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ACADEMICS AND REVOLUTION

INAUGURAL LECTURE

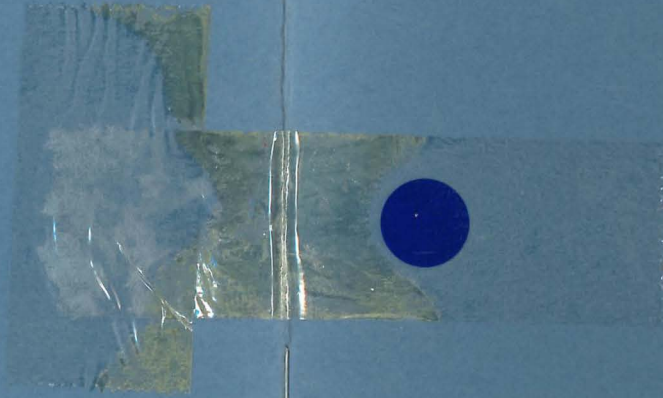
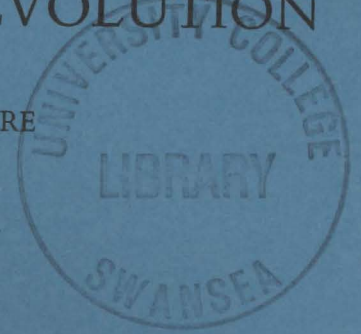
*delivered at the College
on 9th November, 1976*

by

Professor R. W. PETHYBRIDGE

M.A. (Oxon.), D. ès sciences politiques (Geneva)

Director of the Centre of Russian and East European
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Academics and Revolution

Mr. Principal, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Centre of Russian and East European Studies is an interdisciplinary group of eight colleagues. Each of us is firmly rooted in his or her academic discipline. Students taking Russian Studies also major in one discipline, as the Americans say. The Centre has close contacts with six disciplines; Political Theory and Government, History, Geography, Economic History, Economics and, last but scarcely least, Russian Language and Literature.

Tonight I wish to put on record my gratitude for the support given to the Centre by the Departments concerned over the years since I came to the University College of Swansea. It seems to me that the Centre's '*infil'tratsiia*' of these Departments, as the Russians say, has been as successful as the Soviet move into the countries of Eastern Europe after the Second World War, except that our influence has, I trust, been more beneficial, and no blood has been shed as far as I am aware. Occasionally, some years ago, I felt like David dealing with a hydra-headed Goliath, but that too is perhaps not the most appropriate of similes, since we recall that Goliath was a Philistine and, moreover, I never needed to use my sling. I would also like to acknowledge the debt the Centre owes to those members of staff who first conceived the idea of a Centre and guided it through its first years; also to three successive Principals, to the librarians who care for our extensive research materials, to the Registry which tolerates our complex structure, and to the secretary to the Centre. It is indeed pleasant for me to work together with such colleagues.

I would like to talk about academics and revolution. At the very mention of those two words together I can almost feel post-prandial blood pressures rising in left auricles and right ventricles alike. There is no harm in this, as it may prevent you from nodding off: but politics in that narrow polemical sense is certainly not what I am about, neither tonight nor ever.

Have I to define my terms in the way in which we encourage our students to do so? I think it would be dangerous and superfluous to spell out what I mean by an academic – of course I simply

mean most of you in the audience and, hopefully, myself. Revolution is quite a different matter. It can mean all things to all men. The concept of revolution embraces a multitude of problems. At different times and in diverse places it has been viewed as mainly a political, social, economic or psychological phenomenon. Almost never has it been judged to be solely one of these, but rather a subtle amalgam of most or all of them, and of many other elements besides. In all combinations worth the name of a revolution, the political element in the form of a major displacement of political power as Aristotle, Machiavelli and Locke studied it, must be present. So too should the shake-up of the existing social order. Otherwise we may be dealing with disorders, revolts, *coups d'état*, but hardly with thoroughgoing revolutions.

In order to understand the nature of, say, the Russian Revolution, it is therefore my opinion that academics from several disciplines should collaborate to some extent if a myopic view is to be avoided. In this century of specialization there is a clear danger of false autarchy on the part of individual disciplines. Some or most of the disciplines involved here are hybrid within themselves in any case. At the same time I agree that an acquaintance with several disciplines may result in a mastery of none. There has to be a solid core on which to build. Each of us in a Centre like ours naturally grasps at a different core. My bias shows through when I agree with Meinecke on the central role of political history, since, as he says, it partakes of both the lower, practical requirements of man (his economic and social needs) and also of his spiritual thirst for religion, philosophy and art.¹

Despite a recent calculation that ninety-three revolutions occurred round the world during the 1960s, the subject has received scant treatment in the academic literature.² Perhaps it is not without significance that a word has been coined for the study of governmental change by constitutional means (psephology), but not for the perusal of revolutions. The scholar's obvious love of neat *Ordnung*, not only in his own mind, but also in the object of his analysis, seems to play a large role. The study of politics in British universities is often split rather naively into two supposedly distinct halves, the one institutional, the other theoretical. Neither side finds much clarity in



revolution. Institutions dissolve in the course of revolutions, and theories tend to become almost unrecognizable through abrasive contact with fast-changing realities. The kaleidoscope is fascinating to look at, but difficult to portray.

