

Coward

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1. Childhood and youth during the First Republic

Bohumil was a good kid, did pretty well in school, listened to his parents, and went to Sunday mass. Not that he enjoyed all that stuff, sometimes quite the opposite, but he was the type who respected authority, whether it was his parents, teachers, or the priest. His parents were, as they used to say at the time, simple people, and they wanted their only son to become something, simply to be a gentleman and not have to work as hard as they did. On the other hand, they were by no means poor; they owned a small shop, a hardware store, where they both worked, and they even had a few employees. It provided them with a fairly decent living. And they were very happy that their son was studying at a grammar school. In the 1930s, this was considered elite secondary education and could only be accessed through difficult entrance exams. The main purpose of high schools, as it is today, was to prepare students for university studies. Upon successful completion, a certificate of maturity was issued, which was very important because it entitled the holder to enter university. And his parents certainly wanted Bohumil to get in and become a doctor or an engineer. If he ever got a bad grade, they did everything they could to get him to improve. This included reminding him of the economic crisis a few years earlier, which had been associated with unemployment, beggars, and the shooting of demonstrators. They urged him not to end up like that. They often repeated to him that property and money could be taken away, but education was important and no one could

take that away. They simply wanted him to have a degree, which was important at the time. We'll go to church to pray that you do well at school and that God will protect you.

Once, for getting good grades, he even received a new two-tiered leather pencil case to replace his old and already quite worn wooden one. That was something; he felt like a big boss. At that time, very practical gifts such as cotton stockings and so on were usually given. Girls may have been happy about that, but young men were not. Slogans such as "A penny saved is a penny earned," "Work ennobles man," and "The early bird catches the worm" were highly regarded at the time. Bohumil didn't like the last one very much because he didn't want to go to bed at night and get up early in the morning. And even though people were quite thrifty, it was customary to send gifts to the rectory.

Bohumil's father's great wish was for his son to understand music and master a musical instrument. He considered this to be very important for life. So he chose the violin for him and found a fairly skilled teacher at a relatively prestigious music school. It wasn't easy to get in; he had to pass some kind of entrance exam, which he somehow managed to do successfully. It must be said that this was truly surprising, because he lacked any talent for this kind of activity. He then had to practice for long periods every day at home, which he hated with all his heart. In the end, to his great luck, the teacher came to the conclusion that continuing the lessons made no sense and was a considerable torment for both of them. He therefore agreed with his father to end the lessons. Bohumil and the teacher certainly breathed a sigh of relief, and life immediately began to seem happier for

them. It was also his father's wish that the family go to their cottage every Sunday during the warmer months. His mother and the whole family skipped church because of this, and Bohumil did not protest. He had friends there with whom he could play soccer, and he did not mind helping with various garden chores, as it gave him a break from his schoolwork in the fresh air . His parents approved of his interest in sports, so they enrolled him in Sokol, but Bohumil found it too monotonous and too bound by various rules and instructions, so he preferred to play soccer, for example on the street in front of his house or on the playground in the local park, where he often went after school.

However, as he got older, he sometimes wanted to spend his Sundays in a different way, which led to conflicts with his father.

Bohumil's parents were ambitious, and perhaps their un d ambitions were to be fulfilled through their son. They told him that if he became a doctor, that would be something, meaning a physician. It would certainly be good for them, because medical care was definitely not cheap at the time. But Bohumil did not want to be a doctor under any circumstances, because he found the profession too responsible and was afraid that if he made a mistake, which could certainly happen, we are all fallible, he could harm someone. Moreover, the idea of having to spend his whole life among the sick and the dead stressed him out. But he certainly inherited a certain ambition, and so he liked the idea of becoming a doctor or an engineer. For example, becoming a doctor of law would be something that would appeal to his parents and could even help them in their business. But then again, he wouldn't want to be a judge and send people to prison or even to their deaths.

