

**A Report from
the
International
Helsinki Federation
for Human Rights**

CZECHOSLOVAKIA '88

**A Different Seminar
Prague, November 1988**

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights

Rummelhardtgasse 2/18

A-1090 Vienna

AUSTRIA

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A Different Seminar

Prague November 1988

A report prepared by Gerald Nagler, Secretary-General of
The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights

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seminar was sponsored by The Bernard Osher Foundation

The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) is a non-governmental organisation that seeks to promote compliance of the signatory states with the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. Its Chairman is Karl Johannes von Schwarzenberg; its Secretary General is Gerald Nagler; its Executive Director is Yadjia Zeltman and its Project Director is Hester Minnema.

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA '88

"I hereby declare this symposium opened". That was all Vaclav Havel could say to us before he was arrested and rather brutally carried away by the Czechoslovak police.

This seminar prepared by Charta 77 and four other independent organizations in the CSSR was intended to commemorate the historical events 1918 - 38 - 48 - 68. The authorities had been informed in detail already in September -- which resulted in home searches and intimidation.

Since a seminar like this is in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Helsinki Final Act, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights decided to send an international delegation to participate in it. We informed the CSSR authorities and even requested a meeting with the CSSR Ambassador to explain the importance of this symposium and what the IHF participation meant. In the IHF delegation were, amongst others, Max van der Stoep, former Dutch Foreign Minister, Member of Council of State and Chairman of the Dutch Helsinki Committee, Lord Erik Avebury, Chairman of the British Helsinki Committee and Gerald Nagler, Secretary-General of the International Helsinki Federation. Some of the members of our delegation were denied visas: Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, publisher of "Die Zeit", Ove Nathan, Professor and Dean of Copenhagen University and others. Some were given visas but warned and intimidated. On arrival in Prague, our delegation found our hosts arrested and ourselves under "police protection."

After Vaclav Havel had been arrested, we - the foreign delegates - were given an envelope by a woman, who obviously was the chief of the policeforce responsible to "deal" with us. The paper stated in four languages:

Advertisement ("Achtung")

"I am warning you that the action called Symposium CZECHOSLOVAKIA 88 is illegal and its performance would be contrary to the interests of Czechoslovak working people and consequently illegal. In this connection your efforts to take part in this action would be considered as a manifestation of hostility to Czechoslovakia and in virtue of this we should have to draw relevant consequences against your person."

This warning was not signed! Who is "I" -- the police, the state? However, insisting on the full legality of our action, we of course pursued. We tried to continue in private flats with those who were not arrested, but the police stopped even this. The seminar instead of being, as planned, an academic meeting turned into a symbolic meeting.

The IHF delegation conducted a modest commemorative ceremony and laid flowers on the grave of Jan Patočka -- while being surrounded by secret police. The delegation presented a protest to the Central Committee addressed to Mr. Jakes and went to the Police Headquarters to request clarification as to why our hosts had been arrested, what charges had been brought against them, why they were detained more than 48 hours, which is contrary to CSSR law, and if they had access to legal assistance. None of the requests and questions were answered. We also visited the wives of many of the men under arrest; they themselves were often under house arrest. Our moral support was most appreciated.

In short, the human rights situation in the CSSR is appalling. Meanwhile, since many persons living in the West who would have liked to participate in Prague could not obtain CSSR visas, the IHF organized a parallel seminar "CSSR 1988" in Vienna, moderated by the IHF Chairman Karl von Schwarzenberg. Participants were, amongst others, Jiri Pelikan, Zdenek Mlynar, Pavel Kohout, Pavel Tigrid, and Frantisek Janouch, all well known prominent human rights activists. The speeches which were planned to be held in Prague had, ironically enough to be read by others in Vienna.

The seminar in Prague was opened by Vaclav Havel, seconds before policemen arrested him. Our CSSR hosts as well as we consider the seminar as still on-going. The IHF will in every possible way continue to assist our CSSR friends to give them the possibility of intellectual and academic impulses. We consider this to be totally in agreement with the Helsinki Accords.

The IHF and the delegation which was in Prague has already protested against the treatment of our hosts and other human rights violations in the CSSR. We also strongly protest against statements like the enclosed press release from the CSSR Embassy in Bonn.

On Friday November 11, 1988, the foundation of the Czechoslovak Helsinki Committee was announced. Was it symptomatic that on that day the chairman of this committee, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Jiri Hajek, and most of the other signatories such as Vaclav Havel were in police detention? That the members of other Helsinki Human Rights Committees, such as Max van der Stoep, Lord Erik Averbury and Gerald Nagler were in Prague, but hindered from meeting members of the new Czechoslovak Helsinki Committee?

This new independent Czechoslovak committee consisting of internationally respected persons will hopefully be allowed to work without intimidation, house searches, arrests and discrimination. This would improve the very damaged image in respect to human rights of Czechoslovakia.

Gerald Nagler
Secretary General

Vienna, 30 November 1988

CZECHOSLOVAKIA 88

An international symposium on the topic:

Czechoslovakia in the European context 1918 - 1988

Dear Sir/Madam,

By a strange coincidence, a number of fateful events in the recent history of the Czechs and Slovaks occurred in years ending in an eight. Consequently, this year we shall be commemorating several key anniversaries at the same time. And because of our country's specific geo-political circumstances - amongst other reasons - the events in question had repercussions well beyond the national borders and indeed had a major impact on the history of the entire European continent. On each occasion, the course of European history was fundamentally changed, for better or worse. They were events that usually gave rise to a historical dilemma, and generally left some permanent mark on the continent's history. On more than one occasion, an event that seemed to be of purely Czechoslovak importance either presaged various wider European developments or threw light on certain European aspirations or disasters.

The creation of an independent Czechoslovak state in 1918 and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy totally transformed the European political map and were the key to subsequent developments in Europe and a prelude to the coming dangers. The Munich diktat of 1938 and the policy of appeasement of violence that it came to symbolise were the main factors that encouraged and paved the way for Hitler's expansion and World War II. The coup d'Etat of February 1948 was conceivably the final and crucial step towards the lasting division of Europe and the continued escalation of the Cold War. The Prague Spring of 1968 was the culmination of a period, dating back to the late fifties, during which attempts were made in various countries of the bloc to reform the Soviet-style system. The Soviet intervention brought that era to a tragic end. At the same time it was a test of how far the Brezhnev regime could go in consolidating Soviet superpower hegemony. And now, in 1988, there is a sense in which Czechoslovakia is once again a historical testing ground. The contrast between political inertia and the need for change, highlighted by the current

developments in the USSR, is most obvious here in Czechoslovakia. It could well be that it will fall to our country to test the seriousness, depth and credibility of the new policies being pursued by the Soviet bloc.

We have come to realise that our country's internal situation, in terms of human dignity, democracy, social harmony and tolerance, is intimately bound up with the overall European context and has always been in some way indicative of the prospects of peace on the continent. There were some Czechoslovak politicians in the past who showed an awareness of these linkages and of their own special responsibility. Hence a number of major initiatives motivated by the ideal of a friendly and peaceful European community of sovereign democratic states originated in our country. And it is still a valid ideal in the eyes of Charter 77 and other independently-minded groups and individuals in Czechoslovakia. There are many of us who believe that it is actually more topical now than ever before and we are doing what we can to promote it, though our scope for action is limited. Incidentally, this helps explain Charter 77's constant insistence that human rights, a democratic order and mutual tolerance are the only rational basis for genuine and lasting peace.

Clearly these are wide-ranging and complex issues, with many intellectual, spiritual and cultural ramifications, which demand analysis and conceptual debate. In view of of this, we have decided to mark this year's anniversaries with an informal, independent symposium on the topic: Czechoslovakia in the European context 1918-1988.

On behalf of the Symposium Steering Committee

Václav Havel

Miloš Hájek

Radim Palouš

Emanuel Mandler

Rudolf Battěk

Ladislav Lis

Libuše Šilhánová

NB: The original announcement was dated Prague, 25 May 1988

Prague, September 9, 1988

To the
Prime Minister of the Government of Czechoslovakia
Government-Committee for CSCE
Central Committee of the National Front of Czechoslovakia

**Declaration of the organizing committee of the symposium
CZECHOSLOVAKIA 88.**

We announced in a document of September 6, 1988 that the Czechoslovak citizens' groups Charter 77, the Democratic Initiative, the Jazz-Section, the Independent Peace Association and the Association of the Friends of the USA prepare for the days 11 - 13 November 1988 in Prague a symposium: CZECHOSLOVAKIA 88. The topic concerns the passed 70 years of the Czechoslovak state, especially some milestones in its historical development. Many important events were connected to dates ending with the number 8 (1918, 1948, 1968). The symposium should be an occasion of meetings between native and foreign participants from East and West. Among the invited are also some official Czechoslovak institutions.

We expect that the competent authorities will understand the symposium as it is meant: as the expression of the common effort to a dialogue, as an opportunity for a democratic discussion. Therefore, no obstacles should be imposed on the symposium, especially not in a time that meetings of a similar character have taken place without interference from the authorities in various Warsaw Pact countries and in a situation where also the Czechoslovak government stresses its adherence to the common European house, to democratization, to the zone of trust and direct collaboration.

The preparation of the symposium takes place in a completely open way. We hope for a reasonable attitude and proceeding of the Czechoslovak authorities. Further details of the preparations of the symposium will be provided later.

For the organizing committee of the symposium CZECHOSLOVAKIA 88

Vaclav Havel

We, the participants of the Vienna meeting organised in parallel with the Prague symposium "Czechoslovakia 1988"

EXPRESS

our support to those who in Czechoslovakia attempt to carry out a free and open discussion of their country's past and present;

PROTEST

against the violent police action against a peaceful historical seminar which was to be held in the Czechoslovak capital and in connection with which dozens of Czech and Slovak citizens were arrested, some of them still being held in jail;

ACCUSE THE CZECHOSLOVAK AUTHORITIES

of flagrant violations of the Helsinki Final Act and other international agreements duly signed by the Prague government;

STATE

that at a time when in some other Soviet bloc countries human and civil rights are enlarged, in Czechoslovakia, on the contrary, repression and police terror reign, resembling some of the worst periods of blind persecution;

REQUEST

that the Czechoslovak authorities immediately release all those who wanted to attend the Prague symposium and were arrested, as well as the other political prisoners, and apologize publicly for the unheard-of police action in Prague;

ASK

the Austrian representatives at the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe to submit on our behalf this protest to the Czechoslovak delegation to the Vienna Follow-up Conference.

N22
R. 13. 11. 88

Schlag gegen die Opposition in Prag 1988

Auflösung des Symposiums «Tschechoslowakei 1988»

Prag, 11. Nov. (Reuter) Die Polizei hat am Freitag in Prag eine internationale Menschenrechtsveranstaltung aufgelöst. Der Versammlungsleiter, der Schriftsteller Vaclav Havel, sowie über 20 weitere tschechoslowakische Teilnehmer wurden abgeführt. Zu dem Symposium in einem Prager Hotelrestaurant waren 16 ausländische Teilnehmer aus den USA und acht westeuropäischen Staaten gekommen.