For these reasons it is intriguing to study the behaviour of those rare academics who subsequently became revolutionaries. How could they reconcile their calm, academic pursuits with their political activities? I would like to examine and compare the careers of two great Slav leaders, Paul Miliukov and Thomas Masaryk. Both had long careers as university academics before plunging into high politics. They were born within nine years of each other, and were destined to come to know and admire one another.

Miliukov was born in Russia in 1859, the son of a municipal architect. A brilliant pupil, he went to Moscow University and eventually wrote a dissertation on Russian economic history during the reign of Peter the Great. Of all Russian historians to this day his reputation is second only to that of Vasily Kliuchevsky, his university supervisor. Early on in life Miliukov got involved in what was considered by the Tsarist authorities to be overt revolutionary activity. At the age of twenty-two he was sent down from the university for attending a proscribed student meeting just after the assassination of Alexander II. Later, in 1895, he was dismissed from his teaching post by the Minister of Education and exiled to Riazan' for two years. In 1901 he was arrested again for taking part in a commemoration of the Populist writer Peter Lavrov. Miliukov was imprisoned for six months on this occasion, and returned to gaol for a similar period later for contributing to a journal entitled *Liberation*. The ageing Professor Kliuchevsky interceded with the Emperor for his ex-pupil, but to no avail.

What political views did Miliukov hold that led him to being persecuted to this extent? Although fully aware of and enthusiastic about the Marxist interpretation of history, he yet believed that political and especially cultural influences prevailed over economic considerations. Entering into politics, Miliukov never ceased to display laudable, and sometimes regrettable, academic traits. He concentrated in the 1890s on widening the cultural and political base of the nation

through popular education. He began to produce a series of textbooks styled the 'Self-Education Library'. He also arranged for lecture series to be offered to any provincial centres applying for them. In his own words, his aim was 'the democratization of higher education, an attempt to bring the universities closer to the people, and to make education the possession of the entire nation . . .'³ It was when he gave six lectures on 'Social Trends since Catherine II' in Nizhnii Novgorod in 1894 that he ran into trouble. Even the title of the course was considered daring, and it was noticed that the local bishop and the colonel of the gendarmerie both refrained from applause. Explosive names like that of Alexander Herzen were mentioned by Miliukov. It was partly for this that he was exiled to Riazan', which was rather an odd reaction by the authorities. Would it prove inhibiting merely to exile the Director of Extra-Mural Studies to Cymmer for having given supposedly revolutionary lectures at Pontardulais? Miliukov responded from Riazan' by publishing his first great work, *Outlines of Russian Culture*. Temporarily expelled from the academic profession, he felt free to analyze the present as well as the past, thus moving from historical to polemical analysis. The book came out in serial form in a journal which happened to be the organ of the Legal Marxists.

From 1897, when he was free to leave Riazan', Miliukov spent a great deal of time working and lecturing abroad, in Bulgaria, Britain and the United States. When the Revolution of 1905 broke out, he returned to Russia and lectured widely to the general public there. He remarked a little ingenuously that it 'was quite unlike speaking before American clubs.' Confronted by persistent Bolshevik heckling, he mainly resorted to the academic's weapon of calm and logical reasoning.⁴ He came to realize that there were revolutionaries and revolutionaries. Indeed, it may surprise some to see Miliukov classified as a revolutionary at all. It depends on where the observer stands in time and in the political spectrum. To this audience today Miliukov's career as I have outlined it up to 1905 does not appear revolutionary by mid-twentieth century British standards. Yet it certainly struck the Tsarist government as highly inflammatory, to judge by the number of times Miliukov was imprisoned or exiled.

Standing much nearer the time and spirit of that age, Thomas Masaryk commented on Miliukov's aims as of 1903 in this way: 'Miliukov's idea is that the role of liberalism is to mediate between the revolution and governmental circles. He holds that the liberal opposition has peculiar competence as mediator, inasmuch as it is in opposition without being revolutionary.'⁵ Looking at Miliukov's position in 1903 *sub specie aeternitatis*, or as near to this as it is ever possible to get, one would probably agree with Masaryk's assessment. In his cultural campaign of the 1890s Miliukov was willing to promote political education without positively calling out for revolution, although the authorities did not see it that way.