The beginning of the 1937 school year was affected by the illness of former president and, as he was then called, founder of the state or president liberator Tomáš G. Masaryk. His health was closely monitored not only at school, but throughout the country. People read and listened to health reports published regularly every few hours by the president's personal physician, Dr. Maixner. There was a sense of relief when reports emerged of a significantly restorative and peaceful night's sleep and announcements that his condition had not changed or even that the illness was in remission. Reports that his temperature was only 36.8 and that the president's daily routine was proceeding normally also caused satisfaction. Masses were held for him in churches, and even Bohumil's mother prayed for him. But Masaryk died soon after. Students from Bohumil's high school attended the funeral on Wenceslas Square. He himself thought that he would attend many funerals in his lifetime, and that indeed came true. The coffin was carried from the Castle to Wilson Station and from there to Lány to the sound of one hundred and one cannon shots. Black flags flew everywhere on the houses. Fifty-four aircraft flew over the Castle, and as many as 192 aircraft flew over the entire funeral procession. The distance from Lány Station to the cemetery is 2,800 meters, and the route was lined with about 25,000 spectators. Even before the funeral, people came to the Castle to say goodbye to him for three days and four nights without interruption. Bohumil went there with his school, as did his parents. According to newspaper reports, Prague had not experienced such collective grief since the funeral of Havlíček.

The last two years of Bohumil's high school studies coincided with a very complicated situation in the world, which also had a

significant impact on Czechoslovakia. The events of 1938 unfolded very quickly and there was much to discuss at school, at home, and in society in general. In March, the entire nation was angered by the Western powers' stance on the Anschluss of Austria. The Germans simply occupied Austria and nothing happened. At school, the current situation was often discussed in history lessons. His teacher was a lover of Hussitism and the National Revival and liked Palacký, Havlíček, and Masaryk. He got along well with the Czech language teacher, who was a great admirer and expert on Alois Jirásek. In contrast, the German teacher was German and very strict. He believed that everyone should be able to speak German at least as well as Czech, if not better. He seemed to prioritize everything German and underestimate everything Czech. And it was the history teacher who explained to them that this was very serious because it undermined the entire principle of European security established after World War I by the Treaty of Versailles. Well, that's definitely no joke; it could have far-reaching consequences.

The situation continued to escalate. Henlein and his Sudeten German Party kept making new demands. Rumors spread that Germany was going to attack us, and so on May 21, 1938, the armed forces were put on alert. It was also called a partial mobilization and lasted several weeks. In the May elections, Henlein and Hlinka's Slovak People's Party gained considerable strength.

In the summer, Bohumil trained as a Sokol member at Strahov for the All-Sokol Rally, which became a huge event. At that time, Sokol was a large nationwide organization based on national traditions, with a total membership of nearly one million. Its goal was comprehensive physical, mental, and social

development. Slogans such as "A healthy mind in a healthy body," "Our homeland in our minds, strength in our arms," and "Let us strive" were used here. For Bohumil, the convention was a great experience. He was impressed by the monumental demonstration of determination to defend the country's independence, attended by 350,000 Sokol members. The performance of 30,000 men in the "Oath to the Republic" program made a particularly strong impression. The army also played a significant role in the convention, and importantly, not only our army, but also the Yugoslav and Romanian armies. This demonstrated the alliance of the Little Entente countries. There was also an air show directly above the stadium with the participation of the most modern bombers. As a trainee, Bohumil couldn't see everything, so his parents enthusiastically told him about it when he got home.

After the holidays, he began his final year of high school, which was very important because it ended with graduation exams. He was looking forward to seeing his classmates and teachers so that they could share the upcoming historic moments together.

And, of course, he would also be in closer contact with his sweetheart Erika. They had taken a liking to each other in their first year of high school, and their relationship gradually developed into a romantic one. They often went for walks or to the movies together and visited each other's families. They also went to Bohumil's cottage outside Prague, even in winter, when they lit the stove and had to huddle together to keep warm until it got at least a little warmer. They thought they would get married one day. Well, maybe it was Erika who thought about it more. Bohumil was happy to have a girlfriend, but he considered

marriage to be a more distant prospect. Of course, he was interested in girls and flattered by their interest, and when one stood out in particular, he was happy and felt as if he had scored a beautiful and important goal in a soccer game.