C. Sr. Wien, 11. November

Die tschechoslowakische Polizei hat am Freitag vormittag die Abhaltung eines von mehreren unabhängigen Vereinigungen und Bürgerrechtsgruppen, darunter auch der «Charta 77», organisierten dreitägigen Symposiums zum Thema «Die Tschechoslowakei und die europäischen Ereignisse 1918 bis 1988» verhindert. Einer der wichtigsten Organisatoren der Veranstaltung, der Bürgerrechtler und Dramatiker Vaclav Havel, wurde laut Angaben von Agenturberichten aus Prag in einem Hotel in der Innenstadt von drei Polizisten festgenommen und abgeführt, nachdem er kurz zuvor das Symposium für eröffnet erklärt hatte. Wie aus Prag weiter verlautet, hat eine Frau, die sich als Hotelangestellte ausgegeben habe, den 16 anwesenden ausländischen Teilnehmern einen Umschlag mit einer anonymen Mitteilung ausgehändigt. Darin wird in englischer, deutscher, französischer und italienischer Sprache darauf aufmerksam gemacht, dass die Veranstaltung «illegal» sei und in «Widerspruch zu den Interessen des werktätigen Volkes der Tschechoslowakei» stehe.

Zahlreiche Festnahmen

Weiter heisst es in dem Text, jeder Versuch, am Symposium dennoch teilzunehmen, werde als ein «feindlicher Akt» betrachtet und ziehe entsprechende Konsequenzen nach sich. Bereits am Mittwoch abend und am Donnerstag morgen waren von der Polizei in Prag und in anderen Städten des Landes zahlreiche Bürgerrechtler festgenommen worden, offenbar in der Absicht, ihre Teilnahme am Symposium zu verunmöglichen. Havel konnte sich dem Zugriff der Polizei entziehen, indem er sich bis zur Eröffnung des Symposiums versteckt hielt. Laut Agenturberichten aus Prag waren am Freitag vormittag noch etwa zwanzig Personen in Haft. Bereits im Juni dieses Jahres ist unter ähnlichen Umständen ein internationales Seminar über Frieden und Menschenrechte aufgelöst worden, wobei zahlreiche ausländische Gäste ausgewiesen worden waren.

Die westlichen Teilnehmer, unter ihnen der ehemalige niederländische Aussenminister van der Stoep und der Generalsekretär der Internationalen Helsinki-Föderation, Gerald Nagler, veröffentlichten kurz nach der Festnahme Havels eine Erklärung, in der sie gegen die Massnahmen der Behörden zur Verhinderung der Veranstaltung entschieden protestierten. Die Polizeiaktion sei eine «flagrante Verletzung» der KSZE-Schlussakte von Helsinki. Sie kündigten auch an, bei der tschechoslowakischen Regierung zu protestieren und alle Delegationen an der Wiener KSZE-Nachfolgekonzferenz zu informieren. Laut Angaben der Internationalen Helsinki-Föderation in Wien sind die ausländischen Teilnehmer in Prag bemüht, die Veranstaltung trotzdem durchzuführen. Am Freitag wurde in Wien auch bekanntgegeben, dass nach längeren Vorbereitungsarbeiten in Prag ein tschechoslowakisches Helsinki-Komitee gegründet worden ist, dem neunzehn Mitglieder ange-

hören. Präsident des Komitees ist der Aussenminister während des «Prager Frühlings» von 1968, Jiri Hajek, der kurz vor der Eröffnung des Symposiums «Tschechoslowakei 1988» ebenfalls festgenommen wurde. Die Gründungskunde hätte bei der Eröffnung des Symposiums verlesen werden sollen.

Auslandsreise Dubceks

Der ehemalige Parteichef und Führer des «Prager Frühlings», Alexander Dubcek, ist am Freitag - erstmals seit achtzehn Jahren - ins Ausland gereist. Er folgte einer Einladung der Universität Bologna, die ihm den Ehrendoktor der politischen Wissenschaften verleihen wird.

Rom, 11. Nov. (afp) Alexander Dubcek hat die Befürchtung geäussert, von seiner Italienreise nicht wieder in die Tschechoslowakei heimkehren zu können. In einem Interview, das er am Donnerstag vor seiner Abreise in Prag der italienischen Agentur Ansa gab, sagte er, seine Ängste seien vor dem Hintergrund der heutigen Lage der Meinungsfreiheit in seinem Land gerechtfertigt. «Ich und jene, die wie ich denken, sind Zielscheibe der offiziellen Propaganda, gegen die es keine legale Verteidigung gibt», sagte Dubcek.

N22 28.10.88

Botschaft Sacharows an die «Charta 77»

Wien, 26. Okt. Der sowjetische Bürgerrechtskämpfer Andrei Sacharow hat der tschechoslowakischen Menschenrechtsgruppe «Charta 77» versichert, dass die vom Prager Frühling 1968 geweckten Hoffnungen auf Reformen in der Menschenrechtsbewegung der Sowjetunion lebendig geblieben seien. In einem am Sonntag in Moskau aufgegebenen Telegramm schrieb der Friedensnobelpreisträger: «Wir sind zutiefst davon überzeugt, dass die Bemühungen, den Erneuerungsprozess in Ihrem Land aufzuhalten, vergeblich sind. Sie und wir haben gemeinsame Hoffnungen.» Das Telegramm wurde am Mittwoch von tschechoslowakischen Emigrantenkreisen in Wien veröffentlicht. Neben Sacharow haben es drei weitere sowjetische Bürgerrechtler unterzeichnet.

BLACK COMEDY IN PRAGUE

Timothy Garton Ash runs up against the Czechoslovak secret police, who are trying to turn back the tide of history in Eastern Europe

Prague
A LADY with a red flower would meet us at breakfast, we were told. She would lead us to the meeting place. So there we sat in the faded Jugendstil splendour of the Hotel Pariz, a score of academics, writers, human rights activists, and parliamentarians from Western Europe and the United States, waiting for our mysterious guide. Most of our Czechoslovak hosts for this independent symposium 'Czechoslovakia 88' had been arrested the day before. Prominent Western guests had been refused visas by the Czechoslovak authorities on the grounds that the planned meeting was 'illegal' — although by what law they could not say. The streets around the Pariz were full of uniformed and secret police. It looked bad.

Then through the door swept not a lady with a red flower, but the playwright Vaclav Havel, the symbolic leader of the democratic opposition in Czechoslovakia and chairman of the symposium. He walked quickly to our table, sat down and formally declared the meeting open. Within seconds, three plain clothes men were behind him. 'Well, in this moment I am arrested,' said Havel. But before they hurried him away he managed to repeat that he had declared the symposium open.

Sally Laird of *Index on Censorship*, photographed the scene. More secret police moved in to confiscate her film. As we argued with them, we noticed a massive woman in a black leather jacket carrying out just one but a whole bouquet of flowers. She moved over to us and thrust into our hands, not the flowers but envelopes, inside which we found the most extraordinary poison-pen letter it has ever been my privilege to receive. Typed, photocopied, unsigned, in English, German, French and Italian, it read as follows:

Advertisement

I am warning you that the action called Symposium Czechoslovakia 88 is illegal and its performance would be contrary to the interests of Czechoslovak working people and consequently illegal. In this connection your efforts to take part in this action would be considered as a manifestation of hostility

to Czechoslovakia and in virtue of this we should have to draw relevant consequences against your person.

But who was the Kafkaesque 'I'? Someone asked the lady with the bouquet to identify herself. She said she 'ensured order in the hotel'. In subsequent conversation we tentatively identified her as a secret police officer who had guarded the Havel family flat, presenting herself as one



'Lieutenant Novotna', which is to say (roughly) Lieutenant Smith. Briefly detained in a police car the next day, three of us were again handed this fantastical 'Advertisement' (the German version was headed 'Achtung') by another plain clothes policeman. We asked him whence it came. From the City Council of Prague, he said at first. But who was this 'I'? we insisted. He pointed to himself, adding helpfully, as if we might not realise: 'Police!'

What we were doing by this time was to go round in smaller groups visiting such few of the Czech symposium participants as were still at home — usually under house arrest, and the families of those in

prison. Before this we had attempted to reconvene the meeting in a private flat but police in front of the door had simply prevented any of our Czech friends getting in. We had shot off a *démarche* to the Czechoslovak government at the CSO ('Helsinki') review conference in Vienna. We had briefed our ambassadors. We had laid flowers on the grave of the philosopher and founding father of Charter 77, Jan Patoch, a moving ceremony filmed by an independent video team. We had marched up to the Central Committee building and delivered a letter of protest addressed to the party leader Milos Jakes. A rather clever-looking official at the door assured us — in fluent Russian — that he would pass the letter on to 'Comrade Jakes, but regretted that there was no one to receive us on a Saturday. And who was he? What was his name and position? 'I just work here,' he explained shortly, *glasnost* glinting from his glasses. We had marched down to the main secret police office in the Old Town, demanding to know why and where our hosts were imprisoned. Once again the officer at the door explained that no one was working there at the weekend, a contention somewhat undermined by a succession of men in plain clothes pushing through our group to enter the building.

Now, as we paid our individual visits, I was interested to observe the surveillance techniques of the secret police. Their sheer number must make a major contribution to that full employment which is one of the great advantages of socialism. Perhaps naively, I had not realised before how they use nicely dressed young couples, boy and girl walking arm and arm. And then I was glad to note that they, at least, have no shortage of hard currency, since three of us alone had the attention of at least two foreign cars, a blue Ford Sierra and a snazzy little red Fiat. Spying the latter after one of our calls, and feeling rather tired and hungry, we decided to ask our marks for a lift back to our hotel. As we walked towards them, the driver started the engine and then pulled slowly away.

Amusing for us — but no joke at all for our Czech friends sitting in prison. In

theory the Czechoslovak authorities' handling of the symposium was tactically refined. Earlier this year they got themselves a terrible press by breaking up a peace seminar and expelling the foreign participants — including a certain Hitchens, C., late of this journal. Now they would allow our group, which included such eminent persons as Lord Avebury of the British parliamentary human rights group and a former Dutch foreign minister, to stay on, but lock up all the Czechs for 48 hours, and in some cases, immediately again for part of a further 48 hours, abandoning all but the barest shreds of legality. We, meanwhile, would be allowed to go where we pleased. We would have what the Germans call *Narrenfreiheit*, 'jester's freedom'. All doors would be opened to us, and the police would usher us courteously into empty rooms. Better still, we would bring suffering to the innocent. For if we were foolish enough to visit anyone not already well known to the police these people would surely feel the 'consequences' with which we were merely threatened. In practice, this exercise in damage-limitation did not go quite as planned: because of Havel's marvellous coup de théâtre and the black comedy of Lieutenant Novotna with her flowers and her 'advertisements', because we made our own protest dramatically, *urbi et orbi*, and particularly because West German television managed to film Havel's arrest, and to get the film out. As I write, it seems certain that the Czechoslovak government is in for another international roasting.

What does this little tragi-comedy tell us about Czechoslovakia in 1988? It tells us, obviously, that the present Czechoslovak régime is still going backwards where Hungary, Poland, and, most important, the Soviet Union are going forwards, although not uniformly. Indeed, after the removal of Mr Strougal last month, the present government looks more reactionary than ever. As one Czech historian

remarked to me between interrogations — this is now the government that Brezhnev dreamed of after the invasion 20 years ago. But it is a Brezhnevite government without Brezhnev: a régime whose time has gone.

