

Fellow Spirits: The Life and Thought of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, Contemporary of Chikuro Hiroike

Peter Luff

Keywords: Moral order, statesmanship, pacifism, capital punishment, internationalism

From the time of its founder to the present, Moralogy's character as a new truth has naturally led it to emphasize its distinctiveness when offering its solutions to the problems of the world. But its unique qualities, which spring in great measure from the very individual character of Chikuro Hiroike himself, should not obscure the fact that, scattered across the globe, others have shared and continue to share its concerns and some of its essential insights, unaware though they may be of its existence. To discover and acknowledge the presence and the contributions of these 'hidden allies' is a task to be embraced, for it offers hope that, in the face of what often seems a very bleak outlook for humankind, other powerful if unheralded forces for good may be found quietly at work. Chikuro Hiroike himself sought out such forces in the past in the form of the sages and ortholinons; but they existed, too, in his own time, and they continue to make their appearance in the world.

One figure worthy of attention to in this context is Thomas Garrigue Masaryk. Born in 1850 in a rural, part-Slovak, part-Czech working-class family in Moravia (then part of the

Habsburg Empire), Masaryk's long life, one of strenuous activity of the most varied kind, astonishingly diverse in experiences and deeply rich in events, ended, like Hiroike's, in 1937. In the course of his eighty seven years he served his people and the world in many intersecting roles: as an academic, ranging very widely across the fields of philosophy and sociology; as a politician, journalist and military leader, playing a key part in ordering the Europe that emerged from the debacle of the First World War; and as statesman who, as the founding President of Czechoslovakia, did more than any other individual to shape and guide his newly created country through its first years, and who left the imprint of his character deeply etched on it. The range of his natural gifts was remarkable. A talented linguist, fluent in Slovak, Czech, German, Russian, French and Italian, he was also enormously widely read, notably in classical Greek and Latin. He travelled very extensively, and although this was often done with political ends in view, it was also to satisfy a deep and insatiable curiosity about individuals and peoples. In outlook he was genuinely international, gifted with a special ability to get along with others from outside his country's borders.¹⁾ And he was more than simply the sum of these many parts. A unity of understanding and purpose underlay all that he did; scholarship and statesmanship, philosophy and history, princi-

1) 'No finer testimony to Masaryk's...breadth of vision and depth of understanding can be found than in the sixty testimonial essays written by colleagues at home and abroad in a volume dedicated to Masaryk on his sixtieth birthday in March 1910. This volume also testifies to the esteem and admiration Masaryk won, not only through his courage and intellectual achievements, but also through a warmth of personality more evident in interpersonal relationships than in his writings...

Masaryk was among the few Czech politicians before 1914 who acquired a broad understanding of foreign affairs and established close relationships with leading politicians abroad.' B. Garver, 'Masaryk and Czech Politics 1906-1914' in S. B. Winters (ed.), *T. G. Masaryk 1850-1937: Volume 1 Thinker and Politician* (London, 1990), p. 249.

ples and action, all formed part of an interwoven whole, one that was rooted in moral concern. For, as he said of himself late in life, ‘...always and in everything, in scholarship and in politics, my motivating force, my *vis motrix*, has been ethical in nature, and ethics I base on feelings, love, sympathy, and humanity.’²⁾

Masaryk unity of purpose, then, embodied an unshakeable conviction that morality permeates life, and that nothing a human being undertakes is without its moral dimension. This was already a theme in his first published work, in which he sought to explain why suicide was on the increase in 19th century Europe. Although couched in the form of a sociological study, the core of his analysis was that this disturbing trend stemmed from the parallel decline of religion and morality.³⁾ His grasp of the centrality of moral concerns gave him deep insight into the world around him. It meant that he understood his times far better than the vast majority of his contemporaries, and this ability to grasp the true significance of events was an important element in his success in navigating himself and his country through the storms of the early 20th century. He was completely sure of the ground on which he stood; not for nothing did Lenin, for example,

2) K. Čapek, *Talks with T. G. Masaryk* (trans. M. H. Heim, North Haven, 1995), pp. 193.

3) ‘Since the Renaissance, lack of faith, skepticism, and religious indifference has increased in all Christian countries; the positive folk religion — Christianity — daily lost the beneficial influence which it had formerly exercised.

...one may not make [decline of] religion the sole cause of the tendency to suicide without qualification. But...its effect is stronger and more visible than the other simultaneous causes.