The beginning of September 1938 was exceptionally eventful. Clashes in the border regions between German residents and security forces led to martial law being declared in five districts. And in the middle of the month, an order was issued in Germany to take up positions against Czechoslovakia. A total of five armies comprising forty-three divisions were to be deployed. And the real disaster came on September 19. Bohumil's father commented: "It's terrible what France and England are doing. They sent us a note demanding the cession of territories with more than fifty percent German population, either by plebiscite or directly, which they prefer. They say it is impossible to consider keeping these areas in Czechoslovakia and that it is necessary to cede them to Germany immediately. According to them, prolonging the crisis could threaten not only European peace, but also the very existence of Czechoslovakia. Their audacity is appalling."

"Fortunately, the government rejected that," Bohumil objected.

"Then you're wrong, that was yesterday, but today it's completely different."

"Really, that's not possible?"

"You know, politics is done at night too. England and France have just issued a new ultimatum at night that in the event of a conflict, they will not engage on our side; on the contrary, Czechoslovakia will be considered the culprit of the war."

"So what?"

"Well, the government has today annulled its original response, which was a rejection, and has finally accepted the ultimatum."

"To hell with them, the government isn't authorized to do that. Or is it?"

"I don't think so. According to the constitution, only parliament has the right to decide on this, with the approval of a three-fifths qualified majority."

"Well, we'll see what happens next. We'll probably go and demonstrate."

"Let's hope it does something."

The following hours and days showed that a significant part of the public strongly disagreed with the government's capitulation. This was particularly true of the army, which demanded the immediate declaration of general mobilization and martial law throughout the republic. It wanted to resolve the domestic political crisis by temporarily establishing a military dictatorship.

Bohumil and his classmates rushed to demonstrate in front of the parliament. They were not alone; there were about a quarter of a million people there, including thousands of workers who had been called in from the factories. They demanded the rejection of the Anglo-French ultimatum, the resignation of Hodža's government, and the decisive defense of the republic's independence. Everything culminated in an unprecedented oath to defend the republic, and demands were made for the creation of a new, non-capitulating government. The demonstration lasted all night.

When Bohumil arrived home exhausted in the early hours of the morning, his parents were still waiting for him. They were

very nervous that he had not come home and were afraid that something had happened to him.

"Where have you been all this time?"

"I told you I was going to the parliament."

"Well, that's a long time, you must have been somewhere else."

"No, I left early, and it's still going on there."

"And how was it?"

"Amazing, tremendous determination to defend ourselves. Gajda, Gottwald, and Rašín spoke from the balcony, and many people want Rašín to be prime minister to lead the country's defense."

The demonstration, as well as a wave of mass protests across the country, led to Hodža's government losing all political support and resigning. President Beneš appointed a new government headed by the hero of Zborov, General Jan Syrový, which declared general mobilization the following day. This was generally understood as an expression of a clear determination to defend the state. It seemed that the republic would defend itself militarily. General Syrový was a hero of World War I and became famous as the commander of the Czechoslovak Corps in Russia during the civil war. In addition, he wore an eye patch over one eye, so he was often called the second Žižka. The resignation of Hodža's government brought partial calm, mainly due to the preliminary announcement that soldiers would also be called up to the new national government. Most of the workers returned to work in the factories.

There were certain problems with the availability of information, which annoyed Bohumil's father: "Well, that's good. The government resigns and censorship causes the newspapers

to be empty. Readers write, inform, call, and the next day they see nothing but an empty space. And the news that remains is muted and uniform."