For this episode also tells us that the régime which has imposed the grotesque abnormality of 'normalisation' in Czechoslovakia for two decades is now profoundly unsettled, confused and hivering. It is unsettled from the East, for if Gorbachev is behaving like Dubcek, and Poland and Hungary almost like free countries, then how on earth do they justify their continued immobility? By reference to the great socialist model of the German Democratic Republic? Or perhaps to Bulgaria?

It is unsettled from the West, by the permanent example of West European prosperity and freedom, by the importance which most Western governments now attach to human rights and internal political conditions in their conduct of the new détente, by the Vienna review conference and the ability of human rights activists such as those grouped in the international Helsinki Federation to mobilise public opinion on these issues.

Last, but by no means least, this régime is deeply unsettled from below — by the new flowering of independent initiative and civil courage within their own country. It now faces opposition and protest not merely from the front line of Charter 77, not only from intellectual samizdat, but from thousands of young people who have found the courage to speak out, and the no less than 600,000 people who have now signed a petition for religious freedom. On the 20th anniversary of the Soviet invasion thousands of mostly young people demonstrated in the centre of Prague, chanting 'Dubcek!' and 'Freedom!' Last month, in a slightly pathetic attempt to gain some patriotic credibility, the authorities suddenly declared that the 70th anniversary of

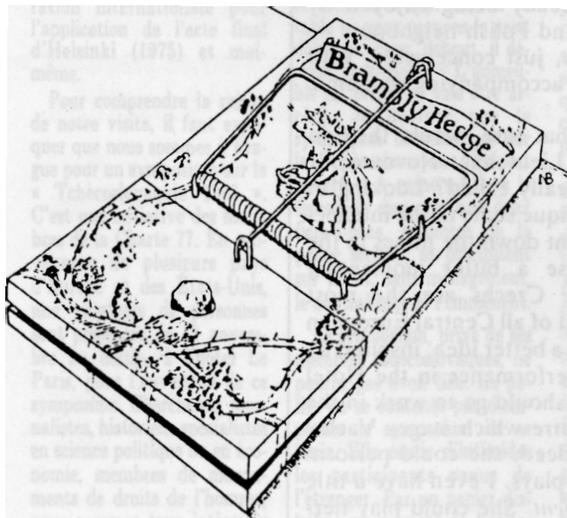
Czechoslovakia's independence on 28 October 1988 be celebrated as a national holiday. (Canny shopkeepers hedged their bets by putting in their windows the slogan 'Long live October!' which could refer either to Russia's revolution in 1917 or to Czechoslovakia's independence in 1918.) Then they locked up all the front-line oppositionists, to ensure that they would not face a genuinely patriotic manifestation. Yet that is exactly what they did face, with a largely spontaneous crowd, again mainly composed of young people, and again chanting 'Freedom!' while being pursued through the narrow streets.

The police round-ups of oppositionists in connection with 28 October, and again in connection with this symposium, are the worst for years. Augustin Navratil, the prime mover of the petition for religious freedom (see 'The yeoman and the cardinal' in *The Spectator*, 16 April 1988) has been confined indefinitely to a mental hospital with a diagnosis of 'paranoia querulens' — and this at a time when even the Soviet Union is desisting from the abuse of psychiatry for political purposes. On the other hand, there are half-hearted gestures of reform and relaxation — for example, allowing devastatingly frank accounts of the country's economic stagnation to appear in the official press. As Tocqueville taught us long ago, such inconsistency is characteristic of an *ancien régime* in its last years.

How long this twilight period will last, and how the change will come about, whether fast or slowly, peacefully or less so — these are, of course, unanswerable questions. The answers will depend primarily on developments inside Czechoslovakia, elsewhere in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union. But they will also depend on us. 'The world sees you,' the crowd chanted to the police during the 28 October demonstration. But does it really?

In 1988, as at all those turning-points which were to have been the subject of our symposium — 1918, when Britain, France and the United States effectively gave Tomas Garrigue Masaryk the international licence to create an independent Czechoslovak state; 1938, when, at Munich, Britain and France sold that independent state down the river; 1948, with the communist coup, and 1968, with the Soviet invasion — in this 'year of eight' as in all those historic 'years of eight', the fate of this small country in the centre of Europe still crucially depends on the attitude of the Western as well as the Eastern world.

Now the current line being peddled to the West by the Jakes régime goes roughly like this. 'We really want to press ahead with our own *perestroika*, with economic restructuring above all. But for this we need order and stability at home. *Ordnung muss sein*. Therefore you must give us credits and technology while understanding why we have to lock up dangerous criminal elements'... such as Czecho-



slovakia's greatest living playwright Vaclav Havel. A pretty feeble line, you might think, yet incredibly enough there are signs that some Western powers might half swallow it. This applies above all to West Germany and Austria, both of which have a particular interest in keeping *Ordnung* in Czechoslovakia so that the Czechs don't upset the further progress of their own particular national convergences with East Germany and Hungary respectively. More surprising is the case of France, whose foreign minister earlier this year made the extraordinary statement that Czechoslovakia's human rights performance was improving (an assertion he subsequently modified), and whose President, François Mitterrand, has chosen this of all places, and this of all times, to pay a state visit — scheduled for early next month.

One might understand his reluctance to follow in Mrs Thatcher's wake to Poland or Hungary but this is taking competition a little too far. To offer political recognition and economic support to the present régime in Czechoslovakia is not just morally abhorrent, it is also politically shortsighted. It ignores a prime lesson of recent East European history: the longer that fundamental reform is delayed, the more difficult it becomes, and the less likely it is to occur peacefully. Such an approach is thus likely to achieve the opposite of the desired effect. There is a time to praise, and a time to scold; a time to finance, and a time to refrain from financing. This is the latter.

In the short term, the prospects here look bleak: above all for the young, the faithful, the courageous and the independent. But not in the longer term. If there is such a thing as the tide of history, then in Central Europe today that tide is flowing Westward. And even if he puts our letter of protest straight into his personal shredder, Comrade Jakes can no more halt the tide than old King Canute. There is thus a more than even chance that in the 1990s the Czechs and Slovaks will begin to enjoy some of the greater freedoms and opportunities that are already being enjoyed by their Hungarian and Polish neighbours — and perhaps even, just conceivably, with slightly less of the accompanying economic distress.

And what, in that case, would they do with the likes of Lieutenant Novotna, or whatever she is really called? Looking at her muscular physique some of the intellectuals who were sent down the mines in the 1950s might nurse a bitter momentary thought. But the Czechs are the most gentle and tolerant of all Central European peoples, so I have a better idea, inspired by her remarkable performance in the Hotel Pariz. I think she should go to work in the theatre. In a theatre which stages Vaclav Havel's plays. Indeed, she could perform in one of Havel's plays. I even have a title for it: *Advertisement*. She could play herself.

UN ÉPISODE DE LA RÉPRESSION ORDINAIRE

Comment un symposium prévu, à Prague, sur la « Tchécoslovaquie 1988 » n'a pu avoir lieu

« **Q**uand les policiers sont venus chercher mon mari, il lui ont dit qu'ils avaient seulement un renseignement à lui demander. Il était en vêtements de travail. Ils l'ont emmené comme ça. Il n'est pas revenu. Cela fait deux jours. J'ai appelé la police. On m'a renvoyée d'un numéro à l'autre. Je ne sais pas où il est. Cela va durer jusqu'à lundi, probablement. Ils le relâcheront pour qu'il reprenne le travail. Depuis le début d'octobre, cela fait quatre fois que mon mari est ainsi emmené par la police et qu'il passe un week-end - ou plus - dans ses locaux. La garde à vue dure, légalement, quarante-huit heures mais, ici, il n'est pas rare que la police, ayant relâché quelqu'un au bout de ce délai, l'arrête à nouveau pour la même durée, puis le relâche. Cela peut se reproduire une ou plusieurs fois... » Nous sommes à Prague, le vendredi 11 novembre, chez un ancien professeur d'université. C'est sa femme qui nous reçoit : lui, il est ailleurs, elle ne sait où, sous garde policière.

Nous, nous sommes quatre, pour cette visite du soir improvisée : M. Van der Stoel, ancien ministre des Affaires étrangères des Pays-Bas, lord Eric Avebury, du groupe parlementaire des droits de l'homme du Royaume-Uni, M. Gerald Nagler, Suédois, directeur exécutif de la Fédération internationale pour l'application de l'acte final d'Helsinki (1975) et moi-même.

Pour comprendre la raison de notre visite, il faut expliquer que nous sommes à Prague pour un symposium sur la « Tchécoslovaquie 1988 ». C'est une initiative des membres de la Charte 77. En provenance de plusieurs pays d'Europe et des États-Unis, une vingtaine de personnes sont présentes, le 11 novembre au matin, à l'hôtel Le Paris, pour l'ouverture de ce symposium. Chercheurs, journalistes, historiens spécialistes en science politique ou en économie, membres de mouvements de droits de l'homme, nous sommes tous intéressés par cette rencontre. Nous espérons y entendre les Tchécoslovaques qui ont, de leur côté, préparé des communications sur différents thèmes touchant le passé, le présent et l'avenir de leur pays.



■ Vaclav Havel, dramaturge tchécoslovaque, un des fondateurs de la Charte 77. (Photo Sygma.)

Mais, dès notre arrivée, cet espoir a faibli : afin d'empêcher la tenue du symposium, la police a préventivement arrêté les organisateurs, sauf Vaclav Havel, le dramaturge bien connu, l'un des fondateurs de la Charte, qui a pu échapper aux recherches. Pourra-t-il venir? Nul ne le sait. Mais voici que, sur le coup de 8 h 45, il pénètre dans la salle. Il s'approche de la table où nous prenons le petit déjeuner. Ému, debout, il déclare, en anglais : « L'immeuble est cerné. Je vais être arrêté. Je déclare que le symposium international sur la Tchécoslovaquie 1988 est ouvert. » A peine a-t-il eu le temps de dire cela que deux fiers-à-bras, membres de la police secrète, se précipitent sur lui et, sans ménagement, le neutralisent et l'emmenent.

Le symposium, privé de ses membres tchécoslovaques, ne pourra pas avoir lieu. La police ne se contente pas d'empêcher le symposium de se tenir. Elle essaie d'intimider les participants venus de l'étranger. Par un papier distribué au moment de l'arrestation, elle nous informe - en quatre langues! - « que l'action nommée Symposium « la Tchécoslovaquie 1988 » est illégale et que sa réalisation serait en contradiction avec les intérêts du peuple travail-

leur tchécoslovaque et elle est alors illégale. A l'égard de cette réalité, votre intention de prendre part à cette action serait considérée comme un signe d'hostilité contre la République socialiste tchécoslovaque et il serait inévitable de tirer des conséquences nécessaires contre vous ».

Face à cette arrestation et à ce message, nous réagissons. Plusieurs démarches sont fixées : communiqué remis aux journalistes présents - séance impromptue entre une quinzaine d'ambassadeurs ou conseillers d'ambassade et les participants du symposium, tous invités par l'ambassadeur des Pays-Bas - temps de recueillement sur la tombe de Jan Patočka, fondateur de la Charte 77 - message à Augustin Navratil, initiateur de la déclaration sur les droits des chrétiens signée par 500000 personnes, interné dans un hôpital psychiatrique à Khomez (à 250 km de Prague) et, surtout, décision de rendre visite, par petits groupes, aux familles des personnes arrêtées, avec leur accord préalable.

