

# Introductory Issue!

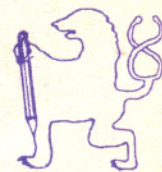
**Dear reader,**

Welcome to *The New Presence* magazine. *The New Presence* is a monthly magazine that features the best Czech and international writers analyzing events in the Czech Republic and Central Europe. The magazine is a direct translation of *Nová Přítomnost*, the Czech Republic's most distinguished magazine.

This month's issue features many interesting articles, including an article by President Václav Havel on what his speeches mean to him (and another on what they mean to us). We believe that you will enjoy *The New Presence*. Please use the subscription form on the reverse or inside the magazine to order your subscription today.

Sincerely,  
Martin Jan Stránský  
Publisher, *The New Presence*

# THE NEW Presence



THE PRAGUE JOURNAL OF CENTRAL EUROPEAN AND WORLD AFFAIRS

October 1996

## **What I think of my speeches**

Czech President

Václav Havel

## **What we think of his speeches**

Jan Sokol

## **Seven ways to improve NATO**

Stephen Heintz

## **Czech provincialism -**

### **Are we our own worst enemy?**

Jiří Pehe

## **Prague - back to the future**

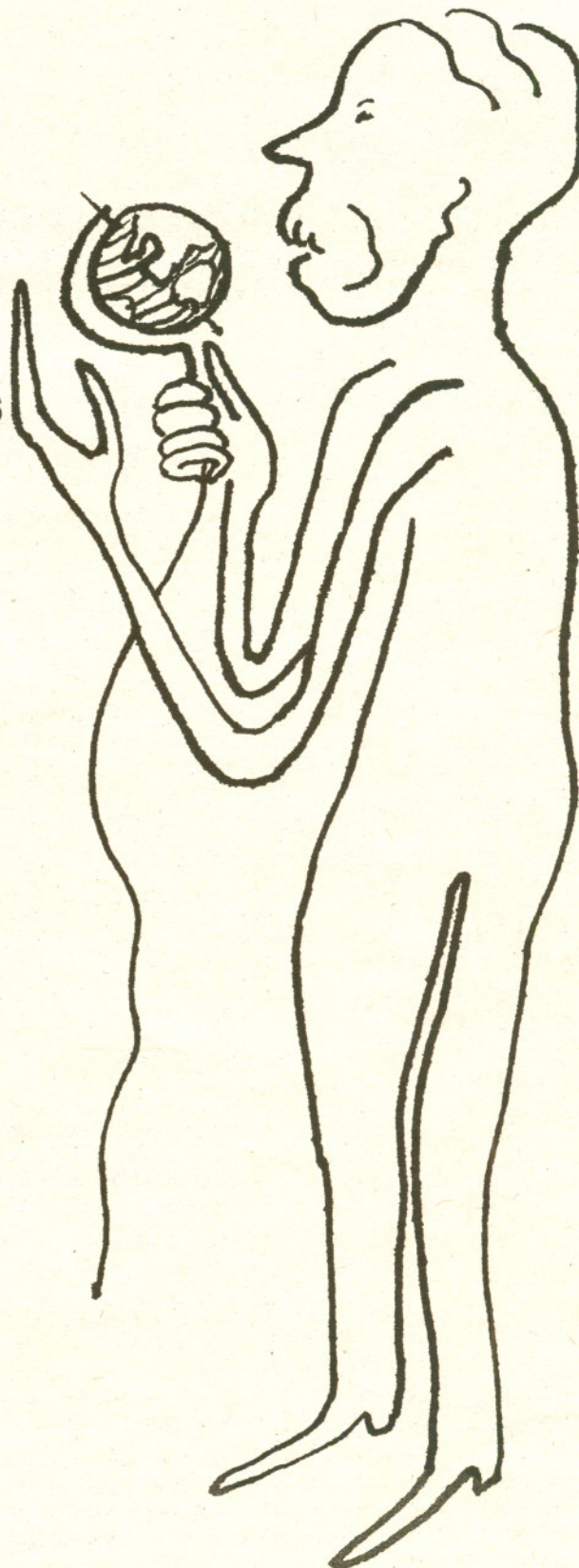
Jiří Musil

## **Ten questions for**

### **Ambassador Žantovský**

## **Europe by train**

Miroslav Holub



News roundup

CZECH NEWS

- Czech President Václav Havel arrived in Brazil to start a tour of South American states that will also see him visit Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay.
  - Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus visited Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore on a tour of East Asia.
  - Michael Jackson opened his world tour in Prague.
  - Czech Defense Minister Miloslav Vybourný announced his decision to support cutbacks in the military budget.
  - Czech President Václav Havel and German President Roman Herzog visited the first-ever joint Czech-German youth convention in the eastern Bohemian town of Polička.
  - Czech Health Minister Jan Stráský presented his health care reform plan to Prime Minister Václav Klaus, which is said to include stipulations that patients will have to pay for a greater percentage of their own care.
  - The Council of Europe announced that it will examine the case of Antonín Moravec, the former chairman of the defunct Kreditní a průmyslová banka. Czech police investigators have recommended that he be put on trial in connection with the collapse of his bank.
  - Police charge Jan Vadlejch, an adviser for Westinghouse, with slander in connection with his corruption accusation against a member of the board of the Czech electricity company ČEZ.
- Banking crisis**
- The Czech National Bank imposed forced administration on Agrobanka, the country's fifth biggest financial institution.
  - Police arrested three officials from Kreditní banka and one from Motoinvest on charges of embezzlement. A fifth suspect, Jan Dienstl of Motoinvest, was not taken into custody.
  - The general manager of Motoinvest, Pavel Tykač, says the chief secretary of an unnamed deputy for the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA) received five percent commissions on the loans given out by Kreditní banka. Anonymous sources claim the deputy was Prague Stock Exchange Chairman Tomáš Ježek.
  - The general manager of Motoinvest, Pavel Tykač, absconded from the country to an undisclosed destination, only to return within two days.

● Prime Minister Václav Klaus, after initially expressing reluctance to set up a parliamentary committee to investigate the Kreditní banka affair, agrees with Parliament Chairman Miloš Zeman, to set one up. Zeman, the opposition Czech Social Democratic Party leader, says that it is too early to call for a vote of no-confidence in the government over the issue but later says that Finance Minister Ivan Kočárník should resign over the affair.

REGIONAL NEWS

- The lower house of the Polish parliament, the Sejm, voted in favor of easing the country's restrictions on abortion. The amendment would allow a woman to have an abortion until the 12th week of pregnancy is she cannot afford to have a child.
- Polish Foreign Trade Minister Jacek Buchacz, a member of the Polish Peasant Party, was dismissed amid increased tensions within the country's governing coalition.
- The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development released a report on the Slovak economy, noting that many analysts were surprised at how quickly the country's economy has grown. Gross Domestic Product for 1995 was 7.4 percent.
- Romanian Prime Minister Nicolae Vacaroiu and his Hungarian counterpart, Gyula Horn, signed a basic bilateral treaty aimed at establishing good relations between the two countries.
- The prime ministers of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia met in the Slovak town of Jasna for a summit of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA).
- French President Jacques Chirac visited Poland and cited the year 2000 as a possible date for that country's entry into the European Union.
- Pope John Paul II visited Hungary for the second time and gave a mass to some 150,000 people in Győr. The first was in 1991.
- The Slovak Constitutional Court ruled that the Foreign Ministry violated Michal Kováč Jr.'s constitutional rights when it failed to ask the Austrian government to extradite him. Kováč Jr., the president's son, was kidnapped in Bratislava last year and brought to Austria.
- The Slovak parliament passed a law that forbids the playing of any foreign anthem in Slovakia unless a delegation from the given foreign country is in the country.

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Cover: Karel Nepraš - "Václav Havel speaking to the world"

Karel Nepraš was born in Prague. He is a professor of the Academy of Creative Arts and specializes in humoristic drawings. He has produced two books of drawings, *Pohřební písně* and *Puppen Busen*.

## INTRODUCTION FROM THE PUBLISHER

Dear reader,

In your hand, you now hold the first issue of *The New Presence* magazine. All magazines like to be able to state that they are unique for one reason or another, that they fill a particular niche. *The New Presence* is undoubtedly unique for two reasons: first, it represents the first-ever instance of a Czech monthly magazine (*Nová Přítomnost* – "the new presence") being translated into English, and second, it represents a continuation of a long-standing tradition that began in Czechoslovakia over 70 years ago.