Syrový fulfilled expectations, and his government immediately declared a general mobilization of the Czechoslovak armed forces up to the age of 40. Well, that was something, but it should be noted that it was probably not just our decision, but was influenced by instructions from England and France and the fact that mobilization was taking place in a number of other countries. At the same time, a state of military alert was declared. The mobilization affected approximately 1.25 million soldiers. The response to its announcement was extremely rapid. Within minutes of the announcement on the radio, the first reservists reported to their units, and in the following hours, the flow of soldiers continued to grow. Everyone who heard the call immediately left their homes. Some left their jobs, others their places of rest, people immediately paid their bills in pubs, and reservists ran through the streets of Prague to the nearest tram so that they could quickly collect their belongings from home and leave on the next train. There was a case of a reserve officer who, thirty-five minutes after the mobilization was announced, was standing in uniform at the train station ready to leave. This was not an exception; there were thousands of such officers. They were supposed to report for duty sixty-six hours after the mobilization order was issued, but everyone tried to report earlier. Those who remembered the mobilization in 1914, such as Bohumil's father, were amazed by this enthusiasm, because during the previous mobilization, everyone had delayed reporting until the last minute and had gone there with considerable reluctance and against their convictions.

This time, the mobilization also affected Bohumil's father. His mother quickly packed his bags. According to the mobilization order, he was to report in a worn civilian suit, take food for two days, cutlery, a blanket, needles, thread, buttons, and cleaning supplies for clothes and shoes. The destination was a fortress in western Bohemia.

The history professor was already over the age for mobilization, so he continued to teach even during this difficult time. During class, he warned his students that it was vitally important that Syrový's government not take over the old commitments of Hodža's government, including agreement to the Anglo-French ultimatum and the cession of the Czech borderlands to Germany. If they do not annul it, we are doomed. Abroad, it will be assumed that Czechoslovakia has essentially agreed to the territorial cession and further negotiations will only concern its extent. As it turned out, neither Syrový nor Beneš annulled it, which was a fatal mistake.

Germany then announced a preliminary date for the start of military operations against Czechoslovakia on September 28. The international situation was very tense and war seemed very close.

Shortly thereafter, Bohumil's class was alerted by their Czech language teacher to a report brought by the Czech News Agency that morning that the Munich Agreement had been signed, in which the great powers agreed on a procedure to be followed in implementing the Franco-British proposal for resolving the Sudeten German question. The treaty specified areas that were to be ceded immediately and other areas that were to be ceded by October 10 on the basis of a decision by an

international committee, which, in addition to the four signatory countries, was to include representatives of Czechoslovakia.

"Well, that's a mess. What are we going to do?"

"Hopefully, the government won't accept it. We have to listen to the radio now to find out what's going on. In such a serious situation, we won't keep you at school. Go home and listen."

Everyone sat tensely by the radio, waiting to see what would happen. It was not until the afternoon that the mayor of Prague and minister without portfolio, Petr Zenkl, announced the acceptance of the Munich ultimatum. As it turned out, he was the only member of the government who resisted and categorically demanded that parliament be convened. When he failed, he stopped attending government meetings and resigned.

"That's terrible. Army General Jan Syrový, the prime minister, is still to speak," said Bohumil's mother.

He did indeed speak after a while: "As a soldier and as Prime Minister, I had to and must think first and foremost of the lives of all of you, millions of working fellow citizens, men, mothers, and children. I am experiencing the greatest moment of my life, for I am fulfilling my most painful task, which would be easier to die than to do. And precisely because I have fought and know the conditions under which a war is won, I must tell you openly, as my conscience as a responsible army commander dictates, that the power that has risen against us at this moment forces us to recognize its superiority and act accordingly. My highest goal, like that of each of you, is to preserve the life of the nation. We had a choice between a desperate and hopeless defense, which would have meant the sacrifice not only of the entire adult generation, but also of children and women, and

between accepting conditions which, in their ruthlessness, imposed under duress and without war, are unprecedented in history.... But we were abandoned. We were left alone. All European states, including our neighbors to the north and south, are up in arms. In a sense, we are a fortress besieged by forces far more powerful than ours."