Voilà pourquoi nous sommes là, ce soir du 11 novembre, à écouter cette femme jeune nous parler avec calme de sa vie quotidienne, perturbée par les vexations dont son mari est l'objet. Docteur en philosophie, il a été l'un des premiers signataires de la Charte 77, ce qui lui a valu d'abord d'être déchu de sa fonction universitaire et d'avoir à enseigner dans une école sans importance, puis d'être rayé des cadres de l'enseignement et d'être réduit à un emploi subalterne dans une briqueterie. Malgré tout, il poursuit inlassablement son action, dans l'esprit de la Charte. Récemment, il a même participé à un colloque sur les droits de l'homme, à Moscou. Il a pu y prendre la parole. Sa femme le comprend et le soutient, sans être mêlée directement à son action. Pour sa part, elle parle ouvertement de ce qu'elle sait, elle dit comment les choses se passent dans la société tchèque. Elle apprécie le soutien de nombreux amis. Elle se consacre surtout à l'éducation de leurs deux enfants. Au moment de l'au revoir, en souvenir, elle nous donne, à chacun, l'un de ces petits pains d'épice - cloches, sapins ou couronnes - enneigés de grains blancs, qu'elle prépare avec eux pour le jour de Noël!...

Ainsi, dans un climat de répression ordinaire, vivent des hommes et des femmes qui, depuis la publication de la Charte, le 1^{er} janvier 1977, aimeraient, comme il est écrit dans la Charte 77, « mener un dialogue constructif avec le pouvoir politique, notamment en attirant l'attention sur différents cas concrets de violation des droits de l'homme et du citoyen, en préparant la documentation appropriée, en proposant des solutions, en présentant diverses suggestions plus générales, susceptibles d'approfondir ces droits et leurs garanties, en agissant comme intermédiaire dans d'éventuelles situations de conflit que peut provoquer l'injustice ». Malgré les obstacles et les embûches, ces hommes et ces femmes espèrent, comme les 243 premiers signataires, que « la Charte 77 apportera sa contribution à ce que tous les citoyens en Tchécoslovaquie puissent travailler et vivre comme des hommes libres ».

Le symposium prévu n'a donc pas eu lieu mais les réactions des Tchèques aux mesures d'empêchement, de contrôle et d'intimidation montrent que la flamme de la liberté brille dans l'obscurité de la répression ordinaire.

Pierre TOULAT
Secrétaire de la Commission
française Justice et Paix.

Rude pravo, 14 November 1988

ATTEMPT AT A PROVOCATION

A fortnight after the provocative action by anti-socialist forces the same group of people now attempted to stage another form of provocation. They had the cooperation of organisations for psychological warfare of the NATO countries. Western broadcasting stations also took an active part. What was it all about?

Last weekend the so-called Charter 77 intended to hold a symposium in Prague under the title "Czechoslovakia 88". According to the foreign press, some twenty persons representing various official and unofficial structures in the West, were to arrive here under the cloak of tourism; many of these persons are acting from extreme anti-Czechoslovak positions.

The interest of these so-called tourists did not focus on cultural sites in our capital, but on inciting so-called dissidents to even more intensive anti-socialist activity. Their intentions backfired. With the use of material, prepared in advance, they intended to discredit our social system and vilify our country in the neighbouring countries. According to the foreign press, this material, frequently glorifying the political structures before 1938, is said to describe our past historical developments from subjectivist positions and even full of contradictions. Several of the organisers have been detained.

A similar event with the same political objectives was organised in Vienna last Sunday by emigré and other centres. Both these actions had one and the same purpose: to cast doubt not only on the endeavour of our Party and society towards restructuring, but to complicate the negotiations of the Vienna meeting, and, in contradiction with the Final Act of the Conference on European Security and Cooperation, to interfere in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia and violate Czechoslovakia's sovereignty.

Vaclav Dolezal

BOTSCHAFT
DER TSCHECHOSLOWAKISCHEN SOZIALISTISCHEN REPUBLIK
5300 BONN-IPPENDORF · FERDINANDSTRASSE 27

Bonn, den 17. 11. 1988

P r e s s R e l e a s e

Weitere Provokation in Prag

Es ist nicht so lange her, seit die antisozialistischen politischen Strukturen in der Tschechoslowakei am Staatsfeiertag - dem Gründungstag unserer Republik (28. Oktober) - Unruhe und Unfrieden zu stiften versuchten, die einen Eingriff von Ordnungskräften erforderlich machten. An diesem Wochenende liessen ihre Anführer, mit dem Repräsentanten der "Charta 77" Václav Havel an der Spitze, erneut von sich hören. Sie beriefen das sog. Seminar "Tschechoslowakei 88" nach Prag ein und vergassen dabei nicht viele ihrer politischen Seelenverwandten aus Westeuropa dazu einzuladen.

Internationalen Anspruch sollte diesem Seminar eine zum gleichen Zeitpunkt im benachbarten Wien stattfindende Versammlung verleihen. Dieser durchaus nicht zufällig zusammengerufenen Gesellschaft ging es keineswegs um unschuldige Meditationen über Geschichte und Gegenwart, sondern - wie schliesslich schon mehrmals - um eine Einschätzung der Möglichkeit, inwieweit es die im Lande verlaufenden politischen und gesellschaftlichen Prozesse gestatten würden, die politische Opposition weiter radikal zu gestalten, um diese dann schliesslich auch zum Hervorrufen von Chaos und Anarchie zu legalisieren. Und es ist kein Geheimnis, dass bei ähnlichen trauten Zusammenkünften zwischen eigenen und fremden Exponenten das taktische Vorgehen abgesprochen wird.

Dazu ist festzustellen, dass diejenigen, die diesmal in Prag auftauchen, genügend Erfahrung darin besitzen, um mit der

Schlussakte von Helsinki - die sie selbst in flagranter Weise verletzen - winkend, mit ihrem giftigen Speichel einen souveränen Staat und seine Gesellschaftsordnung zu besudeln.

Eben in der Schlussakte wird angeführt, dass die Unterzeichnerstaaten die "souvärene Gleichberechtigung und Individualität... zu denen auch das Recht eines jeden Staates auf rechtliche Gleichberechtigung, territoriale Integrität, auf Freiheit und politische Unabhängigkeit achten werden. Sie werden auch gegenseitig ihr Recht respektieren, sich ihr politisches, gesellschaftliches, wirtschaftliches und kulturelles System frei zu wählen, sowie auch ihr Recht, eigene Gesetze und Vorschriften zu bestimmen."

(vgl. K S Z E - Schlussakte, Teil 1,a/Kap.1.)

Kein vernünftiger Mensch ist in einem Land mit geordneten Verhältnissen daran interessiert auf die Ratschläge derjenigen zu hören, die, obwohl mit akademischen Titeln behangen und dem diplomatischen Alphabets mächtig, nicht zu begreifen vermögen, dass sie Gäste eines Landes sind, das sich im Geiste des vorstehend genannten Dokumentes eigene Gesetze und eine eigene Rechtsordnung festgelegt hat und dass diese Gesetze für jedermann gelten.

Und so stellt sich beim Schreiben dieser Zeilen unwillkürlich die Frage: Geht es in dieser so ungewöhnlich gut synchronisierten Kampagne einer Handvoll in- und ausländischer Leute doppelter Moral um eine rein tschechoslowakische Angelegenheit?

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR WARREN ZIMMERMANN
CHAIRMAN OF THE UNITED STATES DELEGATION
TO THE VIENNA CSCE FOLLOW-UP MEETING

INFORMAL HEADS
OF DELEGATION MEETING

VIENNA, AUSTRIA
NOVEMBER 15, 1988

MR. CHAIRMAN,

LAST WEEKEND, A SYMPOSIUM -- "CZECHOSLOVAKIA '88" -- WAS TO HAVE BEEN HELD IN PRAGUE TO ASSESS THE PLACE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN EUROPEAN HISTORY. GIVEN THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, NOT TO MENTION ITS DEEP INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS, SUCH A SYMPOSIUM PROMISED TO INCREASE KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF A COUNTRY WHOSE PEOPLE HAVE SUFFERED MUCH AND ACHIEVED MUCH.

UNFORTUNATELY, IN LINE WITH A DIFFERENT TRADITION - ONE OF SCORN FOR INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSION -- THE CZECHOSLOVAK GOVERNMENT PREVENTED THE MEETING FROM TAKING PLACE. SEVERAL INTERESTED VISITORS FROM ABROAD, INCLUDING SOME AMERICANS, WERE PERMITTED TO ENTER PRAGUE, BUT ALL WERE KEPT UNDER CLOSE AND USUALLY OBTRUSIVE POLICE SURVEILLANCE. NONE OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK CITIZENS WHO ORGANIZED THE EVENT OR PLANNED TO PARTICIPATE IN IT WERE AVAILABLE TO MEET WITH THEM. AT LEAST TWENTY SUCH PERSONS HAD EITHER BEEN TAKEN AWAY BY THE POLICE AND WERE SITTING SOMEWHERE IN DETENTION, OR WERE THREATENED WITH DETENTION IF THEY WERE FOUND IN PRAGUE. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE, VACLAV HAVEL, WAS ABLE TO AVOID DETENTION UNTIL FRIDAY. JUST AS HE ENTERED THE HOTEL WHERE THE FOREIGN VISITORS WERE GATHERED AND OPENED THE MEETING, THE POLICE GRABBED HIM AND TOOK HIM AWAY AS WELL. THE FOREIGN PARTICIPANTS WERE SUBSEQUENTLY WARNED THAT THEIR EFFORTS TO TAKE PART IN THE SYMPOSIUM "WOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MANIFESTATION OF HOSTILITY TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA" AND THREATENED THAT THE AUTHORITIES WOULD "DRAW RELEVANT CONSEQUENCES" AGAINST THESE PEOPLE.

ORGANIZED ON THE WELL-FOUNDED BELIEF THAT THE CZECHOSLOVAK AUTHORITIES WOULD NOT RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF THEIR CITIZENS, A PARALLEL SYMPOSIUM WAS HELD HERE IN VIENNA. THE PAPERS PREPARED FOR THE PRAGUE SYMPOSIUM WERE DISCUSSED. I HAVE READ MOST OF THEM. I WOULD SUGGEST THAT THE CZECHOSLOVAK DELEGATION DO THE SAME, FOR I WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM THAT DELEGATION EXACTLY WHAT IT IS IN THOSE PAPERS THAT SO THREATENED THE GOVERNMENT IT REPRESENTS. WAS IT A CALL FOR RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION? WAS IT A DIFFERING, POSSIBLY EVEN A MORE OBJECTIVE INTERPRETATION, OF CZECHOSLOVAK HISTORY? OR WAS THE THREAT SIMPLY THAT SOME INDIVIDUALS TRIED TO ASSEMBLE TO DISCUSS THE HISTORY OF THEIR OWN COUNTRY WITHOUT GOVERNMENT APPROVAL?

