

EIGHT

THE EVENTS WHICH LED TO THE BIRTH OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THEIR EFFECTS ON
MY PARENTS I AM BORN

I am continuing here the brief historical account from chapter 4.

The first world war which led to the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the birth of Czechoslovakia wrought profound changes in the social conditions and class structure of the old middleclass. It heralded the demise of the unique position it had held in the old Empire. This class became suspect for its historical loyalty to the toppled emperor and with some justification. My parents must have been through a difficult struggle to adjust themselves to the new situation and the new rulers.

First of all, it must be remembered that the Central Powers, as Austro-Hungary and Germany were called, were at war with the Western Allies including Italy and also with Russia. Only Russia was an enemy which the Austro-Hungarian establishment was fighting with conviction, partly for reasons of power rivalry and more importantly for its leadership of the Pan-Slav movement. This inspired the Czech and Slovak ethnic minorities and others like them within the empire to revolt against the Emperor. There was no quarrel with England, France and the USA. Quite to the contrary, my parents and others like them admired these freedom-loving countries, their democratic constitutions, their technology and cultures. It may be coincidence that two brothers of my maternal grandmother had married English girls and that Aunt Berta was translating English books, yet I think this reflected the attitude to the West. There is no record of any marriage with a Slovak.

My father was exempt from military service as food production had the highest priority. Food prices increased during the war. Farm workers were largely called up and replaced by - mainly Russian - prisoners of war. These were housed in barns and stables and ^{were} fed, but probably not paid, by father. He must have been able to make a considerable profit.

Many of the Slovak peasants and farm hands in the army went over to the Russians and to the other Allies. This was not surprising as they were treated bestially by their own officers. Here are some facts.

The 36th regiment revolted and was massacred by German troops. The 11th Austrian regiment refused to march against their brethren the Serbs, and were decimated by their own Austrian officers. The 13th and 72nd Slovak regiments

were exterminated by Hungarian troops.

Not surprisingly, their hatred was let loose against the middleclass loyal to the Emperor when they returned home after the war and my parents were at the receiving end of that hatred too.

I do not know how much of this - if anything - passed the Imperial censor at that time, nor when my parents learned that Masaryk, Beneš and Štefanik were at the head of a movement abroad to create the Czechoslovak Republic. If they did not know then, the shock must have been even greater, once they realised what was planned and that the days of the Austro - hungarian Monarchy were numbered.

Masaryk was relentlessly lobbying the Allied Governments and speaking in support of freedom for the Czechs and Slovaks. In October 1915 he inaugurated the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at the University of London with a lecture on "The Zone of Small Nations" i.e. those lying between Germany and Russia. When the Senate House was built later, the largest hall was named the Masaryk Hall. In February 1916 the Czechoslovak National Council was formed with Allied support. Masaryk became its President and Beneš its General Secretary. Štefanik represented the Slovaks on it. The Council became ultimately responsible for creating the new republic. In that very same February, on the 23rd, my parents got married. I think it is unlikely that they were aware of the formation of the Council. Indeed the official news at that time was favourable to the Central Powers. The war on the fronts was far from decided yet. In November 1916 Franz Josef died. He was succeeded by his well-intentioned but weak grand - nephew Karl.

The following year saw the turning point in the fortunes of war. The USA entered as a belligerent on the side of the Allies. In October 1917 the Czar was toppled. The new Austro- Hungarian Emperor wanted to negotiate peace terms with the Allies but was prevented by the Germans.

I was born in that year, on the 12th February 1917. My life unfolded amongst this turmoil, worry and uncertainty about the future of my parents.

Exhibit 25a is my birth certificate. It shows that I was christened on 10th March 1919 which is the correct date. There is a later version of the certificate, exhibit 25b, where the year of my christening was omitted, so that the impression is given that I was christened one month after my birth. Below is the translation of my birth certificate:

Litterae Baptismales

Nr. 112/1938.
Čís.