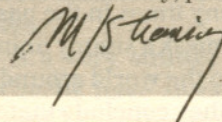
*Nová Přítomnost* is the rebirth of *Přítomnost* magazine, founded by Jaroslav Stránský in 1924 via a secret gift of two million crowns from Czechoslovakia's first president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. The purpose of the magazine was to create a truly independent platform for the discussion of the political and cultural issues of the day, thus contributing to the formation of the newly democratic state of Czechoslovakia. In a short time, the magazine established itself as the premier publication of the "First Republic" of Czechoslovakia, recruiting virtually every famous writer, editor, and commentator of the day to appear on its pages. The magazine played a vital role in the rapid emergence of this new small nation.

With the re-emergence of freedom in 1990, the new Czech Republic once again faces the challenge of forming a new future. In this atmosphere of rapid change and societal transformation, there is again a need for a truly open platform in which to promote ideas and exchange criticisms. *The New Presence* is that platform. In today's era of rapid globalization and integration of Central European nations into Europe, there is a strong need for regional voices to be heard at the international level. The Czech Republic today features some of the world's best known thinkers and politicians, whose views thus far have largely been confined to the Czech press. *The New Presence* now introduces them to a broader audience. We believe that their views are provocative, interesting, and intriguing. Along with Czechs, *The New Presence* also features pieces of interest by regional and international figures, all focusing on the Central European perspective.

Like its predecessor, *The New Presence* looks to the past to analyze the present in order to build the future. We hope that you will enjoy *The New Presence* magazine.

Sincerely,

Martin Jan Stránský, publisher



## Publisher's column

### Into the Future



*Not too long ago, I was watching an American film on Czech TV. The subject was racism and segregation in the deep South in the 1960s. In one scene, an innocent black was murdered by whites, which finally prompted the local blacks to react. Their protest was dignified, quiet, and moving: a thousand men, women, and children followed the coffin in silence, shoulder to shoulder. And every other one held an American flag in their hand.*

*We in the Czech Republic have yet to experience the sight of a minority group such as the Romanies, or any other protest group for that matter, holding a Czech flag in their hand while waging a protest. Why then, did the blacks carry the flag of a country in which the colour of their skin determined not just their living, working, and educational level but also their life and death? They did so because despite everything they were going through at the time they still wanted to be a part of a country that to them*

*represented a certain ideal.*

*Today, we're rebuilding our nation once more. The air is thick with the talk of transformation, be it economic, political, or social. There seems to be no end to the debate on the significance of economic principles applied not just to the economy but also to the environment, health care, restitution of Church property, and so on. The members of the newly strengthened opposition party are just settling into their chairs, while the new Senate has yet to install chairs for members to be elected. Nevertheless, it has been six years since freedom returned to our country. Much has changed, but much remains to be done. Where in all this, does our destiny lie? Where are we heading as a nation? What does it mean to be called a Czech?*

*The solution to these questions can be found in a word which for us is still obscure: patriotism. Patriotism (as opposed to nationalism) has to do not just with our identity as a nation, with our pride – in the most positive sense – but also with something that we must be able to find deep within our hearts and souls, namely, that to belong to this nation of ours is a good thing, that to help or hurt it is to help or hurt ourselves. We need to transform ourselves from multiple groups of individuals into a single group of collective individuals, one that is willing to step out into the light of the world as a nation, with all its strengths and weaknesses. We're not going to be able to reach this goal easily – we have to go after it. However, until we reach it, we shall remain little, and the flame of our freedom will be forever at risk of being put out by the winds of uncertainty.*

*No nation, including Czechoslovakia, fell out of the sky into its own identity as a state. The Czechoslovakian nation, formed in 1918 and led by President Masaryk, not only achieved true statehood but established itself as a model for democracy and culture – not just for Europe, but for the world. Today, it's our turn. It may be a bit alarming that we still don't have a monument of our first president in our capital city. However, it's far more alarming that we, and those in whom we have entrusted our future, still haven't begun to address the issue of our identity as a nation.*

*Let us not allow our efforts thus far to have been in vain. Our present will not only become our children's past, but their future as well. And if one day they decide to protest in public, they too will hold a flag, a Czech one. Not just because they'll want to belong, but because they'll feel it in their hearts as well.*

Martin Jan Stránský

## NEWS BYTES

**Much ado about nothing**

*Foreign Minister Josef Zieleniec caused a stir in the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) with a call for more open debate within the party in an August 5 interview published in Mladá fronta Dnes. In an implicit attack on Prime Minister Václav Klaus's tight grip on the party, Zieleniec said the ODS should speak to the public with more than one voice and that separate factions should be allowed to form within the party. The interview was generally interpreted as an attempt to improve the party's image after a disappointing performance in the June parliamentary election. Several prominent members of the party, including former ODS executive deputy chairman Miroslav Macek and Health Minister Jan Stráský, supported Zieleniec.*

*Zieleniec's call for more discussion within the ODS could not go unnoticed. Nor was it surprising that Macek supported it, since he had already backed similar attempts by Zieleniec in the past. The surprising thing was that nothing resulted from it. If this was supposed to be an attempt to create room for differing opinions within the ODS, then reaction to the interview seems to have shown that there aren't any.*

*There is perhaps another, less altruistic, explanation for Zieleniec's interview, namely that it was merely a relatively cheap grab for attention during the slow-news months of the summer, or an attempt to improve his own image. Aside from a few square centimeters of newspaper copy, this absorbingly fruitless discussion about discussion didn't catch on too well. It is becoming increasingly clear that the ODS is facing the problem of formulating a policy for the future. Its past successes, real or imagined, appear to have been used up. Since Prime Minister Václav Klaus is well known for his aversion to dealing with the minutiae of politics and the party has a poor track record in certain sectors such as health, education, and transport, the time has come for intellectuals who support the ODS to step forward. There were and are several illustrious personalities in the ODS. Will they be able to help the party now when it really needs them?*

Jan Sokol

# Are we our own worst Enemy? Czech Provincialism

Jiří Pehe

Outsiders view the Czech Republic as a liberal and democratic nation by nature. As a rule, these characteristics may, to a certain extent, be responsible for our relative successes in the political and economic transformation of our country. At the same time, these same observers note that the stubbornness, sobriety, and earthiness that have stood us in good stead many times in the past, may too often mask a simply uninspired attitude to the world around us. As a result, they conclude that we are the most provincial nation in Central and Eastern Europe.

Provincialism is generally defined as an attitude of focusing too intensely on one's own problems. It is a narrow intellectual focus on domestic issues, one that excludes or relativizes the potential interests of others; it represents a meanness, a narrow-mindedness, an ignorance of or disinterest in the broader perspective. Such characteristics profit when daily experiences are not placed into a broader, more universal, cultural and intellectual context.

The fact that the Czech Republic is seen as provincial may be understandable. After all, the Czech nation has spent centuries being ruled by foreign powers: first as a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, then as a protectorate of Nazi Germany, and finally as a peripheral possession of the Soviet empire. It was only natural then, that we learned to mind our own business, and shut ourselves into a Czech microworld, leaving cosmopolitan aspirations to more powerful nations, whose defeated or vic-

torious armies regularly swept across our land from West to East and East to West.

Under such conditions, a self-centered attitude was not merely a requirement of survival. It also represented a philosophical stance against overwhelmingly powerful forces whose ambitions often appeared to be foreign and even ridiculous in the eyes of the small Czech nation.

The collapse of Soviet-style communism has placed us in a new and unusual position. For the first time in a long while, Czechs can once again freely make decisions on their own fate, without the threatening geopolitical climate that dogged Czechoslovakia's interwar years of independence. The true decision-making center no longer lies in Vienna, Berlin, or Moscow, but in Prague. Furthermore, following the Holocaust, the postwar expulsion of Sudeten Germans, and the break-up of Czechoslovakia we are now almost completely alone in our state; we can no longer blame our problems on other ethnic or national groups living within our borders.

If we look at our behaviour since the fall of communism, first in a common state with the Slovaks, and then in an almost purely Czech state, it's hard not to notice that, while we quickly made use of our traditional characteristics, such as an enterprising nature, pragmatism, and adaptability, we are still vexed by our traditional provincialism. This, despite the fact that over the past six years a storm of multifarious cultural influences have swept across the Czech lands. Pro-

vincialism has become a certain way of perceiving the world, something that is, and will apparently remain for some time, an individual and internal problem of Czech society.

How does provincialism manifest itself in current Czech life? For one, it shows up in a sort of exaggerated pragmatism, a superpragmatism. This is reflected in an uninspired attitude toward the outside world, a mistrust of values that go beyond the framework of our day-to-day lives and the borders of our little Czech Republic. It also manifests itself in our taste for petty political disputes. Of course, this could also be a natural reaction to 40 years of living in a society suffocating under one ideology; to a certain extent, however, it is also a deeper, almost genetically encoded attitude.