I CAN SEE NO DANGER IN THE IDEAS EXPRESSED IN THOSE PAPERS, NOR IN THE DISCUSSION OF THEM THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN MADE IN PRAGUE AND HAD INSTEAD TO BE MADE IN VIENNA. INSTEAD, THE DANGER IS TO BE FOUND IN THE ACTIONS OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK AUTHORITIES AGAINST THE ORGANIZERS. THE CONTEMPT THEY DISPLAYED FOR THE RIGHTS OF CZECHOSLOVAK CITIZENS AMOUNTS TO CONTEMPT FOR THE VIENNA MEETING AND THE CSCE PROCESS IN WHICH CZECHOSLOVAKIA PLEDGED TO RESPECT THOSE RIGHTS.

IT'S A LESSON OFTEN TAUGHT, BUT RARELY LEARNED, THAT DICTATORSHIPS TEND TO EXACERBATE THE VERY PROBLEMS WHICH THEY SEEK BY REPRESSION TO ELIMINATE. IRONICALLY, SEVERAL OF THE WOULD-BE PARTICIPANTS IN THE ABORTIVE SYMPOSIUM TREATED THAT THEME IN THEIR DISCUSSION PAPERS. JIRI HAJEK, A FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, WROTE: "AT PRESENT THE PRAGUE SPRING IS ACTUALLY GETTING ITS REHABILITATION FROM WHERE IN 1968 THE BRUTAL BLOW WAS AIMED AGAINST IT. IT BECOMES ALL THE MORE NECESSARY TO REVIVE ITS SPIRIT IN THE COUNTRY OF ITS ORIGIN." AND VACLAV HAVEL, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SYMPOSIUM, WROTE THAT AN INDEPENDENT CULTURE IN A CLOSED SOCIETY CAN BE A DOUBLE-EDGED WEAPON: "IT GIVES TO ANY INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY A DIMENSION IT DOES NOT HAVE IN OPEN SOCIETIES - AN ADDED "RADIOACTIVITY" - OTHERWISE PEOPLE WOULD NOT BE PUT IN JAIL FOR THEIR WRITINGS."

THE CZECHOSLOVAK GOVERNMENT DOES NOT WANT TO UNDERSTAND THIS. IT WANTS TO BELIEVE, AS RUDE PRAVO CHARGED YESTERDAY, THAT THE EVENTS OF LAST WEEK AND PREVIOUS WEEKS WERE THE WORK OF ALIENS, FOREIGN RADIOS, NATO TYPES. THE CZECHOSLOVAK GOVERNMENT DOES NOT WANT TO UNDERSTAND THE OBVIOUS TRUTH THAT DISSENT IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS NOT PROVOKED FROM OUTSIDE, AS IT LUDICROUSLY ASSERTS, BUT IS THE PRODUCT OF ITS OWN POLICIES OF REPRESSION. IT DOES NOT WANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT REPRESSION ONLY BREEDS A GREATER DESIRE FOR LIBERTY. THE EVIDENCE IS RIGHT BEFORE ITS EYES - LAST FRIDAY, THE DAY THAT THE "CZECHOSLOVAKIA '88" SYMPOSIUM WAS SUPPRESSED, A CZECHOSLOVAK HELSINKI COMMITTEE WAS ESTABLISHED IN PRAGUE. THE CZECHOSLOVAKIA GOVERNMENT DOES NOT WANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT FREEDOM IS LIKE THE HYDRA OF CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY - IF YOU CUT OFF ONE OF ITS HEADS, NEW HEADS WILL GROW. AND IT DOES NOT WANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT, IN THE END, FREEDOM WILL PREVAIL.

Č E S K O S L O V E N S K O 8 8

Mezinárodní symposium "Československo v evropském dění 1918-1988"
Praha, 11. - 13. listopadu 1988

C Z E C H O S L O V A K I A 8 8

International symposium "Czechoslovakia in the European context,
1918-1988". Prague, 11th - 13th November, 1988

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Seznam referátů připravených k 9. listopadu 1988:

List of papers ready by the 9th November 1988:

*: full text in Czech available
r*: abstract in Czech available
+: full text in English available [x něm (ger) only in German]
r+: abstract in English available

***: the paper was sent to Prague, but the author is unable to attend

*** BRUS, Wlodimierz (Oxford):
Země východní Evropy v období mezi "Brežněvovou doktrínou" a Gorbačovovým novým kursem
+ The East European countries from the "Brezhnev doctrine" to the new Gorbachev course

CÍSAŘ, Čestmír (Praha):
* r* Československo v evropském dění 1988
Czechoslovakia in the European context 1988

CÍSAŘOVSKÁ, Blanka (Praha):
* r* Vznik Československa a Rusko
r+ Russia and the creation of Czechoslovakia

CÍSAŘOVSKÝ, Josef (Praha):
* r* Několik poznámek k naší soudobé kulturní krizi
r+ A few comments on our present cultural crisis

GARTON ASH, Timothy (Oxford):
Reforma nebo revoluce?
+ Reform or revolution?

HÁJEK, Jiří (Praha):
* r* Lidská práva a občanské svobody v kontextu
r+ Pražského jara 1968
Human rights and civil liberties in the context of the "Prague Spring" 1968

HÁJEK, Miloš (Praha):
* r* Dělnické internacionály a vznik Československé republiky
r+ The workers' internationals and the foundation of the Czechoslovak republic

HEJDÁNEK, Ladislav (Praha):

- * r* Poselství minulosti a příslib věcí přicházejících
- r+ A message of the past and a promise of things to come

HÜBL, Milan (Praha):

- * r* "Bílá místa" okolo Mnichova 1938
- Some "unexplored ground" surrounding Munich 1938

JANÁT, Bohumír (Praha):

- * r* Duchovní prameny našich novodobých dějin
- The spiritual roots of our recent history

*** JELÍNEK, Yeshayahu (Israel):

- * Česi, Slováci a Židia: sedemdesiat rokov spolužitia a konfrontácií
- The Czechs, the Slovaks and the Jews: 70 years of coexistence and confrontation

JUNGMANN, Milan (Praha):

- * r* Nad sektářskou koncepcí české kultury
- r+ The sectarian concept of Czech culture

KADLECOVÁ, Erika (Praha):

- * r* Nad výročími o náboženské svobodě
- r+ Religious freedom and this year's anniversaries

*** KALVODA, Josef (USA):

- Únor 1948
- + February 1948

KANTORKOVÁ, Eva (Praha):

- * r* Češství v "Pamětech" Václava Černého
- r+ The Czech ethos in Václav Černý's "Memoirs"

KAUTMAN, František (Praha):

- * r* Tragika českého nacionalismu: Viktor Dyk
- r+ The tragic element in Czech nationalism: Viktor Dyk

*** KOHÁK, Erazim (USA):

- * 28. říjen - filozoficky vzato
- Being philosophical about 28th October

KOHOUT, Jaroslav (Praha):

- * r* Masarykovo Československo v odstupu 70 let:
- r+ idea a realita
- Masaryk's Czechoslovakia 70 years on: ideal and reality

KŘEN, Jan (Praha):

- * r* Rehabilitace 28. října: jaká je a jaká by měla být
- r+ The rehabilitation of 28th October: the way it's been and the way it ought to be

KUSÝ, Miroslav (Bratislava):

- * r* Slováci a československá štátnosť
- r+ The Slovaks and Czechoslovak statehood

- LIPPELT, Helmut (Bonn):
 x něm Stellungnahme zum Vorschlag einer "European Assembly
 for Peace and Democracy" (Stanovisko k návrhu na
 Evropské fórum za mír a demokracii)
 x ger Position paper to the proposal for a "European Asembly
 for Peace and Democracy"
- MEZNIK, Jaroslav (Brno):
 * r* Odpovědnost k dějinám, odpovědnost
 r+ před dějinami
 Responsibility for history, responsibility before
 history
- OPAT, Jaroslav (Praha):
 * r* Se skloněnou šijí?
 r+ Grin and bear it?
- PALOUŠ, Radim (Praha):
 * r* Československo a zlom věků
 r+ Czechoslovakia and the change of an era
- *** PREČAN, Vilém (Scheinfeld):
 * Poznámka o vztahu Čechů a Slováků
 + A note on the relations between Czechs and Slovaks
- *** RUPNIK, Jacques (Paris):
 Intelektuálové a moc v Československu
 + Intellectuals and power in Czechoslovakia
- ŠABATA, Jaroslav (Brno):
 * r* Československo v perspektivě demokratické a
 r+ spojené Evropy
 Czechoslovakia in the perspective of a democratic
 and united Europe
- ŠAMALÍK, František (Praha):
 * r* Dějinné zdroje československé humanitní demokracie
 r+ The historical origins of Czech humanitarian democracy
- SIMEČKA, Milan (Bratislava):
 * r* Československo 1988 - šance do konce století
 + r+ Czechoslovakia 1988 - our prospects to the end
 of the century
- VRABEC, Václav (Praha):
 * r* Demokracie a socialismus: k tradici boje
 r+ za lidská práva v českém dělnickém hnutí
 Democracy and socialism: the tradition of
 human rights struggle in the Czech labour movement
- ZUKAL, Rudolf (Praha):
 * r+ Československá emigrace pohledem ekonoma
 Czechoslovak emigration through the eyes of an
 economist
- ZVĚŘINA, Josef:
 * r* Několik pohledů na náboženský život v českých
 r+ zemích v letech 1918-1988
 Some views on religious life in the Czech lands,
 1918-1988

Milan Šimečka:

Czechoslovakia 1988 - our prospects to the end of the century

Czechoslovakia was constituted seventy years ago with noble intentions and on the basis of worthy ideals. It is possible to blame all the subsequent tragedies that have befallen this country on the fact that our geographical situation in Europe has not been particularly favourable for such intentions and ideals. We tell ourselves that if we were located somewhere else in the temperate zone, where, let's say, we would have Danes or Dutchmen for neighbours, the democratic Republic that Masaryk envisaged would still be flourishing. But what hopes did it have here, in that part of Europe which is supposed to be the lynch-pin to the domination of the entire continent? The successive capitulations of 1938, 1948 and 1968 therefore seem to us the outcome of our sorry geographical situation.

I will side-step the issue of whether another nation, one bolder and less calculating than our own, would have survived here in a more dignified manner than we have. Perhaps. But not necessarily so. The impression I get is that the younger generation in this country does not have much time for the nation's once traditional lamentations over our repeated failures to use our military capability. In the event, when it came to each of those three capitulations there were always those who defended their beliefs without waiting for orders from the general staff. What we really should be thinking about here, is the zealous collaboration which succeeded all those capitulations. This was particularly true after 1968, when we provided a demonstration of collaborationist zeal without parallel in Eastern Europe. And it is not just the politicians - of whom we expect such behaviour - who have been to blame. Why, for instance, did we so meekly conform to foreign notions about how a nation in Central Europe should live? Why, for instance, are there plenty of fairly well-educated people still prepared to lie about the past and the present, when the risk of speaking the truth is far less than after 1948, say, and now that no one can be excused on the

rounds of utopian fervour or plain ignorance? In my view this is the main obstacle preventing us asserting ourselves.

The only reason I mention it, though, is because as we approach the end of the century that saw the birth of our state, it is now immensely important for us to overcome our complex about our geographical situation. For one thing, Europe is changing, even here in the East. Fifty years on, there are budding hopes that we might once more decide our own future in co-operation with other nations rather than at their behest. After all, for many years now we have been asking ourselves incredulously how is it possible that the way we live - morally, politically, culturally, economically and otherwise - should remain unchanged right to the end of the century? Must we slide into the sort of economic and social decline that we see in Poland, for instance, before finding a sensible solution and winning back sovereignty over our own future?