"Well, he explained it to us, the army general, Žižka 2, the hero of Zborov," Bohumil responded and continued: "But the army leadership has a completely different opinion, saying that we will not give in to pressure and make no territorial concessions. The nation is completely united. The army has a duty to defend the territory of the republic, it wants to go into battle and it will. It says we must go to war, whatever the consequences. It is based on the fact that we have a corps of educated officers and that the army is one of the best armed in Europe in terms of weapons and ammunition, even taking into account the developed modern production at the Škoda Works and other domestic arms factories. It is sufficiently mechanized and motorized. It has thirty-six excellently equipped divisions. New aircraft factories have been built and almost 1,500 modern aircraft are available for use. Along the German border stand fortifications known as the second Maginot Line. In places, it is technically more advanced than the French line was in its day.

His mother reassured him: "I heard that Ladislav Rašín went to the presidential office to warn President Beneš, on behalf of other members of parliament, that secession from the state without the consent of parliament is treason under current law. He called on him to prevent a catastrophe, saying that the only way to save the situation was to reject the Munich Agreement and convene an international peace conference."

"I don't think it will have much effect," Bohumil feared.

"On the other hand, they won't kill Dad, I was very worried about him. And of course not only about him, but also about us and the whole nation," said Bohumil's mother.

"Well, you know, I was a little scared too," agreed Bohumil, "but on the other hand, I would have been willing to fight. If they had killed me, I would have told myself that it was for a good cause, and I would have felt like a hero who had done something great and hadn't lived in vain. I'm going out into the streets to see what's going on."

"But be careful," his mother said anxiously.

"Don't worry."

There was great sadness everywhere in the streets. At first, people didn't even want to believe the news about the Munich Agreement, because the betrayal was too great. There were no performances in the theaters, and no music played in the cafes, restaurants, and entertainment venues. Crowds of people began to gather, and the target of their protests was once again the Castle. Bohumil joined them. To maintain public order, it was even necessary to call in military patrols in some places. However, they were not very effective, because in Prague, for example, the soldiers openly showed sympathy for the demonstrators, so it was necessary to withdraw them back to their barracks. The police pushed the demonstrators back and then dispersed them.

They discussed it again in history class, and the professor continued from his previous lessons: "Unfortunately, I have already told you that it was a mistake that Syrový's government did not reject the Anglo-French ultimatum and the cession of the Czech borderlands to Germany. In my opinion, the acceptance

of this ultimatum was a greater tragedy than Munich itself. The Munich Conference merely provided an organizational framework for the cession of territory that had already been agreed to by the Czechoslovak government on September 21. So the talk about us without us is not entirely true. It seems that it was artificially spread by the very politicians who agreed to the cession in order to wash away their guilt. Otherwise, according to the Czechoslovak constitution and all norms of international law, the Munich Agreement is invalid from the very beginning because the Czechoslovak parliament did not ratify it."

The soldiers returned from the border fortresses, including Bohumil's father: "We had no idea what was happening in Prague. I was called up to the army and wanted to fight for Czechoslovakia and for him, even if it meant laying down my life. Unfortunately, everything turned out differently. I must emphasize the role of the army here. As far as I know, everyone wanted to fulfill their duty, but their commander-in-chief did not allow them to do so. In the trenches, I felt a certain relief, I admit that I was afraid for my life, that I would never see you again and what would happen to you. That I would never walk through Prague again, have a beer in some amazing pub or coffee in my favorite cafes, or see my beloved Slavia play. But I felt completely Czech, I loved this country very much, and so I did not hesitate to sacrifice my life and go into battle. That is why, like many others, I felt enormous disappointment and disillusionment over Munich. Well, I came back, and Beneš resigned and left, even though we don't know what our borders will be, we don't know where the plebiscite will be, and we don't know what other territory the international committee will decide will still fall to the German Reich without a vote. That seems pretty awful to me,

because the captain should be the last to leave a sinking ship, not the first."