### Czech media

In practice, provincialism manifests itself in an inability to seriously concern ourselves with events

that do not directly affect the daily life of Czech society. Almost all of us are absorbed by domestic politics. Indeed, one could say that Czech society is overpoliticized, that it is literally being devoured by itself and its own problems. As in the past, all of this occurs without heed to the Central European, European, or global context.

As an example of this trend, one need look no further than the Czech media. Questions of global significance often receive very little attention due to extensive coverage accorded to petty local affairs. International stories are often shunted off to the back pages of newspapers or to the end of television news broadcasts. In addition, international events are often covered as if they could never affect our little island of momentary stability, as if there is no connection between us and them.

This is a very strange attitude, since Czechs have so often been victimized by events that at first seemed to be playing themselves

(cont'd next page)

### The Castle according to Plečnik

*In 1920, President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk commissioned the Slovenian architect Josip Plečnik to upgrade the Prague Castle, which had fallen into disrepair after centuries of rule from Vienna. In his 15 years as castle architect, Plečnik showed that he was more than up to the task.*

*This summer, the castle hosted an unusual exhibition of Plečnik's various additions to the gardens, entrances, and courtyards of the complex—small but beautiful alterations to the castle that visitors normally walk past without noticing. The exhibition also featured blueprints of Plečnik's various realized and unrealized projects in the city of Prague, including the Church of Our Lady in Vinohrady. Cleverly set up as a treasure hunt, the exhibition allowed visitors to wander about the grounds in search of Plečnik's alterations to the castle.*

*Although Plečnik eventually had to leave Prague because of the criticism of sensitive Praguers who disagreed with many of his planned alterations at the castle, today it is evident that he made an unquestionable contribution to the beauty of the complex.*

Jan Sokol

Foto Jaromír Čejka



## NEWS BYTES

**Debatable Questions**

*Strictly speaking, television should be the perfect medium for political debates, although many people prefer radio. The problem is that debaters tend to show off in front of the camera, thereby corrupting the substance of the debate.*

*During the recent election campaign in the Czech Republic, politicians from different parties had several chances to confront each other on the burning issues of the day. These debates are important as they give the voter a chance to see what their politicians think about a given issue and to come to a greater understanding of that issue. More frequently, however, politicians seem to talk at length on subjects about which they know very little.*

*Political debates that involve knowledgeable and detached observers are generally the most interesting ones, since the audience is presented with a good analysis of the issues. They help their viewers and listeners to orient themselves on the political map, instead of leaving them with their own emotions, sympathies, antipathies, or lay opinions that are based on mere fragments of information.*

*In the Czech Republic, we foster a genre that is practically unheard of in Europe: regular debates involving politicians, who are the least qualified people for such a purpose. Their main efforts seem to be spent on winning over voters to their cause, influencing public opinion, defending their behaviour, their views, and their ideology, as well as to refuting or at least belittling their opponent. Instead of offering the voter with an informed view of public affairs, television (as well as radio) stoops to enlisting voters and forming political camps based on emotions, sympathies, and antipathies, rather than on knowledge and understanding. Moreover, any politician standing in front of a microphone or camera, especially in the company of other politicians, is obliged to either propagate or cover up; the politician is always either attracting or discouraging the audience. Objectivity or unbiased subjectivity are not his field.*

*What if at least one Czech television channel or one radio station stopped playing this game and created a new kind of debate - not a political debate but a debate about politics? It would be at least one small step toward the European standard and the average citizen could only gain from it because he or she would have to start thinking.*

A. J. Liehm

out somewhere beyond the country's immediate horizon. This does not mean that some domestic events do not deserve more attention in the local media than international events; people all over the world are primarily interested in their own backyard. The problem is not in this normal preference for domestic news, but rather in the fact that our unusual interest in local events often focuses on reports that are more suitable for the back pages, or for tabloids.

This characteristic is, to a certain extent, reflected in Czech foreign policy. In the immediate aftermath of the fall of communism, some Czech political figures attempted to enrich the Velvet Revolution with a grander vision, a greater clarity, and a wider context. However, the country's provincialism, overcautiousness, self-centered attitude, and its rejection of a wider moral context quickly pushed their attempts into the background.

**Václav Havel**

Perhaps the best way of gauging the provincialism of some of our politicians is to note their attitudes toward President Václav Havel. The repeated and often hateful attacks that have been launched against Havel are essentially attacks on a cosmopolitan view of the world. Havel has often been criticized, or even personally attacked, because he is a symbol of everything that is unacceptable to Czech provincialism - broader moral context, universal humanism, vision, scope, and a rejection of parochial politics. Havel is the antithesis of the Czech fascination with a partisan politics that is incapable of raising itself above narrow interests and personal ambitions.

There is no need to address the manner in which far-right extremists in the Republican Party or the unreformed Communists have expressed their hatred toward Havel; these parties and Havel are as different as fire and water. However, the strongest party on the Czech political spectrum - the Civic Dem-

ocratic Party - has often opposed Havel's views, and its members hesitated to vote for him in 1993.

An even subtler manifestation of the conflicts between Havel as a symbol of anti-provincialism and the short-sighted views of some government politicians can be found in foreign policy disputes. No one is infallible and Havel himself would probably formulate many of his earlier opinions a little differently today. Yet, when some politicians criticized Havel for his invitations to the Dalai Lama, Salman Rushdie, and Yasser Arafat, or for his opinions on possible solutions to the Bosnian conflict and the recognition of Taiwan, they were not just indicating that he had overstepped the constitutional boundaries of his role as president. Above all, their criticisms represented a provincial, overcautious view of our role in the world while criticizing a figure who is not afraid to call a spade a spade and who is able to see the Czech Republic in a broader, more philosophical, context.

**European integration**

It's true that the Czech people and their political representatives have been relatively successful in reconstructing the country's economic system. They have not shied away from opening up the Czech economy to the world. But this simply represents the most pragmatic and useful approach to the situation - something that, thanks to our traditions, we can very easily understand. Furthermore, economic integration has been a part of the Czech reality since the days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Despite these successes, Czech political provincialism is still strong. On the one hand, it may be true that the Czech Republic is purposefully heading toward its goal of integration with Europe through practical political steps. But on the other, when it comes to truly understanding what it means to be European and in opening up to European val-

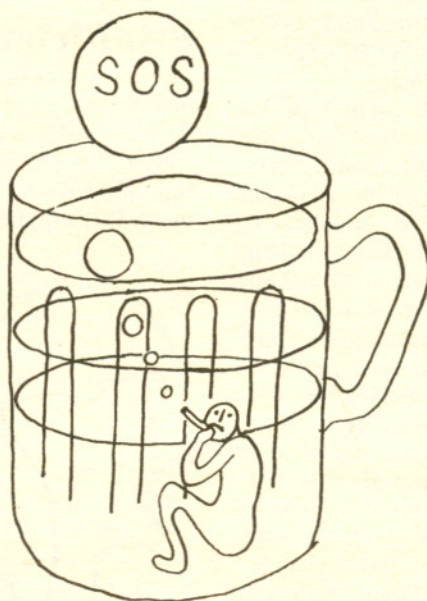
ues, Czech society thus far has only taken a few furtive peeks at the world beyond its western border. This is especially true of its politicians.

Today, we are witness to the political and public rebirth of the slogan: "Czech things are beautiful things." The prime minister claims that he is in favor of integration with Europe, but at the same time warns us that through integration we may lose our national identity. Closer cooperation with the other Central European postcommunist countries is rejected by arguments that, stripped of their diplomatic veneer, have one thing in common: the feeling that we Czechs are exceptional. At times this feeling is expressed with a dose of arrogance strong enough to be seen through any diplomatic cover. We are simply, as Bohumil Hrabal says, "the world champions of indoor tennis courts." Are we? Or is this form of arrogance really a manifestation of our insecurity, lack of scope, and inability to see things in their global context?

The country's potential integration into the European Union isn't viewed as a chance to take on the infamous EU bureaucracy and influence European affairs from within, but rather as a threat that the Czech lands will become a remote province of the EU, and therefore of Germany. Perhaps this fear of losing our identity and our current geopolitical status as a nonaligned nation is simply another manifestation of our provincialism, weakness, and insecurity. The Czech Republic, with its regional reputation for individualism, resembles a proud kid from a small village school who constantly shows off his report card full of As, but who at the same time isn't sure of himself because he knows that when he reaches that prestigious big town high school he may suddenly find himself at the back of the class.

The fear of a more decentralized government that some Czech politicians display, and their overcau-

tious attitude toward the concept of Euroregions is, in a certain sense, a manifestation of provincialism. It is as if Czech politicians are afraid that the Euroregions could contaminate their little Czech sandbox, despite the fact that from an objective standpoint, it is Western countries that should be afraid of the Czech sandbox. After all, we were the ones who lived in a sick society for 40 years, not them. Perhaps it is understandable that many Czech politicians and the public at large fear that the European influence



which would enter our country would in fact be mainly a German one. Our inability to see Germany as a modern democratic state and as the engine of Europe, which we are so eager to enter, is also a manifestation of a certain type of provincialism.