I know that after all the disappointments of the past, there are plenty of people in our country who have lost all interest in anything that falls outside the scope of their private lives. Many of them are imbued with distrust, suspicion and apathy, while others have simply taken their leave of this unfriendly corner of Europe. However, the chance we have now differs from those earlier occasions because it cannot be terminated by force. In the fifties and sixties people of my own and older generations used frequently to talk about "the pendulum effect". Whenever the pendulum of persecution and idiocy swung to a more congenial position, we would have to take a deep breath and do something before the pendulum swung back again. What we are now witnessing on all sides, and particularly in the Soviet Union, is no pendulum. There is no way back: the pendulum has got stuck. And even those who got us into the present situation are aware of it too.

Reluctant though I am to do so, I cannot help using some lessons of the crisis development (to borrow a phrase) in support of this argument, albeit sketchily. From time immemorial, many self-sacrificing people with a social conscience and a hatred of poverty, shared the idea that human society deserved at last to be organised along rational lines accord-

ing to a scientific design, instead of caprice and the baser aspects of human nature. That design matured in the nineteenth century, when Marx provided a theoretical basis for it. According to time-honoured tradition, such schemes were known as "socialism" or "communism", although the designation has no real bearing, since the essence of the whole idea was never the final purpose of the design, but the design itself, as a panacea and saviour which would bring humankind's aimless wanderings to an end.

The project for a just and happy future was so alien to the way of life of those days that its authors could not conceive its realisation other than in terms of violent revolutionary change. The theoreticians dismissed this rather unpleasant aspect of their scheme by asserting that violence existed anyway and that this new violence would last only a short time, just long enough to open the gates to the realm of liberty.

However, when they tried to put the design into practice, first in Russia and then in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Cuba (as well as in Cambodia - yes, Cambodia, too!) that "temporary" violence tended to stick around, while the gates to the realm of liberty remained firmly shut. Violence in all forms, both brutal and slightly more civilised, started to operate according to its own rules and become institutionalised. Within that climate of violence, society restructured itself, a new class was created, social interests merged again, and so on. Forty years ago, our republic too was drawn into that design and put up as feeble a resistance then as before or since. The various factors that influenced the way things turned out have all been precisely documented. Seventy years after the first experiment, the record is there for all to see. As it stands it is depressing, but if one considers the human sacrifices which the project has demanded, the record is morally damning. That applies even more in our case, since we did not start off in poverty and destruction like some others. This only makes our location in Europe rankle with us all the more. (I will share the following disquieting thought with you parenthetically: What if we never had a Western Europe clearly visible across the fence? What if we never had the opportunity for comparison? After all, we are

better off than we were forty years ago. We have enough bread and meat, the cake-shops are full of goodies, there are more cars and fridges, and we have televisions that we never had before. But for the chance to compare ourselves with the West, wouldn't most people today still be giving thanks to Stalin for letting us into paradise? In the light of its implications, it isn't a pleasant thought.)

Awareness of the project's failure is now widespread and growing stronger as evidence floods in from every quarter. Only recently we have even heard our own politicians declare that the present state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. However here we come to the root of the issue's "Czechoslovak specific" as the papers here say - our national peculiarity. People feel that the programme of perestroika we are being offered by our politicians is not sincerely meant. The fact is that it sounds so unreal to hear talk of "reforms" and "changes" from the lips of those who have had the power to put such ideas into practice for years now, but instead have trampled them under foot.

Thinking about our own specific situation brings me to the issue of the ruling party, that we inevitably stumble against, however conciliatory we may seek to be. When the present ruling party came to power forty years ago, it was made up of a very different assortment of people than today. Many of its members had been drawn to it as a radical reaction to their wartime experience, many had a strong social conscience based on recollections of pre-war crises and unemployment. The membership included intellectuals who had committed themselves to a utopian vision, as well as many, many people who believed the Party's false promises. I knew those people well because I was later to be of their number. Over the next few years that fairly luxuriant community was systematically pruned back. The latest pruning of the Party after 1968 left only a stump. Any remaining commitment to the truth and the Party's early ambitions expired, along with all remaining personal endeavours by Party members to use power to do good. People have no illusions about the nature of the present ruling party. Forty years on, it is held together at the centre by those who enjoy being in power and the benefits that accrue from it. However that is a generalisation and

like all such generalisations it is merciless, such as the generalisation about class affiliation we all knew in the old days. For while it may be generally true, within the Party there are also people trying to run factories to the best of their ability in the given circumstances, build water-mains for their communities, run their co-operatives in such a way as to benefit their members, etc. None the less, the overwhelming majority of Party members nowadays are people who wanted to make it easier for their children to get an education or who sought personal promotion with their organisational or other skills, as well as the many who do not enjoy even the most paltry privileges. It is here that scope for national reconciliation is being created.

The resultant situation within the ruling party is not ideologically determined and socialism doesn't even come into it. Any group of people would fall prey to this degenerative disease if it held power for so long, particularly with such a narrow inner circle. Any group that lays claim to a monopoly of power in society inevitably decays.

Those are the specific features of our situation in Czechoslovakia, and they were underlined in red by the most recent of our capitulations. In other countries of eastern Europe it is conceivable that the doors to the future will be opened by a pro-reform section of the Communist Party. Here, though, any reform-minded Communists were eliminated in the seventies, and if there are still any of them secretly around in the Party, they are not letting on - more's the pity. In the Soviet Union, the reformers' achievements in glasnost are admirable.

That was, in brief, the historical case against the pendulum theory. The situation I have described offers much better prospects to the end of the century than one might imagine. We have no illusions left - but no ideology either. The only hope we have of avoiding the bitter end is to achieve the broadest national consensus about change and the transition to democratic decision-making, about pluralism without any ulterior motives, about the free choice of goals and representatives - with no one excluded a priori, and finally about a moral renewal, so that we may lose no time in extricating ourselves from the lies that have poisoned our nation's

soul. There can be no other legitimacy except that which derives from the freely declared will of the people.

I do not think that one may justifiably complain about the lack of a programme. Over the past decade, an alternative programme has been formulated for almost every area of national life. If one considers the documents published by Charter 77, they alone contain enough good ideas to last to the end of the century at least. Moreover one has to take into account what is happening elsewhere in Europe. Successful governments in decent and prospering democratic countries are all equally pragmatic. They all tend to balance various social interests on the basis of conciliation rather than conflict, and they are always either right or left of centre in the final analysis. Our people's mentality is no different from that of its nearest neighbours, and if they had had the opportunity to choose, they would have opted for that sort of solution at all crucial moments of our history. After all, the civilisation to which we belong because of our origins doesn't have much choice about where it goes from here. It cannot choose war as a means of solving international disputes or social conflict, because it would wipe itself out in the process. It has to achieve an equitable distribution both of work and of the wealth it has acquired. And lastly, it must restore the balance between its industrial activity and the natural environment which has been so ruthlessly exploited.

The situation in our country after seventy years of our state's existence does not give much cause for rejoicing. But however paradoxical it may sound, I happen to believe that out of all the East European countries ours is the best placed for achieving, by the end of the century, the freedom to determine its own future and not be a burden on Europe. This assertion flows from what I said earlier. Our nation will not be enticed by any half-baked or hypocritical solutions any more, nor will they lift a finger to assist them. In spite of all the failings and backwardness of its technology, our economy is in better shape than anywhere else in the East. We have no debts and someone can collect a state decoration for that achievement on their way out of office. Citizens' initiatives are now coming into existence as part of the normal course of things. Similarly the the natural authority of those people

with a greater sense of responsibility towards the nation's future than others is growing all the time. Awareness of human rights is becoming widespread. Fear is gradually abating - the fear of the merciless political regime which has paralysed us over the past fifty years. As a consequence of the changes in the Soviet Union the iron grip which we have been held until now is beginning to loosen.

Maybe by the end of the century it will turn out that this republic was founded in quite a favourable corner of the continent. It was just that it took an awful time before the advantages of its setting became evident. The inevitable must come. What amazes me is that there are people around who fail to see or sense it.

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Translated by A.G.Brain.

Speech Jacques Rupnik for Vienna Paralell Seminar
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"Le monde ne sera sauvé, s'il peut l'être, que par des insoumis. Sans eux c'en serait fait de notre civilisation, de notre culture, de ce que nous aimions et qui donnait à notre existence sur cette terre une justification secrète. Ils sont, ces insoumis, 'le sel de la terre' et les responsables de Dieu."
André Gide, Journal, 1939.

"It didn't require great character at all our refusal, disagreement and resistance we had a shred of necessary courage but fundamentally it was a matter of taste." Zbigniew Herbert.

Perhaps nowhere else in postwar East-Central Europe has the dilemma of the intellectuals - torn between power and society been more sharply focused than in Czechoslovakia. In 1948, the overwhelming majority of the Czech (and to some extent the Slovak) intellectuals supported the Communist takeover; they identified with the new party-state and its ideology, which in turn rewarded them with the illusion of power and the realities of privilege. In 1988, the situation is quite the opposite: in the face of a relentless "normalisation" process, the intellectuals defy political authority and assume the role of the "conscience of the nation". The missing link between these two contrasting situations is, of course, 1968: the triumph and the demise of the Czech intellectual; "enlightening" the ruler (the Party) in the Spring, expressing the resistance of a society in the long Winter which has not yet ended.

The odyssey of the Czech intellectuals thus appears as a perfect illustration of the European intellectual's love affair with Marxism and Communism. It is the story of the "God that failed", and the protagonists insist that it can only be properly understood in its historical context: the gradual erosion of messianic ideals by the praxis of social engineering, the story of change within intellectual and political generations (A.J.Liehm).

There is indeed a story to be told, but the 1968 version is too neat to be true; as always, it depends on who is telling the story. The last two decades brought a climate of introspection and critical reexamination of the role of the intellectuals. By revealing that there are different "stories", it challenged the hitherto prevailing linear interpretation of postwar Czech intellectual history and restored pluralism and differentiation within the intelligentsia.

I. The "Betrayal of the Clerks"

Czechoslovakia was the country where the Communists obtained the largest popular backing in Europe after the war: nearly 40

per cent in the free elections of 1946. They also enjoyed the broadest intellectual support. On the eve of the February 1948 takeover, the Communists published a brochure entitled "My Attitude Towards the Communist Party" (*Moj pomer ke KSČ*). The list of well-known writers and artists who gave their support reads like a "Who's Who" of the Czechoslovak intellectual elite of the time. In the preface, the Minister of Information (and senior Soviet intelligence officer), Václav Kopecký, explained this support by arguing that the Communist Party had taken over the role of the bourgeoisie as the only force capable of uniting the interest of a class and with that of the whole nation. Whether or not the impressive list of intellectuals who lent their names to the Party's campaign actually believed such rationalisations, it could be argued that the Czechoslovak Communists' success seemed to follow a Gramscian model: winning a "cultural hegemony" in society even before they actually held the complete monopoly on political power. The triumph and staying power of Czech Stalinism (and conversely, the weakness of resistance to it) can be accounted for not just by the terror that came after 1948, but above all by the fact that the Communists conquered more than state power - they took over the system of values, the symbolic structure of the meaning that individuals and society give to their actions. The emergence of the "organic intellectual", confusing truth with political expediency, was not, in Czechoslovakia, the result of terror but of "conviction". "The pressure of the state machine is nothing compared with the pressure of a convincing argument," wrote Czesław Miłosz. In *The Captive Mind*, he gave us memorable portraits of Polish intellectuals seduced by the "new faith" that came in from the East: former Catholic nationalists (Andrzejewski) and survivors of the death camps; prewar fellow travelers and postwar converts, sometimes returning from exile (Gałczyński, Słonimski). A mixture of fascination and a feeling of impotence, opportunism and the need to belong to an irresistible and irreversible force of History.