‘In fact, the modern half-education and lack of moral principle appear as irreligiosity; and thus we finally conclude that the modern tendency to suicide has its true cause in the irreligiosity of our time...A harmonious religious world-view makes life tolerable under all circumstances, even the life of Job; irreligiosity makes it unbearable with the first blow.’ T. G. Masaryk, *Suicide and the Meaning of Civilization* (trans. W. B. Weist and R. G. Bateson, Chicago, 1970), pp. 162, 85-6.

concede that, 'Masaryk was my most serious ideological antagonist in Europe', for there were few who understood more clearly the nature of the threat to human society posed by Bolshevism in its abandonment of all moral restraints.⁴⁾

When Masaryk spoke of ethics, he did not talk of principles rationally derived, but rather of 'feelings', and key among these was love. It bound together everything in his understanding of the world. 'Love is great moral strength, the source of all mutual sympathy, help, and collaboration. A moral life presumes active participation in God's world order. Love, sympathy, synergy — such is the law of life whether it be for the couple, the family, the nation, the state, or humanity. I know no other.'⁵⁾ But in addition to 'love, sympathy, and humanity', there were other important elements in his perception of the nature of morality. Two mottoes in particular are closely associated with him. The first has the quality of a life vow, a promise before God; 'Nebát se a nekrást' ('not to fear and not to steal), which committed him to the virtue of courage, no small asset in the Europe of the 1930s, as will be seen. The second, 'truth is victorious', was equally important; for Masaryk, truth had an absolute value, one that he equated with the essence of reality; he was convinced that 'A person can put up with a great deal, everything, in fact, if he has a goal and vows to follow it truthfully, come what may. Truthfulness is the secret of the world and of life; it is a sacrament religious and moral...In the awareness of truth, in a moral order, in active love we can find a modicum of eternity here below.'⁶⁾

Masaryk's belief in 'a moral order' which mandated the

4) Lenin's remark is reproduced, without attribution, on the back cover of Čapek, *Talks*.

5) Čapek, *Talks*, p. 131.

6) Čapek, *Talks*, pp. 207, 236.

active pursuit of truth was something he absorbed in part from his wife, but it also expressed anew a much older Czech tradition.⁷⁾ Nor was it in any way an abstract concept; rather, it was something to be lived, constantly and without the slightest compromise. Abandoning the truth was impossible under any circumstances, as Karel Čapek highlighted when retelling Masaryk's story of one dramatic incident from his Russian experiences in the turbulent year of 1917.

[Masaryk] had been sent from revolutionary Petrograd to Moscow since it was so peaceful there, and no sooner did he step off the train than he heard shooting. He headed for his hotel on foot...and found himself in a square where rifles and machine guns were firing at each other, Kerensky's men on one side, the Bolsheviks on the other.

"I set off," he told us. "A man walking ahead of me suddenly broke into a run and slipped through a large door that had been opened a crack for him. It was the Hotel Metropole. I tried to slip in after him, but they slammed the door in my face. So I banged on it and shouted, 'What are you doing? Open the door!' 'Have you got a room here?' the porter shouted back. 'We can't let you in otherwise. We're all booked up.' I didn't want to lie, so I shouted, 'Stop playing games and let me in!' He was so surprised he did let me in."

...what struck the author of the *Talks* more than anything else was that one brief phrase "I didn't want to lie." There he was — guns shooting from both sides of the square, bullets raining down on the pavement around him — there stands Professor Masaryk and the porter won't let him in. Had he said he was staying there, the porter would have let him in immediately, but not even when his life was at stake would he allow himself to lie. And

7) 'For centuries, we — Czechs and Slovaks, whether in our own state or under foreign control — lived in a situation of constant menace from without...It is no accident that here, in this milieu of unrelenting danger, with the constant need to defend our own identity, the idea that a price must be paid for truth, the idea of truth as a moral value, has such a long tradition. That tradition stretches back to Saints Cyril and Methodius, who brought Christianity to the region in the ninth century A.D., through the fifteenth century reformer, Jan Hus, all the way down to modern politicians like Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Milan Štefánik, and the philosopher Jan Patočka.' V. Havel, *Summer Meditations* (trans. P. Wilson), New York, 1993, pp. 126-7.

when he talks about it, he uses the short, dry “I didn’t want to lie,” meaning it goes without saying, that’s all there is to it.⁸⁾

Masaryk’s consistency in such matters was lifelong, as he made clear in his eighties when reflecting on the shape his career had taken.

