palackého 289 (cf. fn. 62).

its past and by 1914 “stood between small town somnolence and modern big city life, between pretension and reality.”⁷⁷ It took the impact of war and revolution to complete the transformation of Prague from a provincial city into the modern capital of a new Czechoslovak state.

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⁷⁷ *Storck*: Kulturnation und Nationalkunst 264 (cf. fn. 13). – Another source describes the city in similar fashion: “Prague was a small metropolis or rather a big small city.” *Kobout/Vančura*: Praha 19. a 20. století 110 (cf. fn. 9).