"Why did I become a Communist?" asks the main character in Milan Kundera's novel *The Joke*, and explains that it was the excitement of belonging to a movement which was at the "steering wheel of history". "At the time we could really decide the fate of the people" - they were not just "dizzy with power" but intoxicated at the prospect of mastering history as well. Marx, after all, declared that the task of the intellectuals was no longer to interpret the world but to change it. Thus understanding "utopia in power" refers to the ancient divide between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*.

But there is also, Miłosz suggested, an element of deceit, what he called "the art of the *ketman*", of outward conformism transposed from the Islamic to the Communist world. To the point

when it became unclear who was deceiving whom: to what extent was "the power" aware (and how much did it mind) being deceived by the writer? Or might not the conformist writer be in the end only deceiving himself?

In his short story "Edward and God", Kundera makes a similar point that the ultimate intention of the Communists is to defeat "truth" rather than simply to vanquish politically: "If I obstinately told a man the truth to his face, it would mean that I am taking him seriously. And to take something so unimportant seriously means to become less than serious oneself. I see, must lie, if I don't want to take madmen seriously and become one of them myself".

Beyond the paradoxes of fascination and deceit, a deeper explanation for the appeal of communism at the end of the war was the collapse of the old world and its values. Jan Patočka observed that Masarykian liberal rationalism was not enough in the age of Hitler and Stalin. There was widespread contempt in Central Europe for liberal values and politics, which accounts at least in part for the weak resistance to Communism. As John Dos Passos put it: to be a liberal or a social democrat at the end of the war was like drinking small beer.

A few specifically Czech traits may, however, facilitate comparisons. To trace the origins of the "intellectual engagé" in Czechoslovakia, one has to recall that, since the decimation of the Czech nobility in the 17th century, it was the intellectuals (writers, scholars, etc.) who took over as the elite of the nation. In the 19th century, before a bourgeoisie had developed, the intellectuals took a leading part in the "national revival", with its emphasis on language and history. Culture became a substitute for politics. Whereas in Poland and Hungary, intellectual and political elites were aristocrats, the Czech intellectuals were of plebeian origin. This also accounts for the differences in style of intellectual and political discourse: in contrast to the spirit of defiance and independence of the elites in the two neighbouring countries, the Czech intellectuals were "realists", proud of their close identification with the people. The power of the written word was somewhat overvalued while political power was often despised or underestimated. The "Dichter and Denker" were naturally held in high esteem. The newly created state in 1918 was a "Republic of the Professors". Masaryk was the President-philosopher and Benes, his successor, was an academic too. (Even in the 1980's, an opinion poll showed that university professors were still considered the top of the social status scale. This, I presume, would no longer be the case today). Every week, President Masaryk would attend a library salon held by the Capek brothers. Could one imagine a contemporary statesman doing the same?

Culture in Bohemia was, however, always more "progressive" than politics. When, in the 19th century, Czech political representation was still conservative, the intellectuals were liberal. When liberal politicians took over, the intellectuals were democrats.

After the First World War, as Czechoslovak political leadership became more democratic, the intellectuals were moved to the radical left.

This, of course, is an oversimplification, but it can be said that, the inter-war relationship between Czech intellectuals and politics resembled (and was very much influenced by) the French pattern. Indeed, the Czechoslovak and French Communist Parties were, after the advent of Nazism in Germany, the two largest CP's in democratic Europe. And because they operated in a democratic environment they were able to attract a substantial section of the intellectuals and at the same time build an extremely resilient Stalinist protection shield to insulate themselves from the contagion of the democratic environment. Gottwald was the Czech Maurice Thorez and even the split between Communists and surrealists had its Czech equivalents. Vitezslav Nezval was the Czech Aragon while Karel Teige, the theoretician of the artistic avantgarde, sided with Breton. Such controversies within the intellectual left were considered a normal part of intellectual life. It was only after the war that they became deadly serious. Harassed by the regime, Teige committed suicide in 1950. Závěš Kalandra, a talented Marxist philosopher and historian, was sentenced to death in the very first of the show trials of the Stalinist era. In Paris, Andre Breton wrote an open letter to the poet Paul Eluard (who knew Kalandra well), to intercede on behalf of the Czech writer. Eluard replied with a memorable excuse: "I am too busy defending the innocent who claim their innocence to deal with guilty people who admit their guilt." If Communists had seized power in France after war, it is a fair guess that their reign of terror would have been as murderous as it has been in Czechoslovakia.

Liberals, like Karel Capek, the country's leading writer of the inter-war generation, did try to argue against the radical drift of the intelligentsia, but with limited success. In 1924, he published a piece entitled: "Why am I not a Communist?". It argued against Communism's "pessimism and dismal hatred pumped artificially" into the working class. There is no proletarian culture, he declared, "whatever cultural values we have left reside in the middle class, or the so-called intellectual class. The proletariat can claim its share of this tradition and work within it, but if Communism just rushes on ahead and rejects everything it calls bourgeois culture, then goodbye, nothing will be left".

The liberal generation of the First Republic (Masaryk, Šalda, Čapek, etc.) disappeared on the eve of, or during the war. But it was Munich, the betrayal by the West, which played a decisive part in the shift eastwards (and to the left) of the new postwar generation. The collapse of Masaryk's Republic meant also the collapse of the values associated with it. The Communist Party seemed best equipped to capture the aspirations to a radical change, as Pavel Kohout recalled in a 1964 article: For my generation the arrival of Russian tanks was a real miracle...

The perspective of a socialist revolution seemed to be the only starting point... Our enemies wanted to restore capitalism. Most of all, I liked being the poet of the revolution. It was an era of great faith that around the corner was the time when the best ideals of humanity would be realised. I am not ashamed of that faith, whatever I called it, Stalin or anything else. The poet - unlike the judges - has the right to believe.

But Kohout, the believer, also wrote poetry celebrating the judges passing death sentences on those reluctant to march cheerfully towards the radiant future. His Diary of a Counter-Revolutionary is an honest account but not an explanation for what happened. In what is known as his "Testament", the poet Frantisek Halas, who died in October 1949, was among the first to analyse the mechanism of the cultural Gleichschaltung. His short essay (which still has not been translated in the West) remains the first serious attempt by a leading Czech intellectual to account for what Julien Benda called "the betrayal of the clerks". Going back to Plato and Marx (but without neglecting more mundane mechanisms of control and manipulation), he traced the origins of the intellectuals' support for "Utopia in power".

Professor Václav Černý (with Patočka possibly the most important, yet a marginal intellectual figure of the postwar period), gives an even less generous interpretation. In his Memoirs (1984), he paints a devastating picture of the Communist generation "class of 1948": zealots and opportunists, careerists quick to lead the purge and grab the vacant jobs while the going was good. This, he concludes, was a spineless and, on the whole, intellectually mediocre generation (the abundant quotations he gives make a painful if often amusing reading). True, there is bitterness, often unfairness in his uncompromising account; but only a scholar of his generation (born in 1905, like Sartre, whose existentialism was his philosophical inspiration, and Aron, with whom he shared the privilege of being for four decades the lonely "spectateur engagé" proved-right-in-the-end) could write so freely about the demise of the Czech intellectual.

II. 1956-68: Reason and Conscience

The XXth Congress brought the period of "gardening in a cemetery" (Salda) to an end and opened the period of soul-searching. Between 1956 and 1968, Czech and Slovak intellectuals denounced the crimes of the Stalinist era in the name of socialist values and ideals. After 1968, it was the other way round: they renounced socialist ideals in the name of the crimes committed after '48 and again after '68. This dialectic of "crimes and ideals" is by no means unique to the Stalinist period. French intellectuals initially denounced slavery in the name of the Enlightenment. Many of their 20th century successors denounced Western values in the name of the crimes or injustices attributed to colonialism.

The intellectual foundations of Czech "revisionism" (1956-68) were remarkably similar to those of Poland and Hungary: a critique of Stalinism in the name of the "Young Marx" and the "Old Engels", an increasingly elastic concept of socialist ideology. Above all it marked the assertion of the primacy of ethics over politics, of the Kantian categorical imperative over the Marxian laws of history and the principle that the end justifies the means. The best illustration of both aspects can be found in the writings of Karel Kosík, *The Dialectic of the Concrete* (1963) and his 1968 essay on "Reason and Conscience". Kosík's influence was, in this respect, comparable to that of Kolakowski in Poland and Lukacs in Hungary.

Czech revisionism had its hour of glory in 1968, though it had already experienced an abortive launch in 1956. At the Writers' Congress in April 1956, the poets Jaroslav Seifert and František Hrubín spoke in terms remarkably similar to those of Po Prostu in Warsaw or of the Petofi Circle in Budapest. "Let us hope", said Seifert, "that we can now be the conscience of the nation. Because, believe me, I think that we have failed in that task. During all these years we have neither been the conscience of the nation, nor even our own conscience."

The main difference, however, with the situation in Poland and Hungary was the isolation of the intellectuals from society. The Hungarian Revolution could easily be used by the apparatus, to put the lid tightly back on. This accounts for another feature of Czech "revisionism": because it was politically frustrated it was sublimated in cultural life which contributed to give it, in the 1960's, an exceptional richness and intensity. And because political de-Stalinisation was delayed, it eventually came with a vengeance. The Writers' Congress of June 1967 was the culmination of the intellectuals' conflict with the political leadership which foreshadowed the Prague Spring. It was primarily the work of the 1948 generation recovering from its Stalinist hangover, compensating --(sometimes overcompensating) for its past failures.

A "revolution within the revolution", 1968 marked the apotheosis of the political influence of the intellectuals acting as a bridge between the Party and the people, "enlightening" the ruler while expressing the democratic aspirations of society. No less importantly, they were trying to redefine their own role as intellectuals, which had been compromised by the experience of the 1950's. Hence the demonstratively heretical tone and substance of much of the 1968 soul-searching.

The tanks of August crushed the hopes of "socialism with a human face" and the intellectuals' attempt to salvage the ideals of their youth by correcting the abuses of Stalinism. Yet, paradoxically, many experienced the defeat as a liberation, a reconciliation with their nation. In his *Diary of a Counter-Revolutionary*, Pavel Kohout wrote: "For the first time, after twenty years, I have the sensation of belonging to the nation". Milan Kundera wrote that the tragic days of August were "the most

beautiful week in our lives". The novelist and former Charter 77 spokesperson Eva Kanturkova recently described it as the "expulsion from paradise", the prime virtue of which was that "the one time critical loyalists finally found themselves in the same position as the rest of the nation".