...my personal satisfaction...comes from having relinquished nothing as head of state that I believed in and loved as a penniless student, a teacher of youth, a nagging critic, and a political reformer, from having found no need in my position of power for any moral law or relationship to my fellow men, my nation, and the world but those which guided me before. I may therefore state that everything I believed in has been confirmed and validated; I have not had to change one item of my faith in humanity and democracy, in my search for truth, or in my reliance on the supreme moral and religious commandment to “love thy neighbor.”⁹⁾

The moral imperative that he obeyed, then, was not just a matter of abstract principle, but one that impelled him into action and demanded of him the fullest attention to practical matters. Much can be learned from studying how Masaryk gave concrete expression to his values in the course of a long life in politics. Throughout, his actions were governed entirely by his moral vision, and he constantly took thought for long-term and not just immediate needs.¹⁰⁾ The three

8) Čapek, *Talks*, pp. 16-17.

9) Čapek, *Talks*, pp. 248-9. He gave much of the credit for this to his wife. ‘She was absolutely uncompromising and never lied, two qualities that had a great influence on my development. She gave me the best that Protestantism has to offer: the unity of religion and life, that is religious practicality, religion for every day.’ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

10) As he explained himself, ‘...everything I’ve ever done and found interesting has had at least an indirect connection with politics. But I’ve never found political activity satisfying in itself, whether the issues at stake are national or social or anything you care to mention. I’ve always opposed philistinism and rowdiness in politics and called for honesty and common sense...In politics I saw only the means; the end for me was religious and moral. But I saw that we needed to be politically free to go our own spiritual way. Even today I refuse to claim that the state is the be-all and end-all of our cultural mission. We must prepare the way for the *Civitas Dei*, the Kingdom of God.’ Čapek, *Talks*, p. 168.

case studies that follow illustrate this harmony of thought and action; despite the very different circumstances of each, they typify the man, as do many others that might have been chosen to stand in their stead.

* * *

The first episode concerns the role Masaryk played in creating and sustaining ‘Russian Action’, an aid program for the thousands of Russians forced abroad by the Bolshevik victory in the Russian Civil War in the early 1920s. Both of the most recent accounts of this initiative agree on the remarkable character of this initiative. As Lesley Chamberlain notes,

The ‘Russian Action’ which invited Russians to live there after the upheaval in their own country was a gesture of unrivalled generosity. From 1921 to 1928 Czechoslovakia spent more than all other European nations together on Russian refugees, on Masaryk’s initiative.

Masaryk, a Professor of Philosophy at the Charles University and longtime observer of Russian affairs, expected Bolshevik power to collapse shortly, leaving a political and cultural vacuum which academics and liberal politicians would fill on their return. While the exiled Russian waited for better days, Czechoslovakia would keep alive their knowledge and skills and feed, house and educate their families, along with thousands more Russian refugees from the Revolution and Civil War. The aim of Russian Action was a stable, democratic civil society in both Russian and Czechoslovakia. It reflected an ideal for a liberal state which Masaryk and Pavel Milyukov, who were old friends, shared. For the Czechs it was also a way of looking to a better Russia as a future ally.¹¹⁾

11) L. Chamberlain, *Lenin’s Private War* (New York, 2006), p. 187. Cf. the following assessment in another recent study. ‘The policy of *Russkaya Aktsiya* (Russian Action) provided financial support to Russian refugees in the early 1920s and focused particularly on education, with the aim of sending educated Russians back to Russia. Unique in the annals of inter-war Europe, it was an extraordinarily generous gesture by the First Republic of Czechoslovakia.’ C. Andreyev and I Savický, *Russia Abroad*, New Haven, 2004, p. 1.

Here, as ever, the fit between action and principles was seamless, since Masaryk was the weaver of his own story. 'Russian Action' was a single design which brought together many threads of his life. It sprang partly from his own recent personal experience. Having himself been a refugee from his homeland between 1915 and 1918, he was keenly sympathetic when faced with the pain of those forced into exile. But in part, too, the help he extended reflected his scholarly interests, for his deep interest in the philosophy and literature of the Russian intelligentsia had found expression in *The Spirit of Russia*, the lengthy work that crowned his academic career; now he could act to provide a refuge to the heirs of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and many others held in contempt under the Soviet regime. Another motivation was his adherence to the cause of truth, since the exiles formed an important part of the collective memory of Russia, the true nature of whose history was already being distorted by Bolshevik propaganda. Finally, as a statesman, Masaryk felt that his country owed a debt to the White Russians who had fought alongside the Czech Legion during the early stages of the Civil War just a few years before; and, as Chamberlain points out, he was also taking thought for the future, attending to what he saw as the long-term interests of Czechoslovakia and democracy. Although his attempts at the promotion of Russian democracy had no immediate success, this did not discourage him from continuing to support the program.