## The Sudeten Question

Perhaps the most penetrating example of this type of provincialism is specifically tied to Germans and Germany - the Sudeten German question. The main issue here isn't in finding a solution to this 50-year-old problem, but rather in the Czech attitude towards it. Despite the fact that the Sudeten German question is stuck like a boulder

under the imaginary carpet of Czech-German relations, Czech politicians seem incapable of sincerely addressing this problem. As long as we continue to shut our eyes to the world around us, that boulder will remain buried. Our provincial attitudes have taken to completely rejecting not only any attempts to seriously address this issue but, in many cases, even to recognize its existence. The general opinion is that this issue is historically closed. Whenever someone rejects this attitude, our reaction is to stick our heads in the sand. People seem to be waiting for the issue to resolve itself. In the best case scenario, they hope it will disappear with the help of some kind of political declaration. Perhaps the Poles - a nation that is often underestimated by Czech politicians and even the wider Czech public - could teach us something about relating to Germans. Even though their relations with Germany have been at least as traumatic and complicated as ours, they have been able to deal with their western neighbor in a satisfactory way. Could they be less weighed down by provincial attitudes than we are?

It is inevitable that the gradual process of forging links with western Europe and the country's willing or unwilling integration into the EU's economic and political structures will eventually do away with some of the afflictions associated with Czech provincialism. At the same time, it is also clear that this provincialism will survive in some form, just as similar attitudes have survived in Austria or Bavaria. This does not necessarily have to be a negative trend, as long as this provincialism manages to tie itself to the emerging concept of politics in a united Europe. However, as our politicians continue to assert that a return to Europe will be easy for us, our provincialism has become a sort of mental and political brake for further development. ■

Jiří Pehe is the director of analysis at the Open Media Research Institute in Prague.



# NATO Enlargement: *Necessary, but Insufficient*

Stephen Heintz

For nearly five years, enormous attention – perhaps too much – has been focused on the debate concerning NATO enlargement. To be sure, NATO enlargement is an important and complex issue requiring careful thought, skillful leadership, and deep practical reforms of military and political structures. The lengthy and, at times, contentious debate has brought into focus questions about NATO's historic mission and its future purpose. The debate has produced important changes in foreign policy, military doctrine, and NATO's institutional role, realized largely through NATO's Partnership for Peace Program and skillful diplomacy.

This December, it is expected that NATO will make key decisions regarding the first round of its enlargement, providing greater clarity about the process and schedule. In the first part of next year, NATO is likely to begin formal negotiations with countries identified as the first candidates for membership. This will be a momentous but nevertheless insufficient step – insufficient for the Czech Republic and other applicant states, and insufficient for European security in the post Cold War environment. While enlargement proceeds, greater attention needs to be focused on the larger, unresolved issues and the steps that are necessary to devise a durable Euro-Atlantic security system that will be just as successful in the first half of the next century as NATO has been in the latter half of this one.

## Why NATO enlargement is necessary

NATO enlargement is an important element in the larger process of European integration, a process of putting right so much that went wrong at the end of the Second World War. Enlarging NATO will strengthen security and build deeper practical ties between existing members and new arrivals. Above all, NATO membership will assure continued reform and modernization of the military in the new member states, and strengthen democratic civilian control and defense capability. Yet NATO is a political as well as a military organization, and membership will thus also strengthen the political relations that bind European countries together, while linking them directly to the United States as well.

NATO enlargement has tremendous symbolic power. Gaining membership will be a signal of achievement regarding the aspiration of the applicant states to be fully recognized as democratic societies with market economies, sharing European-American values and similar future ambitions. Enlargement thus acknowledges and reinforces the difficult and painful processes of economic and political reform still underway in the Czech Republic and other leading applicant states.

While it is important, on the one hand, to recognize the psychology influencing Russian thought and behaviour, on the other hand, one must not forget that there still remain vivid memories of 1938, 1948, 1956, 1968, and 1981, when the West stood by, as first Nazi and then Soviet power crushed the freedom of millions of European citizens.

## Why is NATO enlargement insufficient?

There are three primary reasons why simply admitting new members into the alliance is inadequate to meet the challenges of the post-Cold War era.

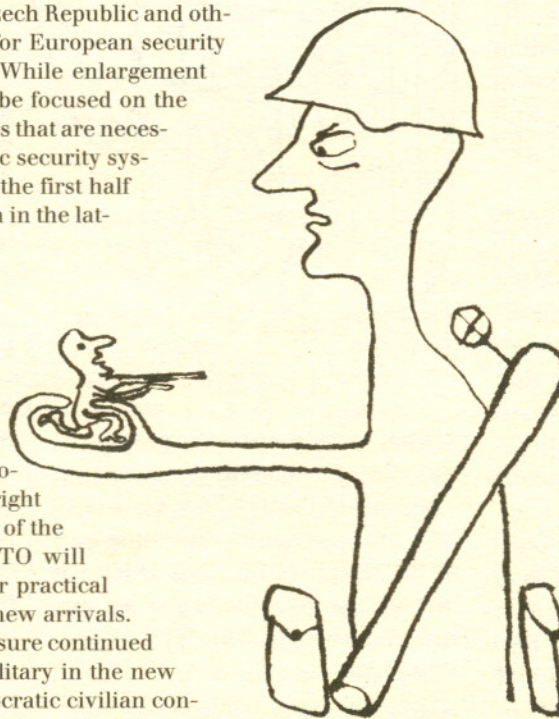
First, a review of the current security environment in Europe and an assessment of potential future threats suggests that NATO's traditional security mission is now out of date.

For the first time in NATO's history, its members today face no clear and present danger from an obvious enemy. Unlike the former Soviet Union, present Russian foreign policy and military doctrine renounce expansionist aims. Nuclear arsenals have been dramatically reduced on both sides of the former Cold War division. Russia is a full participant in the Partnership for Peace Program. Even if Russia's policies and doctrine were to change, its current economic condition and the state of its armed forces preclude military adventurism. Numerous reliable studies have concluded that even in a worst-case scenario, it would take Russia a decade or more to rebuild a credible military threat to Central and Eastern Europe. The challenge today is therefore not to contain an

avowedly aggressive state, but rather to encourage and support Russia's continued development as a peaceful and democratic one.

Second, significant threats to European security remain, along with future risks. These include regional conflicts that range from political disputes to armed aggression, illegal arms trading, drug trafficking, international organized crime, terrorism, widescale socio-economic dislocation and the potential for mass migration, ecological disaster, nuclear proliferation, and the development of missile capacity by rogue states. NATO was not designed to respond to this full array of threats, and is ill-equipped to do so.

Finally, NATO enlargement taken alone, could bring about



results that its advocates are seeking to avoid, namely creating a new division of Europe and isolating Russia. While NATO has no aggressive aims and poses no threat to Russia, it is understandable why many Russians are not yet able to see it in these same terms. Leading Russian moderates like Duma Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Vladimir Lukin remind us that for Russians, NATO is simply "a war machine." Consider the view from Moscow: during the 1980s, Gorbachev made enormous concessions to the West in negotiating a reduction of strategic weapons (the START I and II treaties), in return for which, most Russians believe, the Soviet Union received very little. After dominating them for forty years, the Soviet Union stood by as its former satellites in Central and Eastern Europe secured their independence. Two years later, the Soviet Union itself came to an end. Russia has lost its empire. The military has been humiliated by deep budget cuts, by the return of soldiers with no home, and by the continuing fiasco in Chechnya. The Warsaw Pact between the Soviet Union and its former satellites is gone, and yet NATO is expanding. Thus, Russia perceives itself, and is perceived by others, to be the loser of the Cold War. While we should feel no sympathy for the collapse of "The Evil Empire," we should seek to understand its domestic as well as international legacies in order to avoid future confrontation. While we must be prepared for the fact that events may not go well in Russia, we should make every effort to help them go right.

Most candid observers recognize (and even NATO officials privately agree) that the first round of NATO enlargement can not be large enough to include the three Baltic states or Romania or Bulgaria. Ukraine, a pivotal country in the geo-strategic landscape of Europe, is an active participant in the Partnership for Peace Program, but has thus far refrained from formal application for full NATO membership. NATO admission of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary – widely acknowledged as the most likely candidates for first round enlargement – highlights as many difficult questions concerning those not yet included, as it may answer for those in the first wave.