An important change came over him in the 1905 Revolution. In June 1905 an assembly of the Union of Unions chaired by Miliukov passed a resolution composed by him and directed to the people of Russia and not to the Emperor. *Vis à vis* the authorized government of the day, it cannot be described as anything other than revolutionary. Miliukov proclaimed 'All means are now legitimate against the terrible threat which exists by the very fact of the continued existence of the present government. And all means should be tried. . . .'⁶ At last in the heat of the moment emotional passion clambered into bed beside Miliukov's deeply held rational convictions and engendered a new attitude. It may be argued that the ardent revolutionary personality is hardly compatible with that of the rational academic. Over thirty years later Miliukov, once again a mere academic and in foreign exile, was rather apologetic about his stance in 1905: 'At that time', he wrote 'it seemed neither extreme nor rhetorical'.⁷

From 1905 until shortly after the 1917 Revolution Miliukov was the prime leader of the newly formed Constitutional Democrats and a great force in high politics. The very title of his party after 1905 points to the relative and ambiguous position of the revolutionary in historical perspective. It needed one revolution in despotic Russia to introduce what was hoped would be a constitutional monarchy, but a constitutional monarchy, whether genuine or not, still looked like black reaction to the Bolsheviks. Lenin said in July 1905 that Miliukov 'blurted out the hidden "thoughts" of the landowners and capital-

ists which we have exposed hundreds of times'.⁸ After his revolutionary achievements, for which he was imprisoned yet again, Miliukov went on to record the first day of his new party's existence in October 1905 as follows: 'It was the entrance examination for leadership. It was particularly difficult to remain calm, and maintain sober judgment under such circumstances'.⁹ One can almost see him readjusting his mortar-board for the calmer lectures that lay ahead, or so he hoped.

Miliukov became an influential figure in the 1905 Revolution mainly because his carefully thought out views on constitutional monarchy happened to coincide with the prevailing political climate. Despite the Tsar's continual lack of co-operation during the Duma period, Miliukov still clung to these views when appointed Foreign Minister in the Provisional Government after the Revolution of February 1917. Having long since arrived at careful conclusions based on wide reading in political history, he adopted a confident, apparently inflexible position that was academic in the pejorative sense of the word. At an interview on March 3, 1917, the Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich, whom the Provisional Government recognised as the new Emperor, quipped to Miliukov, 'Well, it's a fine thing to be in the position of an English King. Very simple and comfortable, isn't it?' Miliukov replied in an admonishing tone, 'Yes, Your Highness, it is very peaceful to rule observing the constitution.'¹⁰ Both men were deluding themselves, one for the sake of the House of Romanov, the other for his nice theories, that Russia was both peaceful and constitutional, or would very soon be so.

When Miliukov ate his own words at a party Congress on March 25 which voted for a republican government, his credibility suffered a body blow. He lacked the subtle flexibility of Lenin. On the only occasion when the two men ever met, Miliukov had summed Lenin up as 'a stubborn debater and a slow-thinking scholar.'¹¹ It is interesting to see how often men ascribe their own deficiencies to others. It was of course true that Lenin was stubborn too, but his adaptable thought processes allowed him to swim with the rapidly changing current in 1917, whereas Miliukov sank for ever.

Both men had considerable difficulty in applying their theoretical political models to the Russian

situation, since they had borrowed them from abroad. Neither Marx's West European classes, nor the deep political roots necessary for a constitutional monarchy, existed in Russia. It was typical of Miliukov that he rejected the Petrograd Soviet, not because it was too left-wing, but because it was an institution without precedent in West European political practice. On the ship taking him to Constantinople and exile in December 1918, he confessed 'Who can help it if our historical chronology does not coincide with the Western one.'¹² The over-rational academic peeps through again, this time destroyed politically through an obsession with comparative government and its practical applications. Thomas Masaryk proved to be more pragmatic. Although his country was far more westernized than Russia, he did not fall for this analogy when the Hapsburgs collapsed, but looked constantly to a Czechoslovak Republic of which he eventually became the first President.

There is a certain irony in the fact that Miliukov sailed into exile through the Dardanelles, coveted for at least one hundred and fifty years by Russia. Perhaps the major cause of his downfall was his strict adherence to a secret Tsarist agreement with her allies which granted the Straits as a war prize to Russia. Kerensky was more flexible in this and in other spheres, and outlasted Miliukov in the Provisional Government. Kerensky subsequently made this shrewd comment on his rival: 'Because of his natural bent as a historian Miliukov tended to look at political events in rather too much perspective, as one looks at them through books or historical documents. Such a lack of real political insight would not have mattered much under more stable conditions, but at the critical moment of the nation's history through which we were then living, it was little short of disastrous.'¹³