And the situation was still being discussed at home, at school, at work, in the pub, on the street.

At home, Bohumil's father was mainly concerned with this, and after returning from mobilization, he gathered further information: "So that's how it turned out. I read in the newspaper that the Munich Agreement, which Czechoslovakia accepted, has not been upheld. The results of the Berlin Commission, which was supposed to further specify and refine the agreement, are an unprecedented dictate, because they were not based on the actual situation in individual regions, but on the nationality map according to the 1910 census. The Reich will thus gain territory where Germans had a majority, i.e. more than 50%, in that year. That was a period of the cruelest oppression, when the Czech regions were subjected to the most violent Germanization, when the census was falsified in favor of the Germans. It says here that the dictates of the great powers tore apart thousand-year-old borders, given by God and written in the blood of our nation, shattered the natural economic whole, tore apart rail and road connections, and now wants to tear a million of our people from our midst and sacrifice them to the Third Reich."

"But that's not true," Bohumil added, "they studied it in detail at our school and claim that if you look closely at the maps, you can see that the mutilated borders are not based on the 1910 census but on the 1890 census. When the oppression was even greater."

"Is that how you discuss it at school?"

"Well, yes, the geography teacher brought a map of the republic and drew the new borders with a marker and

commented: 'So here we have a new state, the Czech-Slovak Republic, which lost thirty percent of its territory and more than a third of its population compared to the original Czechoslovakia; at the same time, approximately one million four hundred Czechs, Slovaks, and Rusyns remained in the occupied territories. Furthermore, two-fifths of industrial capacity was lost, with the loss of the fuel and energy sectors being particularly painful. Agriculture and forestry also suffered heavy losses. Slovakia was deprived of agriculturally productive areas in the south of the country. The annexation of territory disrupted the transport infrastructure, especially the important roads connecting the Czech lands with Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia. The railway connection between Prague and Domažlice, Prague and Brno, Brno and Bratislava, Prague and Olomouc and Ostrava, and Prague and Slovakia via Bohumín and Bratislava was severed.

This clearly upset my father: "It's terrible, I can't even think about it, it would give me a stroke. And it's good that you're discussing it at school. I guess most teachers don't agree with what happened."

"Sure, everyone is complaining. Even our German teacher felt sorry for us, but he didn't forget to point out that something like this couldn't happen to the Germans, they wouldn't put up with it and would fight back."

"Well, yes, they're a big country, and even though they're pretty weak right now, they're still strong."

2. Before graduation during Munich and the Second Republic

On September 30, 1938, a new state entity was created, which was called the Second Republic and officially named the Czechoslovak Republic.

There was lively debate about the name of the new state. Characteristic of the proposals was that they did not reflect any Czech traditions, but rather the new Slavic mission of the state, for example, the United Slavic States. The aim was for the proposals to reflect the composition of the state, its geographical location, the tribal affiliation of its inhabitants, and the unity of the Slavic states. For example, the Union of Slavic Countries, which at that time would have included Czechia, Moravia, Slovakia, and Subcarpathia, with the name leaving room for future expansion as other Slavic countries could join later.

Of course, there was also a lot of talk about politics everywhere. The national catastrophe was often linked to the number of political parties operating. It was claimed that such a system could not bring anything positive. There was strong pressure to dissolve political parties on the grounds that in twenty years they had achieved nothing but to divide the nation into a number of mutually antagonistic parties. The Communist Party was banned. The Social Democrats established the National

Labor Party. Other Czech political parties voluntarily disbanded, and their remnants founded the fascist National Unity Party. The simplification of the political situation was to be achieved by creating a single National Unity Party. The youth wings of some left-wing parties disagreed with the planned large party into which all the others would merge. The Slovak political parties concluded the Žilina Agreement, where they agreed on a draft constitutional law on the autonomy of Slovakia.