## Essential steps to build a durable security system for Europe

While enlargement may enhance the security of a few, the risk of heightening the insecurity of many will increase, unless attention is focused on additional steps to widen the zone of peace and stability. As the Czech Republic and other applicant states prepare for NATO membership, more active support for, and involvement by their leaders in the following areas is required:

**1- Pursue a broader vision of the future of Europe and trans-Atlantic relations.** Advocates of an enlarged NATO must emphasize both in words and deeds, that NATO in and of itself is not *the* security architecture for Europe in the 21st century, but rather a central component of an evolving multi-dimensional security system. In particular, NATO applicants (and current members), must contribute more meaningfully to the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) which is developing a comprehensive security model. Just as the CSCE (predecessor of the OSCE) brought the issue of human rights to the center of the security dialogue of the 1970s and 1980s, so could the OSCE focus on "human security" as a centerpiece of the security model for the next century. The concept of

human security should address the social and socio-economic threats to security that are of special concern in societies with nascent institutions, unsure values, and inadequate processes for civic dialogue and conflict resolution.

**2- Transform NATO, don't just enlarge it.** Enlargement is one element of the comprehensive process of NATO restructuring that is now underway. Candidate countries have much to contribute to this process, given their experience and perceptions of European security issues. While NATO cannot by itself take on responsibility for meeting the full array of security threats in today's Europe, it must adopt an updated mission that is relevant to current conditions.

President Vaclav Havel, a persistent advocate of NATO enlargement, insists that NATO must change even as it enlarges, "so it can deal with completely different tasks than it dealt with during the Cold War." NATO's transformation is of benefit to all of Europe, including Russia. For example, the IFOR mission in Bosnia is a crucial test of both NATO's peacekeeping abilities and the practicalities of NATO-Russian military cooperation. These issues have everything to do with NATO's future, and little to do with its past.

**3- Define the "special relationship" between NATO and Russia.** NATO must vigorously labor to put meaningful content into its "special relationship" with Russia, and also devise a similar approach for its future relations with Ukraine. Much effort has already been made, and though progress has been painfully slow, more effort is required. The relationship must include specific undertakings and assurances on the principles of European security and NATO's and Russia's behaviour toward each other; formal mechanisms for communications and consultations (to guarantee "no surprises"); specific areas of joint activity including peacekeeping, arms control, export, and counter proliferation control, and cooperation in the fight against terrorism and organized crime. Russia's participation in the Partnership for Peace Program must be exploited to the fullest. Ideally, while enlarging, NATO should enter into separate charters or compacts that specify the terms of its relationships with Russia and Ukraine.

**4- Refrain from stationing NATO foreign forces or nuclear weapons in the East.** As it enlarges, NATO should announce that, given the current security environment, it will not undertake any nuclear deployments or set up permanent multinational forces on the territory of the new member states. Building large new force headquarters or deploying nuclear weapons is expensive, unjustified, and unnecessary. At the same time, NATO must reserve the right to deploy its assets as it deems necessary, should future security conditions demonstrate a clear and present danger. In addition, NATO must continue appropriate training and exercise activities in order to remain prepared to respond to threats should they arise.

**5- Support efforts for sub-regional cooperation.** Greater effort is needed to develop and strengthen sub-regional security, in particular by promoting a multi-dimensional approach to the functioning and potential value of existing sub-regional groupings, such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Central European Initiative, and the Black Sea Zone for Economic Cooperation. These groupings can contribute to security because of the contacts, mutual understanding, and channels for consultation and for crisis prevention and management which they create. Most of them also include Russia and/or other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and thus these groups can help to keep bridges open during the delicate period of

*(cont'd next page)*

NATO enlargement.

**6- Promote CFE revision.** We should recognize Russia's legitimate concerns with the 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, which was negotiated under far different circumstances, before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Revisions of the treaty negotiated earlier this year that permit larger Russian forces along the country's southern border areas, are only a temporary and practical step to address the new security realities. Yet, it is no secret that many of Russia's closest neighbors were left unsatisfied. The Czech Republic, which has no intention of filling the armed forces quotas required under the official CFE treaty, can and should help NATO work out a more thorough revision of the treaty, one that would eliminate potentially destabilizing and unbalanced deployments of armed forces throughout the whole treaty area.

**7- Reconsider policies toward the CIS.** Many Europeans and Americans remain skeptical of the CIS. Some even suspect that the CIS represents a thinly veiled effort to recreate the Soviet Union or a new Russian Empire. On the other hand, close political cooperation among countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union can contribute to European stability in much the same way that regional and trans-frontier cooperation have in Western Europe throughout the

post-war period. The goal of wider European security is not well served by Western policies that neglect or distrust the CIS. Rather, we should make clear that we expect the CIS, like any other European organization, to develop in a transparent, truly voluntary, and democratic manner devoid of aggressive ambitions.

## Conclusion

Czech writer Ivan Klíma has written of 1989 as a historic opportunity, "a moment when people believed they had managed to disrupt the flow of history, and thus open up room for maneuver." The flow of history has indeed been profoundly and promisingly disrupted. Each step we take into the future must be taken with the knowledge of other steps that must follow. As we take steps to enlarge NATO, let us not constrict our room for further maneuver. Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, and others who have struggled for so long to win their freedom, can contribute much to the process of securing their freedom through a multi-dimensional Euro-Atlantic system, of which NATO is a part. ■

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## Russia Still Protests NATO Expansion

Interview with Andrei Kokoshin, *Moscow News*

Moscow News asked Russian First Deputy Defense Minister Andrei Kokoshin about how the problems surrounding NATO expansion look after Boris Yeltsin's reelection as president.

The president's disapproval of NATO expansion was not just an election campaign stance. In fact, it reflected a long-term policy of securing Russia's national interests. I am certain that no one needs the alliance's expansion – not us, not NATO members, not Eastern Europe. NATO expansion would be a continuation of old security strategies, a policy built on the idea of filling the vacuum created by the fall of three components of the Soviet empire – the Third World, the territory of the U.S.S.R. itself, and Eastern Europe. This policy is at variance with the new order of international relations. In this situation our opponents [in the West] are following a classical pattern, but they run the risk of receiving a classical response.

Wasn't it Churchill who once said that Russia is never as strong as she wants to seem but is never as weak as she does seem? Russia will find enough resources to respond to a military threat. It is harder for us to muster strength for an economic upsurge and the accumulation of national wealth. Nevertheless the Russian bear, rearing up on its hind legs, has been a familiar sight to the world for decades.

New geopolitical combinations are also possible. The Pacific rim region is far from happy with the idea of NATO's eastward expansion in Europe. Even in the United States and in Europe, where positive opinions about NATO's expansion dominate, there is no una-

nimity on this issue.

The results of the Russian presidential election and the new level of stability in Russia are influencing Western attitudes toward NATO expansion. We have seen clear signs of this. Judging from the information I have at hand, the mood has changed in the U.S. Congress as well. It seems to me that this issue will not play a significant role in the U.S. presidential campaign. Admittedly we are also at fault for the attitudes held in Central and Eastern Europe today. In 1992-1993 we did not pay enough attention to these countries. Since then, we have stepped up our diplomatic efforts in this area, but precious time has been lost. Also, cooperation in the field of military technology evolved too slowly, despite the fact that these countries still have many Russian-made weapons on their territory. We must be more sensitive to the security interests of these governments.

In the past we would talk about NATO expansion directly with the Americans or the Germans, ignoring the Eastern Europeans. But they clearly also want to be included in this discussion, and rightly so.

An active search is now underway for a new system of European security that would rule out NATO expansion and take into account the interests of the Central and Eastern European states. This search should concentrate on forging a system of projects in such areas as transportation, communications, energy, telecommunications – a system that would link all Europeans from Britain to the Urals. Such a fabric of links would naturally ensure security and stability on the continent, and the question of NATO expansion would not even arise. Furthermore, the creation of such a system would become a realistic alternative to the confrontation that could be sparked by NATO's eastward expansion.