Eleven months after Miliukov left Russia in defeat, Masaryk returned from exile to Prague in triumph. Thomas Masaryk was born in 1850 at Slovácko, a border region between Czechs and Slovaks. Slovácko literally means not quite Slovakia, the Monmouthshire of the future Czechoslovak state which Masaryk was to establish. His social origins were lower than those of Miliukov, as he himself confirmed: 'I was reared among poor people who were downtrodden toilers on estates belonging to the Emperor.'¹⁴

His intellectual brilliance soon freed him from his background. At the University of Vienna he studied philosophy. Incipient nationalism, a pragmatic cast of mind and the teaching of Franz Brentano led him to reject speculative German thinkers and turn to men like Comte, Mill and Hume. To Masaryk philosophy was a practical instrument for analyzing politics and society. When in 1882 he became professor of philosophy at the new Czech university in Prague, he antagonized colleagues who did not find him sufficiently academic by the standards of that time and place, yet he attracted many students. In his memoirs he later wrote: 'People often made merry over the idea that Professors like Wilson, Masaryk and Beneš . . . should decide questions of international policy. Our professorships mattered little; and there are professors and professors . . . I gained knowledge of men and of life and, with all my theorizing, remained practical . . . I never wanted to be a professor; I wanted to be a diplomatist and a politician. . . . Though I wished not to be a professor, fate soon made a teacher of me. After a short apprenticeship as an artisan, I had to give lessons in order to earn my living as a high school and university student. Nor, later, was I to be spared a professorship; yet it did me no harm and even helped me politically.'¹⁵

Masaryk first became influential in politics in 1889 with the formation of his group of nationalists known as the 'Realists'. From 1891 to 1893 he was returned to the Vienna parliament as a representative of the Czech nation. His lifelong emphasis on patriotic nationalism, together with his family origins, gave him two great advantages over Miliukov, whose social background and master race always prevented him from attracting as much widespread popular support in a revolutionary situation. Yet even Masaryk, partly Czech, partly Slovak himself, could be insensitive. He failed to foresee the difficulties Slovaks would encounter in the new state once it was set up. In a lecture on the problems of small nations given to a British audience in 1915, Masaryk confirmed that 'Great Britain is in the main English', and he referred to the Celts in passing as 'remnants of non-English nations'.¹⁶

Masaryk like Miliukov moved from academic to political life and then on to revolution. When Masaryk on December 18, 1914 left Prague in

self-imposed exile for the duration of the First World War, he could be accused by the Austrian government of being both a traitor and a revolutionary. From the end of August 1914 he had been writing to *The Times* Vienna correspondent suggesting that the Russian high command should enable his countrymen to desert from the Austro-Hungarian armies. A year later the 'Czech Committee Abroad', led by Masaryk, declared open war on Austria.

However, as befitted an ex-academic, Masaryk had long since worked out his own rules on the uses and limits of revolutionary activity. In the second edition of *The Czech Question*, published in 1908, he noted how his views were changing on the problem of revolution. Having opposed it on principle in the past, he now looked to what he called a 'revolution of reform'. Yet he remained highly flexible, although over the age of sixty. His more normal stance until the outbreak of the World War was that the Austrian state was a system within which the Czechs would have to manoeuvre. He abandoned this position for ever when he left Prague in 1914. Masaryk argued that revolution was permissible when, as in the World War, administrative and political chaos threatened, and it was justified if it brought reform and improvement in its wake.¹⁷

His ideas were refined further during his ten-month visit to Russia which started on May 16, 1917.

He began to make a clearer distinction in his mind between desirable and undesirable revolutions. He later said that 'the Russian Revolution has not been, and is not, creative enough, the Russians did not learn to administer, and without administration there can be no democracy.'¹⁸ The orderly, rational academic raises his head once again. He also accused Lenin of manipulating Russia unscrupulously for the realization of communist aims in Europe as a whole, but he conceded that the Bolsheviks had initially sparked off a desire for freedom in their own country. For Masaryk revolution was a neat tool to be applied like a surgeon's knife and then stored away or discarded for ever. This was exactly the opposite of Trotsky's notion of revolution as permanent.¹⁹ Masaryk understood the strong ties between war and revolution, and wanted to get rid of both as soon as possible. Above all he

feared continuing violence and political and social utopianism. These two mainstreams bedevilled the early years of the Soviet regime.