Defeat was given as evidence of "the grandeur of the Czechoslovak experiment". In a famous article published at the end of 1968, Kundera argued that "the significance of the Czechoslovak policy was too far-reaching not to encounter resistance. The conflict was more drastic than we expected and the test which the new policy underwent was a cruel one. But I refuse to call it a national catastrophe as does our somewhat tear-prone public. I dare to say, against the popular wisdom, that the significance of the Czechoslovak autumn is perhaps greater than that of the Czechoslovak Spring". In a similar vein, Eduard Goldstücker, the chairman of the Writers' Union, wrote an article entitled, "The power of the Weak".

One way of understanding this eulogising of weakness and the virtues of defeat at a time (end of 1968) when the roll-back of reformism was already under way (with the participation of the Dubček leadership), is to see that for the Communist intellectuals, August 1968 was a tragic, yet purifying, liberating experience. It proved a contrario that their intentions had been honourable since an invasion was needed to crush them. In the words of one samizdat author (Sládeček), "it relieved the Communist intellectuals of the feeling of responsibility", for the regime's past misdeeds. Nor were they to share the responsibility for the return to the ice age of neo-Stalinism. Under "normalisation" they shared (at last!) the fate of their nation.

This, of course, sheds a different light on the role of the Communist intellectuals in 1968: Was it for them, above all, an attempt to settle old scores with "the power" and their own past? Škvorecký's novel *Miraki* provides devastating (and very funny) portraits along these lines. Was the purpose of 1968 merely to correct 1948? As Sládeček put it: "Was improved socialism to belong to all, or were all, once again, to belong to socialism?" These are merely some of the questions raised in samizdat literature over the last decade and they are obviously loaded ones. Their purpose is not "objectivity" or fairness to the individuals involved, but a challenge to the interpretation of postwar Czechoslovak intellectual history as given by the Communist intellectuals themselves: from the innocence of youthful revolutionary idealism to the original sin of Stalinist terror, from the "purification" of 1968 to the purgatory of "normalisation". The Communist intellectuals had a tendency to use the collective "we", claiming always to speak for all intellectuals, often for the Party, sometimes for the nation. In fact they were mostly speaking for themselves, the (admittedly important) Communist generation, class of 1948.

This collective "we" has been challenged since 1968. When Karel Kosík published his famous essay "Our Present Crisis", another philosopher, Ivan Sviták, replied with a piece "Your

Present Crisis". Kundera's meditations on the "Czech fate" were answered in February 1969 by Václav Havel. To claim that, for the first time since the reformation, the Czechs found themselves at the centre of world history is an illusion smacking of "provincial messianism". The return of free speech and basic civil rights can hardly be presented as an earthshattering novelty, since for most people outside the Communist mentality this is merely the return to "normalcy", to something that had already existed in Czechoslovakia and that was still enjoyed in most civilised countries. In the end, the reform-minded Communist intellectuals presented as their greatest achievement what the rest of the society saw as the undoing of the nonsense they had contributed to some twenty years earlier.

In a 1968 interview Havel described his relationship with the "revisionist" intellectuals in 1968 as follows: "They represented something like a cultural establishment. For us younger non-communists there were many things in their endeavor that were close to us: they were naturally a preferable alternative to the sclerotic bureaucracy of Novotny and its prominent dogmatists; nevertheless they too had, from our point of view, their "limits" (today, of course, they mostly overcame them). We found in their activity a number of problematic elements: from illusionism, paying tribute to old ideological schemes, a constant obsession with tactics, a lack of thoroughness and even infantilism to unabashed identification with their "establishment" status which they considered as a matter of fact: The idea that someone else could speak on certain issues was for them inconceivable. They had a tendency to extend their personal experience to all. They always spoke of themselves as a generation rather than its Communist component".

The "normalisation", by giving control over official cultural life to a handful of discredited third rate hacks, also swept aside the reform-Communist "establishment". The independent counter-culture of the 1970's created a new "equality" of access to publishing. It also modified the hitherto prevailing terms of the debate.

Two themes are worth mentioning for the purpose of our analysis. 1. For the non-Communist intellectuals, 1968 was the first occasion to have their voices heard. For them 1968 was more than a belated effort from above to correct the "deformations" of socialism; it was above all a key moment in the revival of civil society and of truly free intellectual life (a point made in 1988 interviews with the author by V. Havel, J. Gruša, V. Belohradsky, J. Němec).

2. The "cultural Biafra", the tragedy of Czech culture did not start in 1968, but in 1948. The origins of independent cultural life and samizdat have to be traced to the Stalinist period. Suffice to read Jiří Kolář's diary now published under the title Eye witness ("Today, the greatest perversion, excentricity, absurdity, is to tell the truth and see the face of the world as it is" 1.1.1949), the writings of V. Effenberger and the surrealists, or Jindřich Chaloupecký's On the margins of

art (1988) to understand that parallel culture developed (admittedly on a small scale) the very day Communist intellectuals seized power over the realm of culture. Jan Vladislav, one of the founders of literary samizdat some forty years ago puts it as follows:

"In reality, the history of Czech- and in certain cases of Slovak- spiritual resistance goes back to the Communist takeover of 1948. At that period, a considerable number of intellectuals, university teachers, students and artists were excluded from the public activity as a result of harsh administrative measures. Many of them, including two score of the country's writers, were even arrested and jailed in the fifties, while a still greater number were deprived of any opportunity to work in their chosen disciplines. Numerous authors were expelled from the official writers' union and lost all chance of being published. Czechoslovak intellectuals virtually split into two camps at the time: on the one hand, there were those who accepted the cultural policies of the new regime -either from conviction or out of opportunism, and on the other, there were those who, in one way or another, realised the danger then facing the spiritual identity of every individual and of the national society as a whole, and sought to confront it by going on working to the dictates of their own conscience, though deprived of any prospects of public expression". (Kolár, Hrabal, Fatočka, Černý, etc.)

III. 1968-88: Intellectuals and anti-politics

After 1968 the intellectuals who had been so active during the Prague Spring also became the prime target of the repression that followed. For Czech intellectuals (the situation was markedly different in Slovakia), the post-'68 period could be described as a shift from power to society, from politics to anti-politics. By breaking with political power, the intellectual rediscovered his role as a moral counter-power. In a recent essay Jan Vladislav put it as follows:

"Even if they don't strive directly for power in the community, in a sense they have it regardless. It is power of a particular kind. In general it operates outside the established power structures, which is probably one of the main reasons why the powerful consider this kind of power so dangerous even though its resources consist exclusively of words and ideas".

This new role of the intellectual entailed two aspects: 1. the politics of counter-culture; 2. the ethics of spiritual resistance.

1. Over the last twenty years the Czech intellectuals have resumed their traditional role inherited from the 19th century. In the face of a massive onslaught on society by a totalitarian power, the sphere of culture became the ultimate rampart against "normalisation/sovietisation". On the one hand, the underground

of parallel culture was, for the intellectual, an emancipation from political and ideological constraints of the past; from censorship and self-censorship. On the other hand, it restored the role of culture as a substitute for politics. Hence another danger: should independent culture "serve" society the same way it served the party and its ideology in the past?

In "totalitarian conditions", says Havel, this can be a double-edged weapon: it gives to any intellectual activity a dimension it does not have in open societies - an "added radioactivity"- otherwise people would not be put in jail for their writings. But it also has its trappings any writer should be aware of those of a literature with a "message".

2. Ethical anti-politics. The emergence of the Charter 77 human rights movement has created a new situation for the Czech intellectual: after the emancipation from power came the defiance of power. Václav Černý saw in the Charter "a milestone in the cultural development of the nation, a moment in the history of Czech spirit, restoring the moral backbone, reviving the feeling for law, justice, human dignity, and the will for truth. It was a warning and a reminder power-holders, all of them everywhere..."

It was undoubtedly Jan Patočka, the philosopher, who became the *spritus movens* in the shift from politics to the ethics of resistance. In his famous piece of January 1977 entitled "What Charter 77, Is and What It Is Not", he stated: "No society, no matter how good its technological foundations, can function without a moral foundation, without conviction that has nothing to do with opportunism, circumstances and expected advantage. Morality, however, does not just allow society to function, but simply to allow human beings to be human. Man does not define morality according to the caprice of his needs, wishes, tendencies and cravings; it is morality that defines man (...) The aforementioned relationship between the realms of morality and state power indicate that Charter 77 is not a political act in the narrow sense, that it is not a matter of competing with or interfering in the sphere of any function of political power. Nor is Charter 77 an association or an organisation, but rather it is based on personal morality (...) it is aimed exclusively at cleansing and reinforcing the awareness that a higher authority does exist".

The regime's hysterical campaign against the Charter merely reinforced this notion that the challenge was primarily a moral rather than a political one. This accounted for the strength and the appeal of the intellectuals' ethics of resistance, but also for some of its limitations. As Petr Pithart observed, in the face of a power obsessed merely with self-preservation, the intellectual obtains almost automatically a monopoly on "truth". The danger would be to confine the intellectual to a virtuous ghetto existence.

The Catholic philosopher Václav Benda was the first to suggest the extension of ethical resistance to the creation of parallel structures; from the assertion of the responsibility of

each individual for the fate of society as a whole to the creation of a "parallel Polis". The thinking was rather similar to Michnik's "new evolutionism", but the self-organisation of civil society did not materialise in Czechoslovakia (except in the cultural sphere). The passivity of an atomised society, the absence of independent institutions such as the Polish Church, the intellectuals' preoccupation with a threatened European cultural identity (rather than with the mobilising powers of nationalism) all mark important differences between the Czech and Polish intellectuals' attempts to establish ties with society in the late 1970's and early 1980's. The Czech intellectual did not manage to reach out to society as did his Polish counterpart. By the same token he avoided also having to "compete" for moral authority with the Church or with Solidarity. In Prague, he preserved his "monopoly" on moral indignation.

This led him sometimes to rationalise his socially marginal yet spiritually central role. In the tacit "social contract" between Communist power and a consumer-oriented society, the intellectual is the only one for whom the terms of the contract remain fundamentally unacceptable (Liehm, 1973). One can find in Havel's writings a critique of the nature of power (influenced by Patočka and Bělohradský the impersonal rule of the mega-machines which escape human control) and a parallel critique of a society succumbing, taking part in the "totalitarian lie".

Respected, even admired by society for his courage to "live in truth" (which it does not have), feared by the powers-that-be for relentlessly exposing their illegitimacy, the Czech intellectual's cultural and ethical substitutes for politics place him in a difficult yet in many ways gratifying position; he holds the monopoly on the symbolic power of the written word and on moral defiance.

Virtuous, yet isolated, he sometimes wishes to be relieved from the burden of the nation's conscience and be "just a writer". Havel's play *Largo Desolato* is a moving depiction of the intellectual over-burdened with demands by society, tired of his role as the "professional supplier of hope". Yet he cannot escape the role because it is, after all, his destiny as an intellectual. Václav Havel, who, since the death of Jan Patočka, following eight hours of police interrogation, has become the pivotal figure of the Czech intellectuals' spiritual resistance, is best qualified to speak about "the tragedy of fate stemming from the responsibility; about the futility of all human endeavours to break out of the role that responsibility has imposed; about responsibility as destiny".

Jacques RUPNIK

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11 - 13 November 1988

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