"But we don't mind," said Bohumil's father, "we're not in any political party. Never get involved in politics," he advised, "politics is crap."

"Well, sometimes it's really crazy. Now they've even gone after Sokol. It says here that the resolution of the last general assembly is outdated and will need to be amended, and that Sokol must find the courage to take up a bold broom to sweep out of its ranks... but I don't know who, because there's a gap there; the censors deleted it."

"Well, censorship has really hit us hard," said my father, "there's more white space than print in the newspapers, only the sports section is full. At least we have advertisements in the papers. I'm reading an ad in *Národní politika* that takes up the entire back page in large print: According to the Prague City Council, I engaged in unfair competition by selling branded goods at below market prices in September 1938. I am informing my customers that I am filing a complaint against this finding with the provincial office, because I am convinced that I am fulfilling my obligations and, as a result of my new purchases, I was selling at my previous low prices. Well, there are lots of ads like this everywhere. And here is another advertisement promoting Czech goods, large on the last page: your own is best, the only

Czechoslovak factory in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the precision engineering factory of Ing. Šídlo, makes it possible that tomorrow you will not have to buy foreign goods when you can get the same quality from Czech workers. Do not forget that your existence also depends on the Czech people."

"We read all sorts of things in those advertisements today," Bohumil responded. "I also have *Národní politika* here with a large advertisement: Truth against lies. Recently, we have been attacked by hostile saboteurs with completely false propaganda, and based on informants, our enemies have spread deliberate and untrue reports about us, trying to convince the public that we are financed by Jewish capital. In their falsehoods, they further claim that we are not nationally conscious Czechs and Aryans. They are discouraging our customers from buying from our factory by claiming that we have sold out our stock. We declare in full awareness of our responsibility that Matěj Prokop, son of a fabric dyer, and Josef Čáp, son of a sugar factory engineer, a native of Humpolec, are and always have been Czechs and Christians, and that we employ only Czech staff in our factory. Those who spread false rumors are protecting the harmful consequences of the subversive activities of hostile elements damaging our national economy. In conclusion, we would like to inform the slanderers that we will pay CZK 100,000 to anyone who can prove us to be lying, Prokop and Čáp Cloth Store, Prague 2, Wenceslas Square 64.

"Well, yes, and I have another article here that begins as follows: The claim that there is nothing of Slavic origin in Dr. František Bauer's editorials and that he only deals with issues of Slavic thought is untrue, especially today, when we see that all our interests are foreign to the interests of people who are not of

our blood. These things are not true at all, because the truth is that Dr. František Bauer, editor of *Národní politika*, is of Slavic origin, from a Czech family that has lived in Turnov, Bohemia, since time immemorial and has been a purely Czech Christian family for generations. It is known that none of the members of this family has ever been or is a member of another race, nation, or nationality. It is true that Dr. František Bauer attended Czech schools and studied in the Czech Republic, and that wherever he worked, especially in his journalistic activities in politics, he always worked in the interests of the Czech nation.

"Now there are such events," continued my father, "promoting the Czech character of Prague. Almost all magazines and their readers are concerned with this. The national character of Prague is also to be supported by changing German or Jewish names to Czech ones. Announcements published in the commercial register are said to contribute to this. For example, Leo Winter, owner of the silk import company Winternitz, was allowed to change his surname and is now called Leo Veselský, and Samuel Winternitz is being removed from the register."

"It's rather amusing, but we discussed it a lot in Czech lessons. For example, the local council of Prague 1 to 8 has now decided to ban certain foreign-language signs, insisting that foreign-language names and Czech corruptions in companies and advertising must be removed and no longer used, because it is necessary for the capital city of Prague to be completely Czech in terms of language and to be rid of unnecessary, undignified, and burdensome symbols of the empire. For example, signs such as restaurant, bar, grocery store, auto repair shop, auto supplies, photo studio, photo supplies, dentist, candy, and desserts are prohibited. Our professor welcomed this,