When he became President of the new Czechoslovak state, Masaryk often referred back to his wartime experience. In a speech at an industrial centre in May 1920 he declared 'I was a worker myself, and I have always felt with you, and still feel with you. . . . I know Bolshevik Russia well, I observed the Bolshevik Revolution very carefully. I say here, according to my best knowledge and conscience that the Russian example is unsuitable for us.'²⁰

Beyond these general considerations there were more specific reasons why the Czechs believed that they stood to lose from the Russian Revolution. Masaryk quickly realized that the Hapsburgs, having taken note of events in Russia, would be inclined out of fear to treat their own minority nationalities much more leniently. When peace came, the Austrian government rather than leaders like Masaryk might still be able to speak for and control the Czechs and Slovaks. Another cause for anxiety was that Slav subjects of the disintegrating Austrian Empire might cling too closely to the apronstrings of the new Russia which had as yet failed to prove that it had completely discarded its authoritarian methods of government. In the long run this fear was more than justified. Masaryk's son Jan killed himself or was pushed in a second defenestration of Prague as the Russians extended their Slav dominion in 1948.

Thomas Masaryk fared better than his son. At the outset of the war, when there was the possibility that Tsarist troops might reach Prague, he had to fend off the strong pro-Russian group of Czech nationalists headed by Karel Kramář. Only gradually did it appear that the western side of the alliance against the Central Powers would be stronger. We have already noted that Masaryk did not leave Prague immediately after the outbreak of the war. Once away, he embarked on a remarkable international pilgrimage in support of Czechoslovak freedom. Over the next four years he lectured and lobbied untiringly in Geneva, Paris, London, Tokyo, Chicago, Washington, New York, Petrograd, Moscow, Kiev and Vladivostok. It was his high-level contacts in the parliamentary democracies that

bore fruit at the end of the war. He had lectured in the United States long before the war, and had won the support of influential men like Charles Crane who was a close friend of Professor Wilson, as he then was. In London another academic, Professor Seton-Watson, helped Masaryk's cause. When Masaryk was appointed to a chair at King's College, London, in 1915, Asquith himself sent his personal apologies for being unable to preside at his inaugural lecture. As yet I have heard nothing from Mr. Callaghan.

Masaryk's international support from the parliamentary democracies before he became President formed another crucial difference between his position and that of Miliukov. Miliukov too dreamt of constitutional government for his country, although he made the mistake of including the monarchy. Miliukov remained inside Russia in 1917, isolated from his western allies and incapable of broadening the base of international aid for Russian democracy. Masaryk was bitterly disappointed to find on his arrival in Russia that his friend had resigned from the government just two days previously. Masaryk later asked himself 'Was the Bolshevik Revolution really necessary? I assert this: as soon as Russia had got rid of absolutism and a Republic had been proclaimed, with an established parliament and constitutional liberties, there were no political or moral reasons for a revolution, even though we admit the weakness and incapacity of the interim government.'²¹

Masaryk had always been more sceptical than Miliukov about Marx's political and social thought. This may seem odd, given Miliukov's more conservative views and Masaryk's self-avowed 'realist' approach to politics. But remember how Masaryk as a young man had turned away from German philosophers, including Marx. He had also left the Catholic Church and become a Protestant with the Czech Protestant's traditional stress on the importance of the individual and his conscience. Masaryk believed that Marx's scientific method tended to underestimate both these factors. He therefore condemned from the outset what he saw as the Bolsheviks' inhuman fanaticism. Instead he played along with the established governments of the time in order to get rid of just one of them, Austro-Hungary, which also happened to be the most reactionary after the defunct Tsarist regime.

When the western allies found that they could not detach Vienna from the Berlin axis in the war, they soon realized the propaganda value of supporting the Czech nationalists who likewise looked to the collapse of the Austrian Empire.

Masaryk was fortunate in that unlike Miliukov, his nationalist revolution was not swept away by a second Marxist upheaval. During his long term as President of the Czechoslovak state, Masaryk prevented the Czech Marxists from initiating a social revolution of the type that engulfed Russia and even impinged on the successor states of the Austrian Empire. The Hungarians experienced a short-lived Soviet-type republic, and the Austrians took on a moderate socialist form of government. The differing course of Czech political history in the interwar years was partly due to the greater attention paid by Masaryk and his people to the creation of a new unified state, which always took priority over social and economic considerations. It was all very well for Masaryk to see revolution as a surgeon's knife to be applied with academic calm and precision. He later patted himself on the back by writing 'preparatory work in the mental sphere is essential, . . . only those revolutions that have been deliberately thought out in advance can possibly prove successful.'²² The fact remains that through the centuries nearly all major revolutions have had unforeseen consequences, as Miliukov was well aware. The knife stays bloody and passes from hand to hand. Thomas Masaryk enjoyed unusual success during his lifetime, but even his revolution did not for ever escape from the final twist of the knife, for Czechoslovakia was stabbed in the back in 1948.