There is nothing wrong with accepting that Masaryk's motives in promoting 'Russian Action' were not entirely altruistic. There was no reason why he should have been purely disinterested in what he did. 'Russian Action' certainly had its practical, political aspects, perhaps as an attempt to create a future hedge against the Germans, or as an expression of fellow feeling with a Slav people. But the fact that

such considerations played their part should not distract from the very significant presence of the ‘feelings, love, sympathy, and humanity’ (though in actuality Masaryk did not like many of the Russian exiles as individuals). Most of all, the generosity and farsightedness of ‘Russian Action’ stand out, a remarkable offer by a country of only 13 million people just starting out on its own independent life, and with more than enough calls on its limited resources from its native inhabitants.¹²⁾

* * *

The growing threat to the existence of Czechoslovakia posed by the rise of Hitler illuminate different attributes of Masaryk’s temperament, notably his pacifism and courage. The unity of belief and action so characteristic of him was, nonetheless, just as evident in his defense of his own country as in his generosity to refugees from another.

12) Chamberlain’s detailed account of what was provided to the exiles, and Masaryk’s personal involvement in it, bears out this judgment. ‘Russian Action supported a vast range of people, and peoples, from within the Russian Empire, and especially from Ukraine. They included every class and political grouping, and every level of expertise from illiteracy to near genius. Some 5,500 new arrivals were officially registered in 1921-4 but by the middle of the decade the Czechoslovak authorities reckoned with a Russian population five times that number...Apart from continuing the education of an upcoming Russian generation, defending the integrity of history was probably Russian Action’s greatest achievement and it was performed in stark contrast to the way in which the Soviet regime either doctored Russian history or rendered it irrelevant...Russian Action was funded by the Czech government, with additional personal contributions from Masaryk and his President’s Office...Masaryk’s personal role in Russian Action, though it stands to be defined more precisely, can’t be overestimated. ‘It was his own money — or rather the Czech government gave it to him to use in whatever way he chose. He didn’t take anything for himself. He was a very modest man,’ Katkov remembered.’ L. Chamberlain, *Lenin’s Private War*, pp. 187-93. Vera Kalinovska, another exile who spent time in Prague, described it as ‘one of the biggest and — all things considered — one of the happiest Russian émigré communities in Europe, chiefly thanks to President Masaryk and his wish to help us.’ M. Glenny and N. Stone, *The Other Russia* (London, 1990), p. 258.

For Masaryk, pacifism was a core belief, but he did not equate it with a complete refusal to fight in self-defense if the circumstances warranted, as he made very clear on a visit to Tolstoy.

...most of all we argued over non-resistance to evil. Tolstoy did not understand that the issue at hand is not merely opposing evil by force but waging an all-out war on it. He failed to make a distinction between defensive and offensive. He thought, for example, that had the Russians not resisted their Tartar invaders they would have abstained from violence after only a brief massacre. My theory is, if a man attacks me with intent to kill, I will defend myself, and if there is no other alternative, I will kill him. If one of us has to die, why not the one with evil intent?¹³⁾

For Masaryk, then, the cause of peace demanded firmness, and never more so than when his country found itself in an increasingly precarious position after 1933, caught between Hitler and Stalin. As President of Czechoslovakia, Masaryk had no doubts about his duty to provide his people with as much protection as possible.

From the outset I've devoted a good deal of attention to our army...I am a convinced pacifist, but I love the army. Even if there were no more war, there would still be a need for two basic military virtues in every man worthy of the name: discipline and courage. I may want peace, but that doesn't mean I will meet aggression unarmed. On the contrary. What I want is a practical peace, not a utopian one, and that means I'll dedicate the combined power of my brain and my love of country and humanity to keep the peace, but also, if attacked, to fight a war. We must be as brave and manly and as strong as possible. There has never been the slightest contradiction between my humanist ideals and my efforts in defense of the state. We need to build our country and to provide everyone with the greatest personal happiness. That is why we must work for a durable, judicious peace.¹⁴⁾

It is significant that there was no attack on Czechoslova-

13) Čapek, *Talks*, pp. 150-1.