Krstný list

Extractus Matriculae Baptizatorum Paroeciae Rom. Cath. *Mardunice* tom. VII. pag. 50.
Výťah z matriky pokrstených farg rímskokatolíckej sväzok str.Anno Domini 1917 (tisíc-deväťsto-odvinnášt) februára 12 (dvadsiatego)
V roku Pána

Numerus currens Radové číslo	7.
Annus, mensis et dies nativitatis Rok, mesiac a deň narodenia	1917. februára 12.
Annus, mensis et dies collati s. baptismi Rok, mesiac a deň sv. krstu	1919. marca 10.
Baptizati nomen Meno pokrsteného	Katej, Karol
Baptizati sexus Pohlavie pokrsteného	mužský
Baptizati legitimitas vel illegitimitas Či je pokrstený(á) zákonný(á) alebo nezákonný(á)	zákonitý
Nomen parentum, eorum conditio et religio Meno rodičov, ich zamestnanie a náboženstvo	Schwitzer Štefan slatkár rk. Kihárdová Alžbeta rk.
Locus domicilii parentum et numerus domus Bydlisko rodičov a číslo domu	Mardunice 52.
Nomen patrinatorum, eorum conditio et religio Meno krstných rodičov, ich zamestnanie a náboženstvo	Zedwitz Mr a manž. Wilczeková Migenia Rknt.
Nomen et officium baptisantis Meno a úrad krstiaceho	Michal Bubeník farár
Observationes Poznámky	

In quorum fidem has propria manu subscriptas et sigillo officii paroecialis munitas edidi litteras.
Čomu na dôkaz vydal som túto vlastnoručne podpísanú a pečatou farského úradu opatrenú listinu.Datum: *Mardunice* die 9. mensis *aprilis* anno 1938
Dané - 50 - roku

Q. 178
1934

Litterae Baptismales.

Krstný list.



Extractus Matriculae Baptisatorum Parochiae

Výťah z matriky narodených fáry rímsko-katolíckej

Madunice

Numerus currens -- Radové číslo	7.
Annus et dies natalis Rok, mesiac a deň narodenia	1917. februára 12.
Annus et dies collati s. baptismi Rok mesiac a deň sv. krstu	marca 10.
Baptisati nomen -- Meno pokrsteného	Matej, Karol
Baptisati sexus -- Rod pokrsteného	mužský
Baptisati legit. vel illegit Či je pokrstený(a) zákonný(á) alebo nezákonný(á)	zákonný
Nomen parentum, eorum conditio et religio Meno rodičov, ich občianský stav a náboženstvo	Gilárd Alice m.
Locus orig. v. domic. et numerus domus Bydlisko, alebo miesto príslušnosti, číslo domu	Wien - Madunice 52.
Nomen patrinorum, eorum conditio et religio Meno krstných rodičov, ich občianský stav a náboženstvo	Zedvitz Mz a grofka Jfigenia Wilhelema m.
Nomen et officium baptisantis Meno a úrad krstiaceho	Michal Bubnič farár
Observationes -- Poznámky	

In quorum fidem expediui has sigillo Ecclesiae et manupropria subscriptione munitas litteras.

Na dôkaz čoho listinu túto cirkevným razítkom a vlastnoručným podpisom potvrdiac, vydal som.

Madunice, 15. dec. 1934.