We have already seen enough of Masaryk to understand that his personal victory was not fortuitous. His character played a great role. He was always patient and above all flexible. He had to be both in his long negotiations with the allies in the World War. Although he evinced most of the supposed merits of the academic, he lacked many of the defects, or concealed them better than Miliukov managed to do. In Russia during 1917 among Czech troops Masaryk found that 'Our soldiers were fond of me and acknowledged me as their commander-in-chief . . . They saw nothing professorial about me.'²³ He had the popular touch which Miliukov and all the Constitutional Democrats lacked in Russia, as

the Socialist Revolutionary, Chernov, noted in the same period: he said that Miliukov's 'chief weakness was a complete lack of feeling for popular, mass psychology. He was too much a man of the study, hence a doctrinaire. The studious side of his nature had been moderated by the long schooling of parliamentary life and struggle . . . that peculiar little world which, in Russia more than elsewhere, was isolated, protected against the pressure of the street.'²⁴ Even Masaryk, like President Wilson, was to suffer from his past. His enemies declared that the Czechs had elected a president to return after the war and, instead, they got a professor. But they got a rather atypical professor, and in the land of Comenius a man of education received wide respect.

Perhaps the best way to sum up the two men and their place in history is to quote at some length Miliukov's comparison of his own fate and that of Masaryk. He wrote that Masaryk 'led his country to freedom and reached his goal for the accomplishment of which the country was prepared by the work of the entire nation, and by an especially favourable international situation. In contrast the efforts of the Russian 'liberation movement' met with the blind opposition of the government, and the unpreparedness of the popular masses. The international situation created by the prolonged war which tired and exhausted the country proved to be unusually unfavourable to us. The support of democratic Europe which helped Masaryk to create a new free state did not extend to those who could not stand on their own feet in the difficult moments. To speak of someone's *guilt* would be out of place here; it was our *misfortune*. But neither should the sad meaning of the parallel be hidden if anyone found it necessary to seek it.'²⁵

It is interesting to note that in this appraisal Miliukov is acute and objective in retrospect on the vital differences. Popular domestic support and international aid for the Czechs allowed Masaryk to survive politically. Naturally Miliukov goes on to ascribe his own fate to misfortune and omits to list those personal attributes which Masaryk possessed and which he sadly lacked.

Both Miliukov and Masaryk proved to be remarkably objective in the best academic tra-

dition when it came to recording their careers in their historical and autobiographical works. They had also been far-seeing as younger men in their prediction of revolution. I would like to turn now to this aspect of their thought.

Masaryk and Miliukov successfully predicted the revolutions which eventually occurred in their countries. Prophecies of this kind are made with a variety of political aims in mind. Conservatives do it in order to scare people with the terrible consequences of even progressive revolutions. Some reactionaries, like Protopopov in the winter of 1916-1917 in Russia, have gone so far as to engineer mock revolutions which they intended to extinguish immediately in order to ward off the real thing. Moderates have often raised the spectre of revolution so as to induce the political authorities to make radical reforms. Our two academics, like the French *philosophes* before them, genuinely desired revolution and in helping to foster a favourable climate of opinion gave their predictions a self-fulfilling look.

One can never say, of course, that a single man wills something as vast as revolution. Can he even make any predictions that are not worthless, or else merely fortuitous? Certainly the greatest revolutionary geniuses have made glaring errors with regard to timing. On the very eve of 1917 Lenin declared that he did not expect to see a revolution in Russia during his own lifetime. Miliukov fared rather better on this point, since in 1904 he looked to an early revolution, and it arrived the following year. I think that one can safely say that there are some future developments which are far more probable than others, at least in the short run. Mechanistic and deterministic explanations cannot provide a full answer, since politics and revolutions are too anthropocentric in nature. Novelty occurs endlessly in them, and the specific details of such surprising phenomena as revolutions are unique. Yet there are many sets of regularities produced by human institutions which make a great deal of political behaviour possible to assess and even to foretell. Each revolution may be novel and its actual timing unpredictable, but only the specific shape is unique. Even revolutions may reveal analogies with earlier events.

Masaryk and Miliukov therefore managed to predict in a general manner what is unpredictable

in exact terms. Let us now list very briefly and keep in our minds some of the general contours they detected. In the economic sphere, neither man agreed with either Marx, who claimed that revolution was a product of increasing misery, nor with de Tocqueville, who ascribed revolution to increasing prosperity. Rather they noted that all those social groups whose economic prospects were improving less rapidly than expected were dissatisfied. Complaints were exacerbated in the Austrian, and especially the Russian Empire by the stop-go performance of the respective economies, by increasing inflation and, in the case of Russia, by large foreign loans. In social terms the populations of these countries experienced a wide gap between actual status and potential ambitions. In the years before the World War they went through a great deal of social mobility, both vertical and horizontal. Pay differentials melted at the edges. A large number of social and political institutions lost their significance in the eyes of the public, and appeared to be decaying fast. As a result political factions found it much easier to show disrespect for these institutions and to run to extremes on the left and on the right. Both Russia and Austria also witnessed the final implosion of massive multinational empires, leading to radical devolution of their heartland minorities, geographically speaking, and eventually to internal war. All of the trends I have mentioned were irritated by prevailing psychological moods, such as mutual economic envy by one class of another, a stronger mental reaction than in calmer times against power-holding hierarchies, a cynical rejection of well-tried institutions, and a moral decline which was reflected vividly in the arts of the epoch.