14) Čapek, *Talks*, pp. 246-7.

kia in Masaryk's lifetime, even though it was one of Hitler's principal targets and contained a very large German minority in the Sudetenland.¹⁵⁾ Within a bare year of his death, though, his country had been dismembered, and within less than two, entirely destroyed. Yet, even in death, Masaryk fought against this, and since his courage had been absorbed both by the army and by extensive elements of the population at large, the fall of Czechoslovakia was by no means a foregone conclusion. During the Munich Crisis of September 1938, enough spirit emerged from within the country to suggest that a determined campaign of resisting evil was the preferred option for the majority. The army leadership was unequivocal that no territorial concessions should be made to Hitler, and that resistance was the only proper course open, whatever the outcome might be. The language used by the army generals to impress their determination on Masaryk's successor, President Beneš, could have come direct from Masaryk's own mouth.

The Czechoslovak army understood that the crisis had reached a crucially important point. On 9 September 1938...General Ludvík Krejčí addressed President Beneš...[and] warned against any compromise and pointed out that the army stood ready to do its duty. It was well armed and eager to fight, and the Wehrmacht should not be overestimated. "This is a decisive moment in our nation's history and it calls for resolute decision....If we do not defend ourselves there will be no mercy for us. We would be annihilated in the most barbaric manner. If we must die let us do so honorably."¹⁶⁾

15) A quotation from a source to the effect that while Masaryk lived, Hitler would not attack Czechoslovakia, can be in the Wikipedia article on Masaryk at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom%C3%A1%C5%A1_Masaryk. Though anonymous, this remark has the ring of truth; Hitler, like Lenin, may well instinctively have recognized the difficulties of dealing with an antagonist who knew exactly where he stood, why he must defend that ground and how self-destructive fear would prove.

16) I. Lukes, *Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler* (Oxford, 1996), p. 215.

Munich proved to be a tipping point, not just for Czechoslovakia, but for Europe as a whole. Even as late as mid-September, 1938, matters hung in the balance. A Nazi assault on Masaryk's people and his key beliefs was far from inevitable.

Hitler's concern that his troops might end up "bleeding to death" after they had hit the steel and concrete of Czechoslovak fortifications, his worries about causing another Verdun, and the surprising vagueness of his speech at Nuremberg showed that the Führer's steely appearance may have been only a mask. And now the routing of the Freikorps in a low-key action by the Czechoslovak police...must have increased his doubts. Hitler's domestic position, of course, had remained strong, but only as long as he marched from one success to another. One setback — and who knew what would have happened? The question was whether President Beneš, his allies, and the rest of democratic Europe would be able to sustain the tide's new, favorable direction.¹⁷⁾

The rest of democratic Europe, principally in the shape of Chamberlain and Daladier, neither saw nor grasped this opportunity, lacking as they did the essential insights of a Masaryk. They chose to abandon Czechoslovakia and, with it, themselves; which left Beneš with a simple choice between fighting alone, or surrendering to Hitler's demands. Even at this late and unhappy hour, there were still plenty of voices inside the country for whom military defeat at the hands of Hitler was not the worst that could befall the Czech people. Certainly the immediate odds were overwhelming, and the impact of the short-sighted and cowardly betrayal of Czechoslovakia by its allies demoralizing. But still there was an understanding that resistance, however futile it might appear, was a moral obligation, an argument that reflected Masaryk's spirit and one which he would surely have endorsed. It was advocated very clearly at the time, and not just by the army

17) Lukes, *Czechoslovakia*, pp. 214-5.

leadership. Within hours learning of the French decision to abandon Czechoslovakia on 30 September, and while the Czechs were in the process of deciding whether to fight alone,

...Mrs Hana Beneš rang Drtina and asked him to come to the presidential apartment, where she was talking with Alice Masaryk, the daughter of former President Masaryk. The two ladies asked Drtina plainly whether, in his opinion, Czechoslovakia should surrender or fight to the bitter end. No nation, he said, could lose its liberty without a struggle, unless it was ready to accept moral disintegration.¹⁸⁾

Masaryk, represented here at the heart of the crisis by his daughter, would surely have been pleased to hear the moral health of his nation being treated as the decisive issue, for it was inseparable from the virtue of courage, one of those 'two basic military virtues in every man worthy of the name', and it set the country's terrible dilemma in its widest perspective. The argument in favor of surrender was that it would mitigate the suffering inflicted on the country by the Germans during and after a war. But against this short term prospect, fearful as it was, had to be set the long-term damage that a failure to fight would inflict on the nation, a point that has been recognized by a least one historian.

While the conference at Munich was still in progress...Four of the top generals of the Czechoslovak army came to see [Beneš]... their argument consisted of four points. First, Czechoslovakia should go to war under any circumstances. Second, the Allies would eventually be forced to fight. Third, the nation was united and the army wanted to fight. Fourth, even if the country was to remain isolated, the army should fight...They...left, expecting the worst, which for them was not death, but surrender.