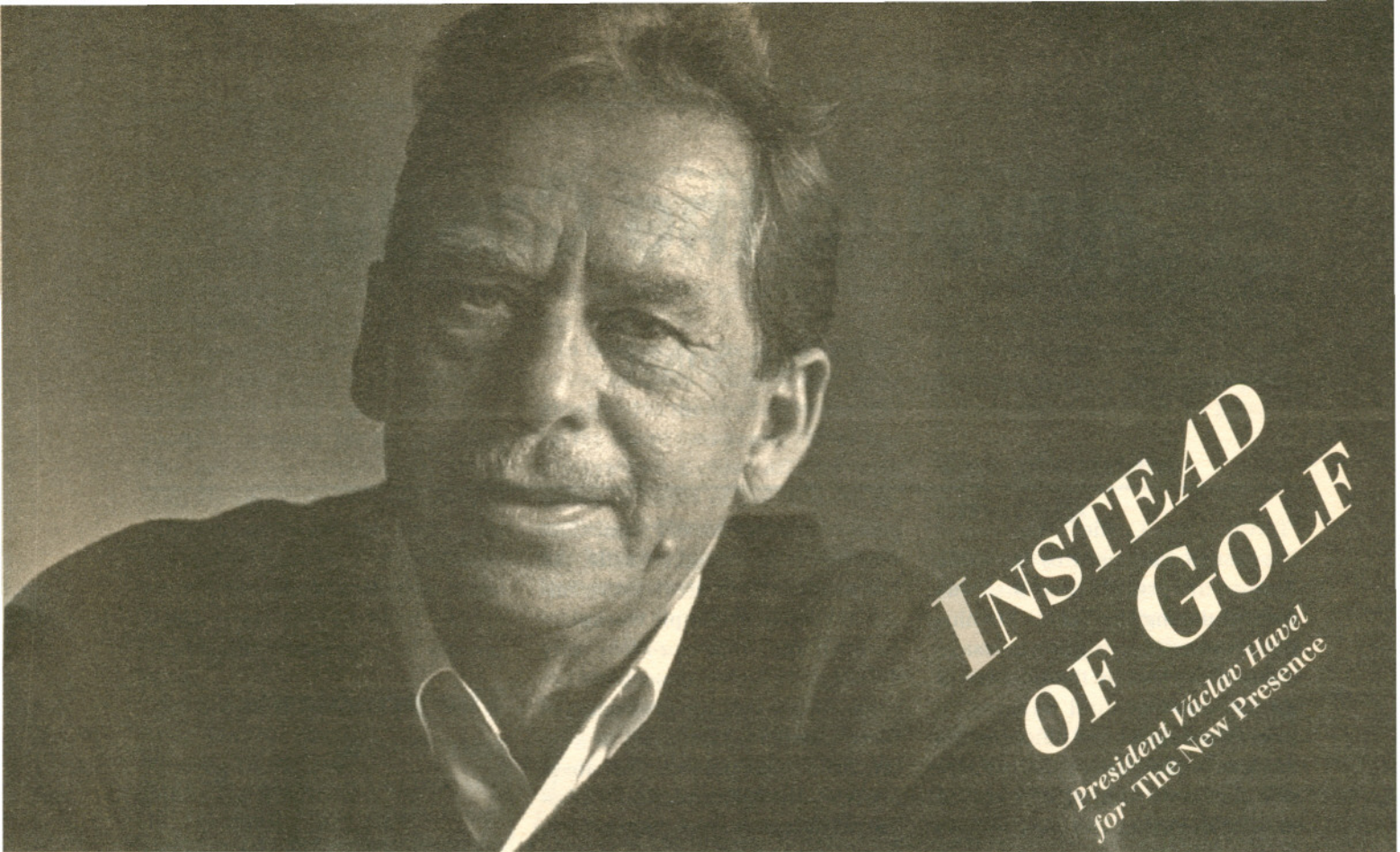


Foto Bohdan Holomíček

# INSTEAD OF GOLF

President Václav Havel  
for The New Presence

I treat my speeches - whether delivered at home or abroad - as literary works in their own right. I'm afraid I cannot think of them in any other way. That is why I compose them myself, refining and amending them as I go along. This task ranks among my most intense activities as president. It is probably a relic of my past as a writer, one which slightly complicates my work in the presidential office. I sometimes envy other presidents who get their speeches straight from their speech-writers or advisers, read them over, and are then able to play golf on weekends.

After reaching a certain point, I decided - half on my own and half compelled by my advisers - to deliver my international speeches, especially those destined for Anglo-Saxon audiences, not in Czech, but in English. Although English is not one of my strengths, I have become used to it, and I now read such speeches in that language. I always prepare for each reading in advance, as my speeches are often philosophical, and therefore contain complicated sentences along with words that are unknown and unpronounceable - for me at any rate. I insert all kinds of phonetic notes into the text, marking the phrasing as well, so that the sentence that I am reading does not mean the complete opposite of what

I want to say - something which can easily happen in English.

Each time I deliver a speech in English, I have enormous stage-fright, like a student before final exams. However, I must say that thus far - knock on wood - I've been surprisingly lucky and have managed to give my speeches with reasonable success. What I have found even more astonishing is that the audience usually understood me, generally comprehended what I intended to say, and even laughed in places where they were supposed to laugh. It always gives me great joy and satisfaction to experience this, but unfortunately, it still does not prevent the habitual stage-fright and nervousness from setting in at the next occasion.

One of my best experiences delivering a speech in English occurred on graduation day at Harvard where, in conjunction with my being presented with an honorary degree, I was due to deliver a rather demanding philosophical speech, lasting approximately 45 minutes. To my surprise, I found out that I would not be speaking in a dignified academic hall, but rather in front of 15,000 students in some sort of amphitheater. Furthermore, I was due to give my talk not in the morning in front of a fresh and attentive academic audi-

ence, as I had expected, but late in the afternoon after an all-day celebration on the university campus! (A Harvard University graduation ceremony certainly has all the features of a celebration; it is a happy and cheerful event for thousands of students.)

There were several speakers before me; I was one of the last to speak. Moreover, it was drizzling, and I was thinking to myself: "After such a huge event, no one can really be interested in listening to a foreigner speaking in complex philosophical sentences in broken English." I did not believe that things would go well at all. And so my stage-fright grew larger and larger, especially as there were a number of VIPs sitting in the auditorium, including American Vice President Al Gore. I suppose one could say that my stage-fright was understandably stronger than on any other occasion.

I now know that this was one of my most successful speeches ever. The immense crowd listened attentively and even applauded many times during the address. Their reactions were animated, they laughed frequently, and after it was over they congratulated me profusely. For me, it was such a deeply felt experience, that after it was over I was left thinking that perhaps I can speak English after all.

# Havel to the Castle!

Jan Sokol

"Havel to the Castle!" was one of the first slogans used by the Civic Forum, the organization that was formed during the Velvet Revolution. Posters carrying this message – now yellowed by the passage of time – can be found hanging in many workplaces and offices to this day. On some posters the inscription has been altered by hand to read: "Havel at the Castle," as though that amounts to some sort of finalization of events.

## The weight of tradition

For many of us, however, it seems that events are only just beginning, not ending – especially concerning Václav Havel himself. This article chronicles the events from his election in December 1989 to his current position as Czech president "at the Castle." In the process I hope to throw some light on what it really means to inhabit the presidential office at the Prague Castle and on the difficult process of an ordinary citizen's transformation into a head of state.

When Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk became the first Czechoslovak president in November 1918, he stepped almost unnoticed into the tradition of former Czech sovereigns, who had all ruled from Prague Castle. (A recently published book, *Czech Kings*, even has Masaryk on the cover.) This tradition of ancient Czech rulers doubtless had its influence on Masaryk, and he decided to govern from the castle.

Few royal residences can com-

pare to the splendor of Prague Castle. Next to the Prague Castle, the Louvre in Paris or the Hofburg Palace in Vienna are simple workplaces built for *nouveau-riche* city dwellers. Despite, or perhaps because of this fact, the presidents of those countries chose not to govern from such palaces. But absolutely no one in Prague would think the president should govern from some other place; imagine, for example, the Strakova academy, or, heaven forbid, the Česká spořitelna building! The public accepted Masaryk's decision that the presidential seat would be in the castle as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

The Czech president is not crowned or anointed, but his inauguration always includes some sort of ceremony in St. Vitus Cathedral, located within the castle compound. This would certainly be enough to make any French republican nervous, as the cathedral also houses the Czech crown jewels, which date from the mid-14th century. The crown jewels are bolted behind thick, iron doors which are secured with seven locks. Only three people have the keys – the Czech archbishop, the president, and the prime minister. To open the doors, all keys must be inserted and turned simultaneously. It is a typically Czech solution: the president is at the castle, but the crown itself is kept behind seven locks.

According to legend, anyone who enters the first-floor vault in the cathedral where the jewels are kept, puts the crown on his head, and claims to be king will not live

long. Nazi *Reichsprotektor* Reinhard Heydrich was the last person to actually place the Czech crown on his head in this way: a few months later he was assassinated.

## The presidents move out

The second president, Edvard Beneš (1936-1948), initiated the eventual movement of the presidential residence out of the castle grounds by building a villa in a nearby garden and using it as his presidential residence. Communist presidents from Klement Gottwald to Ludvík Svoboda lived in the Beneš villa, while the last communist president, Gustáv Husák, lived outside the castle grounds entirely. Václav Havel, too, followed the more modern practice. During the early years of his presidency, he preferred to remain in his own flat overlooking the Vltava River, satisfying himself with a perfect view of the castle he was supposed to be inhabiting. Later on, he purchased a spacious villa not too far from the castle and without the view.