Does this catalogue of general outlines remind you of anything? The analogy with Britain today is so striking that I will not rub your noses in it by repeating the broad similarities again. Of course one must beware of false and narrow comparisons. It is natural for men in crisis to turn too easily to history for auguries. In 1917 Russians sang the *Marseillaise* in atrocious French. Plekhanov hailed Lenin as a twentieth-century Robespierre, and Trotsky made close allusions in his writings to French revolutionary episodes. When one starts to trace individual contours, the details show up a multitude of unique aspects. Take for example the national question, of great interest to Masaryk in the past and to the Welsh

now. In Russia the liberal faction nearly always fought for central control, unlike most of their British counterparts in recent history. The Scots and the Welsh can only secede to themselves or to the ocean, so to speak, but continental Russian and Austrian national minorities could and did secede to other nation states, some of which were ethnically related to them.

There were in addition many incidental time triggers in the Russian and Austrian examples which I have not listed but which acted as definite, specific accelerators of revolution. International war is the most obvious of these. Yet as I have already tried to argue, undoubted uniqueness does not automatically imply the absence of broad similarities. The useful notion of more precise triggers or accelerators helps to get rid of the objections of those whose hatred of conceptual schematization of any kind takes the naïve form of proclaiming the absolute uniqueness of each political event.

Raphael's Prophetic Almanack for 1917 noted well before the event that the planet Uranus in March would be on the Tsar's mid-heaven close to the place of his Sun. The Tsar was advised to 'beware of sinister and seditious influences.'²⁶ You may judge my next statement to be as well founded on evidence as Raphael's astrological *Almanack* but nevertheless I shall put my head on the block of history and come out with it, although I lack the time to enlarge upon it here. I predict, as Miliukov and Masaryk once did for their countries, that as far as broad contours are concerned, and not allowing for specific accelerators (or indeed decelerators like North Sea oil), this country is heading for some kind of revolution. I am not the first to say it, nor shall I be the last. You will ask me, as I asked of Miliukov and Masaryk, what is my motive for saying this? Perhaps I cannot avoid polemics completely. After all who can? Controversy still rages hotly among scholars over the Akhenaten revolution, staged in Egypt about 3348 years ago. My motive is the moderate one of the three I mentioned earlier. I raise the spectre of what looks like retrogressive revolution through a process of *Gleichschaltung* in the hope that the left, the right and especially the lethargic centre will act quickly so that enough decelerators and reforms may be launched to avoid it. Britain possesses the supreme political complacency of a

nation with the longest surviving democracy in the world, a land that has not been invaded since 1066 and has not had a revolution since Cromwell. It is precisely because we have so much more to lose than the Czechs or the Russians in 1917²⁷ that I think it worth while to point out the danger. Yet still I fear that this and other audiences will accuse me of being alarmist and adopt the ridiculing pose of Jan Masaryk when he said: 'A revolution in England? That would be, my friend, a very orderly affair, and the police would have no reason to interfere. Someone would have to make a proposal; someone else would have to second it; and then a far-ranging debate would take place. The effect of the revolution on the price of tobacco would be considered; on the import of eggs and bacon; on dog-racing and other matters of vital importance. The Archbishop of Canterbury would be consulted, G. B. Shaw, Agatha Christie, the BBC brains trust, George Formby and the captain of the winning team of the Cup Tie. The views of the Council for Civil Liberties would be taken into consideration; of the Association of Old Maids; of the Anglican Church and the management of the Battersea Dogs' Home; of the vegetarians, the esperantists, the firemen and St. John Ambulance. I may have left somebody out. It is certain that before the end of all the debates and consultations Saturday would come, and the Chelsea-Arsenal match. Revolution would have to be postponed until Monday, when the debate would be continued in the correspondence columns of *The Times*.'²⁸

Jan Masaryk's comments are amusing enough, but he was thinking of Britain as she appeared to be during and just after the Second World War. I doubt whether we are still the same today, even in temperament. Jan Masaryk's democratic country as created by his father was destroyed in 1948 through its own institutions. In 411 BC the freemen of Athens also voted to abolish democracy. In typical British fashion we too could muddle through to catastrophe with a laugh.