The meeting...summed up well the devilish dilemma that the president faced...Beneš ...knew the kind of war that Hitler was about to force on Europe...The Nazi assault on Poland eleven months later and Hitler's subsequent attempts to exterminate every trace of Polish identity showed quite well what the presi-

18) Lukes, *Czechoslovakia*, p. 254.

dent felt obligated to avoid. At the same time, the wounds (physical and psychological) caused by the Czechoslovak army's failure to resist were as deep and maybe more treacherous than whatever injuries Czechoslovakia would have sustained in a war with Germany.¹⁹⁾

Nor was the moral and practical damage confined to Czechoslovakia. A much greater share of the shame attaching to Munich belongs to the British Prime Minister Chamberlain, with his famous, fatuous 'piece of paper' on which was written Hitler's promise of peace, 'peace in our time', which was broken just six months later when the Nazis marched into Prague and swallowed the remnant of Czechoslovakia. This belatedly forced Chamberlain into a guarantee to Poland that was to lead to the outbreak of a European conflict in September 1939 on far worse terms, militarily, for the western democracies, Czechoslovakia being eminently more defensible than Poland.

It can be seen, then, that Masaryk's death, albeit at the advanced age of eighty seven, raises serious questions about the course that events might have taken had he remained alive for another two or three years. Would Hitler have continued to refrain from any assault on Czechoslovakia? Had he refrained, what would that have meant for the security of Europe and for his domestic position? At the very least, such questions reveal that Nazi success was far from pre-ordained, and that it fed off the spirit of appeasement against which Masaryk always took a firm stand. Further, had Masaryk been confronted with the Munich crisis, would he not have dealt far more forcefully with Hitler, Chamberlain and Daladier? What effect would his continued presence have had on public opinion in Britain and the U.S.A., with which he had cultivated important personal ties? Finally, even if

19) Lukes, *Czechoslovakia*, pp. 251-2.

Chamberlain and Daladier had persisted with their betrayal of the Czechs, would not Masaryk, unlike Beneš, have fought to the last? And what moral and practical effect might that not have had on Europe and the world in the second half of the twentieth century?

* * *

The final case study presented here concerns Masaryk's thoughts and actions in the matter of capital punishment. Here, again, his involvement in the issue, which is an essentially moral one, was an intensely practical matter rather than an occasion for purely abstract theorizing. As President of Czechoslovakia, Masaryk had to sign, or not sign, death warrants in criminal cases. How he approached such momentous decisions, a single life resting entirely the stroke of his pen every time, reveals how deep his sense of responsibility ran. He spoke of his struggles in the following terms.

The issue of capital punishment has always weighed heavily on me. I have lost many nights pondering on whether to sign a death warrant, and the days when I have done so I mark with a black cross on my calendar. I have looked carefully into whether capital punishment has an effect on crime; I have studied the statistics on criminality and in particular of murder over a long period of time, and I fail to see that the death penalty serves as a deterrent to potential murderers: a murderer in the throes of the crime thinks not of whether he will be punished but of whether he will succeed. The death penalty does have a certain effect on the rest of the population, though, especially on the segment inclined to think about such things.

My argument in favor of the death penalty is not that it serves as a deterrent but that it serves as a moral expiation. Taking a human life is so horrendous a wrong that expiation can only come from an equally onerous ransom. Of course I make the necessary distinction between murder and other kinds of homicide and accept, with modern criminal psychology, the possibility of extenuating circumstances for every crime. But in certain exceptional cases I cannot deny that capital punishment coincides

with the metaphysical recognition of the value of human life. At the same time I hope and believe it will be abolished by universal will as the educational and moral level of the population rises.²⁰⁾

This passage reveals the full and remarkable range of Masaryk's knowledge and concerns. Here is present the scholar, seeking out and attending to the relevant academic research into the deterrent effect of the death penalty and the motivation of those who commit murder; and dispassionately so, ready to accept that the evidence does not support the argument about deterrence. We also meet the politician, who must consider what effect abolishing capital punishment might have on public opinion. At the deepest level, though, where the issue is finally decided, we find someone completely enveloped in moral concern, attempting to define and defend, as clearly as his feelings allow, what constitutes the value of human life. Beyond all that, though, is the man; one imbued with a profound sense of personal responsibility, sharply attentive to all that surrounds him, full of sadness when faced with the weaknesses of humankind, and ever hopeful about its prospects.