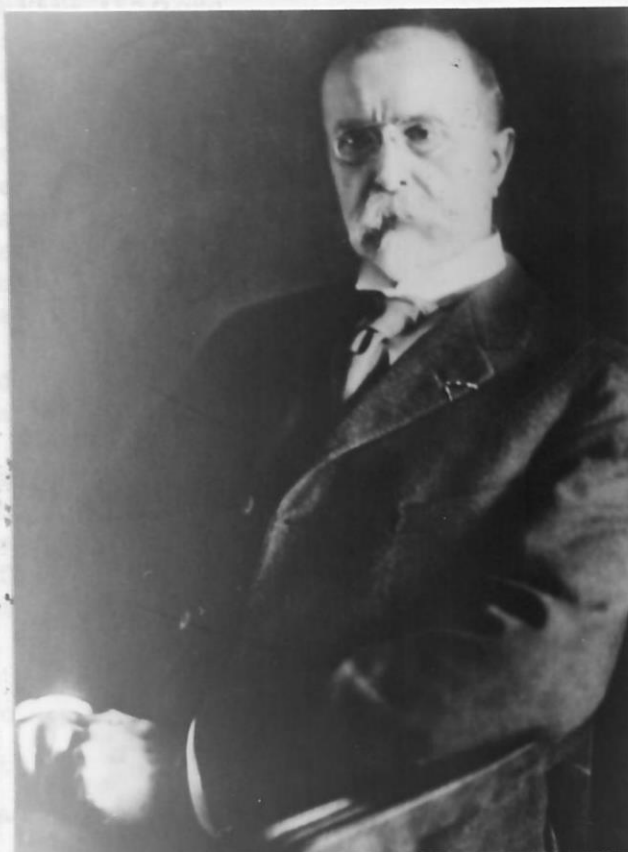


M. Bubnič farár

26. Franz Joseph I. b. Vienna
1830, Emperor 1848,
d. November 1916

27. Empress Elisabeth, wife
of Francis Joseph,
Bavarian Princess
b. 24.12.1837, murdered
by an anarchist in Geneva
10.9.1898. Portrait by
Winterthaler in the
Hofburg





28. Thomas Garrigue Masaryk
b. Hodonin, Moravia 7th March
1850 d. 14th September 1937.
First President of Czecho-
slovakia 1918 - 1935.



DRUHÝ PRESIDENT
REPUBLIKY ČESKOSLOVENSKÉ
DR. EDVARD BENES.

29. b. at Kozlany, Bohemia 28th May
1884. President 1935-1938. During
war President of exiled Czecho-
slovak Government in London.
President in Prague 1945 to
7th June 1948 when he resigned.

d. 30th August 1948

Birth Certificate

Number 112/1938

Extract from the Roman Catholic Parish Birth Register in Madunice, vol. VII p. 50
Anno Domini 1917 (one thousand nine hundred and seventeen) February 12 (twelve)

Current number	7
Year, month and day of birth	1917 February 12
Year, month and day of Holy Baptism	1919 March 10
Names of Baptised	Matej, Karol
Sex of Baptised	male
Whether Baptised is legal or illegitimate	legal
Names of parents, occupation and religion	Schwitzer Štefan, farmer RC Szilardova Elisabeth RC
Address of parents and house number	Madunice 52
Names of Godparents, occupation and religion	Zedwitz Utz and wife Wilczeková Ifigenia RC
Name of officiating priest	Michael Bubnič, vicar
Observations	
As proof of the correctness of the above I have signed this and appended the seal of the Vicarage.	
Date: Madunice 19th April 1938	

(signed) Dr. Josef Zombath

Mother's maiden surname is used; the Christian name is wrong. In the other version it has been corrected to Alice. In version II Wien has been put before Madunice, though the entry states clearly residence and not place of birth. There is yet another difference between the two versions: in the entry about Godparents the words "and wife" were omitted as it was an error. Instead it says Countess Ifigenia Wilczeková. Perhaps a word of explanation is indicated. My parents had no close contacts with the aristocracy except that Grandfather Szilard was the lawyer to Count Erdödy who lived in a modest castle on a hill just outside Hlohovec. The aristocracy lost of course much more than the middle class after the war. As the Monarchy had gone, so their titles became meaningless. They also lost a great deal of land, houses and money and all influence and privileges. It is therefore not surprising that they and the middle class came closer to each other. There was perhaps an element of snobbism in having asked members of the aristocracy to be my Godparents. The Zedwitz's originated from the farthest north western corner of Bohemia near the town of Asch and were already prominent at the time of the Counter - Reformation. (See R.J. Evans "The making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550-1700", Clarendon Press, Oxford 1979 reprinted 1984). In the same book the Erdödy's are also mentioned. According to Tatiana Metternich in her book "Bericht eines ungewöhnlichen Lebens" (Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag, 1976, reprinted 1980 and 1985) the Wilczeks had a "Palais" in the prestigious Herrengasse near the Opera in Vienna (p. 353). In the same street was also the Liechtenstein Palais (Donald J. Olsen "The City as a Work of Art" Yale University Press 1986 p. 152). My Godparents belonged to these families. I saw my Godmother two or three times when I was quite small and remember her as a dried-up, wrinkled lady but still of some elegance.