If I have suddenly turned didactic, it is because I think we can learn a little from the faults and virtues of those two academics turned politicians to whom I have alluded tonight. If we are indeed facing the possibility of revolution, as academics we should reveal our merits and suppress our defects. Hardly any of us would wish or need to

embark into active politics, but in a sense the discipline I teach is an open book – we all consider ourselves dab hands at politics, whatever subject we teach. We should, like Thomas Masaryk, remain flexible, calm, and as rational and objective in our discernment as the threat of revolution, with all its emotive overtones, allows.²⁹ It is no good being timid or silent. Most academics were so in fact during the great modern upheavals and their influence was paltry and has gone unrecorded. Masaryk and Miliukov are very rare exceptions to W. B. Yeats' rule:

'All shuffle there; all cough in ink;
All wear the carpet with their shoes;
All think what other people think;
All know the man their neighbour knows.'

Mr. Principal, academics fight for the freedom of our universities from over-aggressive governmental intervention. We may in the future be facing the prospect of struggling for the more basic freedoms without which true learning and culture cannot survive – the freedom of speech and of the written word, and, in particular, the liberty not to be forced to combine within a corporate state. We can be proud that even yet our state like Prospero's is still

'so reputed
In dignity, and, for the liberal arts,
Without a parallel.'

But each one of us should not neglect to defend the political foundations on which those glories are built, lest, like Prospero again, we lose everything:

'The government I cast upon my brother,
And to my state grew stranger, being
transported
And rapt in secret studies.'

NOTES

- 1 'In studying the state, the causally most influential factor of historical life, and in probing at the same time for the values the state is able to produce, political history takes account of both the depths and heights of life, and in order to do this, must reflectively place itself at the centre of life.' (F. Meinecke, 'Kasualitäten und Werte in der Geschichte', *Staat und Persönlichkeit*, 1933.)
- 2 This has been noted by many observers. See W. F. Wertheim, *Evolution and Revolution*, 1974, p. 395, note 67, and L. Stone, 'Theories of Revolution', *World Politics*, 1965, p. 159 ff.
- 3 P. Miliukov, 'Rasprostranenie universitetskogo obrazovaniia v Anglii, Amerike i Rossii', *Russkoe Bogatstvo*, March, 1896, p. 79.
- 4 *Ibidem*, 'Rokovye Gody', *Russkii Zapiski*, volume X, 1938, pp. 135-138.
- 5 T. Masaryk, *The Spirit of Russia*, Volume II, 1919, p. 429.
- 6 *Osvobozhdenie*, June 8, 1905, p. 367.
- 7 'Rokovye Gody', *op. cit.*, p. 144.
- 8 V. Lenin, *Proletarii*, August 23, 1905.
- 9 P. Miliukov, 'Rokovye Gody', *op. cit.*, Volume XIII, p. 122.
- 10 P. Miliukov, *Vospominaniia*, 1955, Volume II, p. 316.
- 11 *Ibidem*, Volume I, p. 258.
- 12 From a letter written on December 4, 1918, to I. Petrunkevich, in the Miliukov collection of the Russian Archives, Columbia University.
- 13 A. Kerensky, *Russia and History's Turning Point*, 1965, p. 242.
- 14 From Masaryk's reply to speeches marking his sixtieth birthday on March 7, 1910, quoted in P. Selver, *Masaryk*, 1940, p. 27.
- 15 Masaryk, *The Making of a State*, 1927, p. 291.
- 16 Masaryk, 'The problem of small nations in the European crisis', inaugural lecture delivered at King's College, University of London, 1915.
- 17 Masaryk, *The Making of a State*, *op. cit.*, p. 416.
- 18 F. Peroutka, *Budování státu*, Prague, 1933, Volume I, p. 477.
- 19 Masaryk wrote 'Democracy does not mean perpetual revolution'. See *The Making of a State*, p. 416.
- 20 J. Herben, *T. G. Masaryk*, Prague, 1947, pp. 380-1.
- 21 Quoted in Selver, *Masaryk*, *op. cit.*, p. 279.
- 22 Masaryk, *The Spirit of Russia*, *op. cit.*, Volume II, p. 536-7.
- 23 Quoted in Selver, *op. cit.*, p. 277.
- 24 V. Chernov, *The Great Russian Revolution*, 1936, p. 172.
- 25 Miliukov, 'Moi vstrechi s Masarykom', *Posledniia Novosti*, September 21.
- 26 *Raphael's Prophetic Almanack for 1917*, W. Foulsham, London 1916.
- 27 Even Lenin wrote of the 1905 Revolution 'If we had a parliament we would definitely support Miliukov and Co. . . .' P. Miliukov, *God bor'by*, 1907, p. 55.
- 28 V. Fischl, *Hovory s Janem Masarykem*, 1952, pp. 78-9.
- 29 Masaryk always combated blind emotion in politics: 'The revolutionary instinct? I have very little respect for such instincts . . . Instinct - that is moral chaos,' Quoted from T. Masaryk, *Otázka Sociální*, Volume II, p. 142, in R. R. Betts, *Essays in Czech History*, London, 1969, p. 298.