* * *

Masaryk's legacy is as multi-faceted as his life. With regard to his continuing impact on the country which he did so much to create, we are presented with a classic example of the workings of moral causality, of how the significance of moral behavior may be perceived very differently depending on where and when one takes one's stand. In the short and medium term, all that Masaryk had worked to build up seemed consigned to oblivion, proof of the weakness of his utopian principles. Czechoslovakia was occupied and dismembered by Hitler, then swallowed by Stalin after the

20) Čapek, *Talks*, pp. 247-8.

Second World War, and Masaryk's very name was obliterated by his country's new masters. But when viewed in the longer term, it is evident that his example and influence continued their work unseen even in the bleakest of times. The Masarykian stream was forced deep underground, but its strength was not impaired, and it began to break surface with increasing force in the Prague Spring of 1967, in Charter '77 and finally in the Velvet Revolution which restored independence and democracy to Czechoslovakia. The rising tide of these events was no accident. They were in good measure the work of Masaryk's spiritual heirs, men like Jan Patočka, Ludovík Vaculík and Vaclav Havel, among many others.

Masaryk's concepts, too, lived on, an example being his passion for 'small-scale work'. As Vaclav Havel explained it,

At a time when the Czech lands and Slovakia were an integral part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire...Masaryk established a Czechoslovak national program based on the notion of "small-scale work" (*drobná práce*). By that he meant honest and responsible work in widely different areas of life but within the existing social order, work that would stimulate national creativity and national self-confidence. Naturally he placed great emphasis on intelligent and enlightened upbringing and education, and on the moral and humanitarian aspects of life. Masaryk believed that the only possible starting point for a more dignified national destiny was humanity itself. Humanity's first task was to create the conditions for a more human life; and in Masaryk's view, the task of transforming the stature of the nation began with the transformation of human beings.

This notion of "working for the good of the nation" took root in Czechoslovak society and in many ways it was successful and is still alive today.²¹⁾

21) V. Havel, 'The Power of the Powerless [1978]', in *Open Letters* (ed. and trans. P. Wilson), New York, 1992, p. 172. As one foreign commentator recognized, the importance of this concept did not diminish even when the influence of dissidents seemed unlikely to generate large-scale political change. 'The main hope rests in the ability of Charter 77 to continue its 'small-scale work' (*drobná práce*), to

Of even greater importance was the fact that Masaryk's fundamental belief in the centrality of moral concern also re-emerged into the full light of day as the communist regime in Czechoslovakia crumbled. His name and his words were invoked in the inaugural speech to the nation by the first popularly chosen President of Czechoslovakia for more than fifty years.

Our first president wrote: "Jesus, not Caesar."...Masaryk based his politics on morality...Let us try in a new time and in a new way to restore this concept of politics...Let us teach ourselves and others that politics can be not only the art of the possible, especially if this means the art of speculation, calculation, intrigue, secret deals, and pragmatic maneuvering, but that it can even be the art of the impossible, namely, the art of improving ourselves and the world..²²⁾

Masaryk's legacy, though, reached well beyond the borders of his country. In his own time, he was deeply concerned with the problem of how small states and ethnic minorities are to be treated in the modern world. As president of one such small state, he had decided views on the matter.

Big peoples, like the British and the American, who are wont to apply continental standards of judgment and are not greatly troubled by questions of language, are wont to look upon the liberation of small peoples and the creation of small States as a bothersome process of political and linguistic "Balkanization". Yet circumstances are what they are, determined by Nature and History. Turkey, Austria-Hungary, Germany and Russia simplified half Europe by methods of violence, mechanically, and therefore, temporarily. As remedies for "Balkanization", freedom and democracy are preferable.

use the famous phrase of T. G. Masaryk, often cited by the Chartists..., arousing citizens from resignation, stimulating confidence and hope, cultivating a sense of independence and reviving traditional values. In the words of Jan Tesař, 'the essence of dissent is the consciousness that there is no salvation except in the citizen himself, in the restoration of the feeling of individuality [svěbytnost] and civic responsibility'...' H. Gordon Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia*, (London, 1981), p. 193.

22) V. Havel, 'New Year's Address [1990], in Wilson, *Open Letters*, pp. 394-5.

The problem is whether the big peoples which have hitherto threatened the small peoples and each other will accept the principle that all nations, big and small, are equally entitled to their own individualities in political organization and political culture.²³⁾

Masaryk's recognition that any attempt to control other nations by violence cannot provide a durable solution is as relevant today as it was when he made it in the 1920s. That problem is now again firmly on the international agenda, since the prospects for independent small states in Eastern Europe today (Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and even the Ukraine, for example) are suddenly uncertain in the face of a resurgent Russia. The crisis of the 1930s has been transposed further east, but its essence is unchanged. Nationalism lies at the heart of it, and the clear distinction that Masaryk drew between chauvinism and true nationalism remains of the first importance.