## In the absurd dimension

The late professor of history, Ernest Gellner, pointed to some interesting consequences of the Czech concept of what a presidency should be. The president is above the fray of everyday politics. Masaryk and Havel, the first and latest Czech presidents, were each the most obvious candidate of their time, a person who remains above the fray of everyday politics, but retains a cer-

tain moral authority. The president is supposed to be as popular as some of the most popular kings in the past but yet have the statesman-like qualities of Sir Winston Churchill. As opposed to an aristocrat born with a silver spoon in his mouth, a candidate for Czech president is not really equipped or prepared in advance for the position. The grandeur of the post, along with the long corridors, endless red carpets, palace guards, flags, official ceremonies, diplomats, wreaths, and state duties of all kinds – all scare him in the beginning.

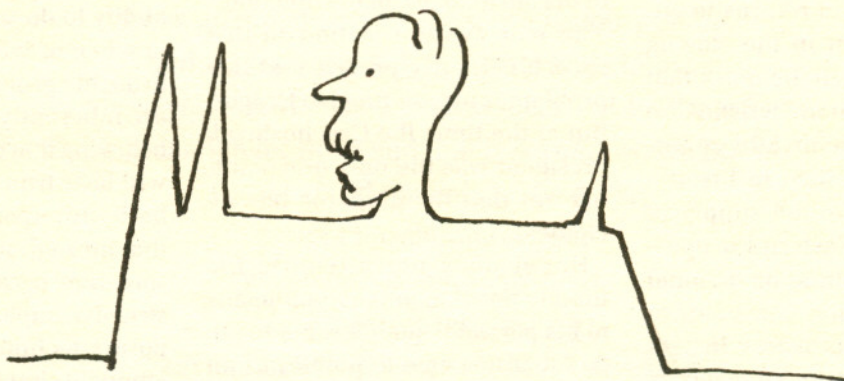
So how has Václav Havel performed thus far? Following his first days in office, some observers commented on the length of his pants during his first review of the castle guards, while others circulated a rumour that he zipped through the castle halls on a scooter, a rumour that was in fact

confirmed by the scooter's appearance at a recent exhibition of presidential automobiles.

The first step in the difficult transformation of citizen into president is documented in Havel's acceptance speech on being awarded an honorary doctorate from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in April 1990. Havel shows quite clearly that he does not feel very comfortable in his new role, referring to a "strong sense of general uselessness" and a "need to explain and defend." He feels himself to be in an "absurd dimension" in that "he does not belong in the role of president and can be ousted at any time – and rightly so." It is a feeling linked to the times, but nevertheless he feels that, as a result of it, he will perform better than he

might otherwise. In admitting this, Havel feels that he may have "revealed more than necessary," that he "may be reproached," but that he's "ready and probably deserving of it."

In this respect, he is not very far removed from Franz Kafka, who also lived in the shadow of the castle for about two years. Havel has always had a close affinity with Kafka in terms of the "absurd dimension." Nonetheless, there is a tiny but very important difference. In contrast with the Surveyor (the



main character in Kafka's *The Castle*), Havel already works in the castle!

Even at this point, Havel is not "just himself," but also a representative and a symbol of a nation – even if he does not want to be. As head of state, he represents the identity of the ordinary citizen in a far broader sense than he himself would wish and than might be apparent at first glance. Havel undoubtedly realized all of this very early on. His speech in Jerusalem, like his antics with the scooter, is probably an attempt at distancing himself from his role and looking at it from the outside.

The next step in his development is an alteration in his point of view from an independent observer's perspective to that of a person look-

ing down on the world from the castle heights. The world appears different from such a vantage point. The modern president, standing on one of the castle balconies, enjoys an unparalleled view, but also hears the distant sound of a thousand complaints, a thousand problems, a thousand cries for help.

## The president emerges

Although Havel must have been shocked by the initial exposure to the bureaucracy of the presidential office, his background as a playwright gave him a sharp eye for detail. His plays, philosophical in nature, represent the search for the reasons and trends underlying the everyday reality of life under communism. His initial observations in office therefore center on moral themes, specifically on lies, cheating, and falsehood.

In his speech at the 1990 World Summit for Children in New York, he talks about lies and their effects, noting that "so much evil has already been committed in the name of children." However, since he is no longer a critic or playwright, but a president, Havel feels compelled to offer at least a symbolic sign of a solution. That is why in the same speech he focuses on a concept of hope that is epitomised in the innocence of childhood – "children convicted their parents of lying" and therefore "awoke in their parents a better sense of self." He also appears to express frustration that there is no way to prevent murderers and dictators from publicly "stroking the heads of children."

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The August 1990 speech in Oslo deals with collective hatred. Hatred is seen here mainly as the active opposite of love, "the specific welling-up of the soul," which "hollow, empty, and indifferent" people are incapable of. In a somewhat Hegelian fashion, Havel seeks its root in the unsatisfied need for recognition or self-confirmation, in an "excessive feeling of injustice" or ingratitude. A "feeling of adequacy" is what is missing, a "sense of measure." From there he gets to the oppressive problem of collective hatred, dangerous mainly because it is a funnel that eventually sucks in everyone who is "predisposed to jealousy." As Havel returns to political equilibrium in the closing stages of his speech, he notes that these malignant characteristics are the true reasons behind the countless errors committed in history. There is an unlimited supply of these wrongs in Eastern Europe – virtually every ethnic or national group in the region can point to some injustice in its history. In light of what followed in Yugoslavia, Havel's speech on collective hatred was truly prophetic. However, the wars in Yugoslavia showed that hatred is not just related to this feeling of injustice and not being recognized, and that perhaps fear for one's own life sparks a more serious form of hatred.

## The intellectual and moralist

It is difficult to talk about morality in today's world, important though it may be. In the modern era, there is little support for people who attempt to discuss the moral sides of an issue. If a president residing in the castle lends his voice to such discussions, he invites rebuttal: what about you up there? what about your morality? Therefore to make a substantive comment on such issues, Havel must turn his own viewpoint inward, to take stock of the fact that he now works in a castle.

The 1991 Copenhagen speech, which was justifiably acclaimed, is devoted to this. Again it is Havel's attempt to view his own situation – this time quite clearly that of a man in a castle – from a certain distance. Without joking, he notes that "being in power means I am permanently suspicious of myself." Havel perceives the perks associated with political life as a temptation, another of his traditional themes. "A man who has forgotten how to drive a car, how to shop, how to make coffee or a phone call is not the same man who knows how to do these things throughout his life ... He is becoming a hostage of his position, of his advantages, of his function." The worldwide reaction to this speech certainly proved that this problem is not confined to Czechs. But at the time, the Czechoslovak president was the only one pointing out that the emperor has no clothes.

Havel does not attribute his unique position among politicians to his personal qualities, but to the fact that he came to politics as an outsider, as an intellectual. In his April 1992 address to a group of Japanese intellectuals in Tokyo, Havel reflects on whether the fall of communism had brought intellectuals to power by necessity. He examines the well-known and often-published objections to intellectuals assuming positions of power – their amateurism, hesitancy, incomprehensibility, inability to lead or administer – yet he says that intellectual politicians have certain advantages and that precedents of such leaders exist in history. Intellectuals could introduce "some kind of a new wind, a new spirit into politics, particularly because they better and more deeply understood the state of today's world. Contemporary civilization finds itself at a great crossroads" and politicians should therefore experience the "fate of the world" at a deeper level. But so far only scientists, poets, and philosophers – in short intellectuals – have some experience in this respect.

## Waiting for Godot

I would like to conclude this attempt to understand the genesis of Václav Havel as a president with a theme that represents another threshold in his evolution. It is the theme of waiting, time, and patience. In his October 1992 acceptance speech to the Academy of Humanity and Political Sciences in Paris, Havel distinguishes between different types of waiting by referring to *Waiting for Godot*. Such unfruitful waiting for a "vague rescue from the outside" does not represent hope, but an illusion, "a patch on the hole in the soul." Its complete opposite is therefore the ability to do something regardless of when or whether it will pay off, to do things one is firmly convinced are inherently good – all the while believing that perhaps one day they will bear fruit. Just when that will be is unimportant. Havel admits that throughout his presidency, he somehow became prone to the "destructive impatience of the contemporary technocratic civilization ... I thought simply that time belonged to me. It was a huge mistake indeed. The world, existence, and history all have their own time, into which we can creatively enter, but which none of us has totally in hand."