Chauvinism, that is to say, political, religious, racial or class intolerance, has, as history proves, wrought the downfall of all States...We shall solve our own problem aright if we comprehend that the more humane we are the more national we shall be...nations are the natural organs of mankind...To a positive nationalism, one that seeks to raise a nation by intensive work, none can demur. Chauvinism, racial or national intolerance, is the foe of nations and of humanity. Love of one's own nation does not entail non-love of other nations.²⁴⁾

That final sentence shows how naturally the scope of Masaryk's concern moves back and forth between the individual, the nation and humankind as a whole, love being the unchanging theme. In the process, it reminds us that Masaryk and his country have a peculiar significance for those preoccupied with the active pursuit of morality anywhere in

23) T. G. Masaryk, *The Making of a State* (trans. H. Wickham Steed, New York, 1927), p. 412.

24) Masaryk, *The Making of a State*, pp. 434-5.

the world. Masaryk's singular importance commands attention, for there are very few statesmen in the modern era who have taken moral concern as their point of departure and their motive force; Ghandi, certainly, and perhaps Lincoln. But such figures are very rare indeed. Modern Czechoslovakia has, therefore, the quality of an experiment, unique in many respects, in the application of morality to political life, to national life. This confers on it an importance out of all proportion to its size, an importance that it derives in good measure from the life and work of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk.

* * *

In terms of their backgrounds, Masaryk and Hiroike lived at opposite ends of the earth and so, it might seem, were destined never to meet. Yet such an encounter was, fleetingly, possible, for Masaryk made a brief stop in Japan between April 6th and 20th, 1918. In this very limited time, and with pressing political matters to occupy him fully, his ceaseless curiosity in the world around him was still much in evidence.

My fortnight in Japan added little to my knowledge of the country, for my whole attention was given to the fate of our Legions, to the war and to the prospective peace. I visited various temples in Tokio, saw what was accessible, but cannot say that I studied Japan. I sought, indeed, to learn something of her economic condition and to see what the economic effect of the war would be on so active a country. The circumstance that England and, to a certain extent, France, were prevented from exporting their goods to the Far East, naturally gave the Japanese an opportunity to extend their business in Asia and even as far as Egypt. I kept an eye on bookshops and art dealers, bought a few woodcuts and not a few European books. The influence of German (particularly German medical) literature was obvious, and I found a second-hand bookseller who dealt chiefly in German books.²⁵⁾

Time and circumstance were not propitious. But had Masaryk and Hiroike-sensei met, how much common ground would they have found? There were certainly many parallels in their lives. Both sprang from humble backgrounds and were, in large measure, self-taught. Both were teachers and scholars, enormously widely read and with a deep concern for the past. Both were possessed of a strongly didactic streak. In terms of fundamental beliefs, both were utterly convinced that morality is the substrate of human existence, permeating all of life; that, in Masaryk's words, there is a 'moral order' to the world. And for both men, self-examination was of great importance; as Masaryk put it, 'People don't seem to understand that criticism, especially harsh criticism, is often a matter of self-criticism, and even painful confession.'²⁶⁾ In their concern for peace, in their strong belief in the value of education and in their sense of individual responsibility ('small-scale work'), there would have been much to share. Nor would religion necessarily have proved a barrier. Masaryk was very clearly a Christian, but he located his own role in the world outside of any established religion.

I consider neither the Church nor theology to be religion, or at least not the whole of religion...The Church must continue to care for the soul and attend to practical morality. If that is what the priests did, they would be closer to Jesus. Nearly every family has its moral problems, recognizing them and restoring the soul sinking beneath them should be the duty of all priests...the task of Christianity is...to become the true herald of practical love and reviver of souls...What we need is freedom of scholarship and research, intellectual integrity in matters of religion, tolerance; not spiritual indifference, no, but faith, living faith in something higher than ourselves, something great, sublime, eternal.²⁷⁾

Given such an approach, an encounter between Masaryk

25) Masaryk, *The Making of a State*, p. 206.

26) Čapek, *Talks*, p. 193.

27) Čapek, *Talks*, pp. 185, 187.

and Hiroike would surely have been fruitful. Such a meeting did not take place in 1920; that is no reason, though, why it should not do so now.