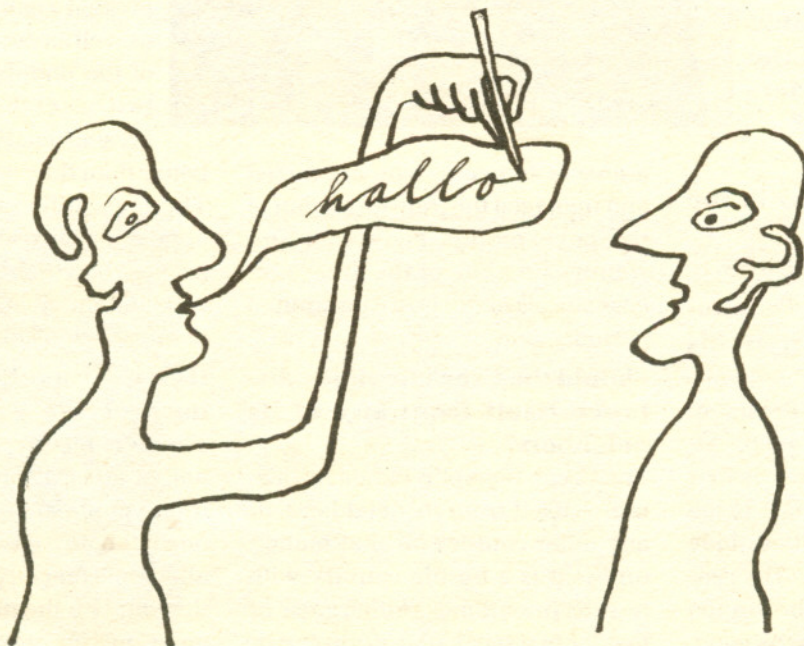
Probably everyone has experienced the feeling that things cannot be hurried along – especially in politics. Another important step in the genesis of a president is his recognition that a good politician rarely gets a chance to see the material results of his work. In this sense, I would like to comment on an important theme that is missing in Havel's reflections. Between the extremes of impatiently trying to speed up history or stoically waiting for it to run its own course, European tradition offers a third possibility, namely a trust in the democratic institutions that are the pillars of a free society. ■

Jan Sokol is a professor of philosophy at Charles University in Prague, and is on the editorial board of *The New Presence*.

Vladimír Holáň  
1905-1980  
Human Voice

Stone and star do not force their music on us,  
flowers are silent, things hold something back,  
because of us, animals deny  
their own harmony of innocence and stealth,  
the wind has always its chastity if simple gesture  
and what song is only the mute birds know,  
to whom you tossed an unthreshed sheaf on Christmas Eve.  
To be is enough for them and that is beyond words. But we,  
we are afraid not only in the dark,  
even in the abundant light  
we do not see our neighbour  
and desperate for exorcism  
cry out in terror: "Are you there? Speak!"

Translated by Ian a Jarmila Milner





# Ten Questions: Czech Ambassador To The United States, Michal Žantovský

## Is there tension between Czechs living abroad and those at home?

I am not aware of any particular tension. The relationship between Czechs living abroad and those at home is certainly better today than it was four years ago when I first assumed my position. The relationship itself is a complex product of two centuries of historical, economic, and social development on both sides of the ocean. This is the legacy we all have to cope with. In my experience though, most Czechs in the United States, both as individuals and groups, are very understanding of the needs and goals of the Czech nation. There may be individuals or small groups who do not feel the same way, but my experience is overwhelmingly positive.

## What single thing would best help Czechs in the United States to understand Czechs at home?

Come over.

## What about for Czechs in the Czech Republic?

Welcome those who come over.

## How does Václav Havel's reputation abroad compare to his reputation at home?

In the Czech Republic, President Havel's reputation is very good. Almost seven years after he was first elected, his approval rating is in the high 70s, something quite unique among presidents today. His reputation abroad, and in the United States in particular, is just as good, if not better. He is generally per-

ceived as one of the great leaders of this period, and one of the great thinkers, humanists, and human rights advocates of this century.

## How do Václav Havel and Václav Klaus compare?

The prime minister also has a large group of admirers in the United States. He is admired primarily as



a doer – someone who organized and managed the transformation of the government, economy, and country into one of the great success stories of the post-communist period.

## Should the Czech Republic distance itself from any of its neighbors?

The Czech Republic should not distance itself from its neighbors, or any other country for that matter, unless it is a hostile country with hostile intentions. Adherence or loyalty to a particular grouping or region defined geographically is,

however, a different matter. In my mind, geography alone does not rank too high as a value. Geography is important, but it is not destiny. Personally, I put more emphasis on the affinity or loyalty of people and countries who share similar values and principles, as well as some of the same goals. The sense of belonging to a particular cultural or political sphere is as much about self-identification as it is about geography.

## What are the effects of the recent election in the Czech Republic?

For many outside observers, the results were mildly surprising. Many predicted that the present coalition would win in a landslide, which did not quite happen. At the same time, after the initial excitement subsided and calculations and analyses were made, it became clear that the present coalition actually did as well as the last time in terms of the popular vote, and that two out of three parties in the present coalition did slightly better than they did four years ago. The main difference is, that the opposition now consists of fewer parties, of which the Social Democrats did much better than they did in the previous election.

## How will this effect the governing process?

The new picture that many see is one of a certain balance of forces in the political landscape. On the one hand, there is a very viable coalition of center-right political parties, and on the other, one sees an emerging strong center-left opposition. The real difficulty will be

## This month's interview

in balancing a parliamentary system in which there is no clear majority. This may make the business of governing a bit more difficult for the coalition.

Despite all these new developments, people at home as well as in the US realize that there has been no fundamental change in the overall course of the Czech government or in the overall course of the Czech government or political process.

#### What are your best and worst moments as Ambassador?

There have been too many memorable moments for me over the past

four years to recount here. Suffice it to say, that the good moments outnumbered the bad.

#### Is the transformation of the Czech Republic complete?

Only in the very limited, technical sense of laying down the foundations for an open political, economic, and social system, and not quite yet in the broader sense of overcoming the legacy of the past. The problems of centralization and bureaucracy, of a hypertrophied welfare state living off hypertrophied taxes, of corruption, can all be traced in their origins to the communist period in our coun-

try. At the same time, these problems are common to many European societies that have not experienced communist rule. This leads me to think that in the still larger sense, transformation is never a finished job. There will always be attempts to limit, suppress, subvert, or misuse liberty, either in the name of a supposedly higher ideal, or for purely selfish reasons of greed or lust for power. An open society is a living transformation, always a work in progress.

Interviewer: Martin Jan Stránský

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#### East Central European politics today



Keith Crawford

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## The Czech press

**Where is privatization now?**Jana Havligerová, *Mladá fronta Dnes*

The National Property Fund's (FNM) days as an institution are numbered. However, it wouldn't hurt to give this key actor on the privatization stage a new legislative script. Even though the FNM was always meant to play an entrepreneurial role in the economy that its current administration is so bureaucratized that it is bound to start working subconsciously against the privatization process itself.

The FNM's officials are in a very privileged position. They are meant to be mere representatives of the state's authority who sit on the boards of companies in which the state has a direct stake. However, as the board members of various lucrative companies they also receive fat bonuses for their work that go far beyond the benefits of other state employees.

We are definitely not talking about negligible sums of money here. Last year, an FNM representative who worked at *Investiční a poštovní banka* or SPT Telecom could have made in theory up to half a million crowns in bonuses. It would therefore be hard to believe that such a person would have an interest in the quick privatization of his company—a goal that would also assist in the quick dissolution of the FNM itself.

The FNM defends the special benefits accrued by its



representatives by saying that it needs to offer competitive rewards to attract top managers, lawyers, and economists, who would otherwise work for more money in the private sector. And, the FNM's defenders ask, where would privatization be then?

The problem is, where is privatization now? Exactly in the same position as it was at the beginning of the privatization process—and that goes for banks as well as many other, less strategically important firms. There is little reason for this state of affairs to persist since many of the companies the state still holds have not been dogged by controversy and the public at large generally agrees that they should be privatized. Yet the state continues to hold on to its shares in these companies. Why? Are the fund's managers holding up the privatization of these companies in order to hold on to their privileged positions for as long as possible?

The fund has its own statute and thus the benefits accrued by its officials are perfectly legal. However, it would be a lot more beneficial for the privatization process if the law were changed.

**Potsdam**Jiří Loewy, *Reflex***REFLEX**

In the last few months, much has been said about the Potsdam agreements and the Beneš decrees. Many people have a sketchy understanding of these historical issues.

In early June 1945, Sir Winston Churchill, in an apparent premonition of problems to come, told Soviet leader Josef Stalin that the extension of Russian influence up to the Lübeck-Eisenach-Terst line, and even further up to Albania, would require an intensive exchange of opinions.

**The Big Three**

The conference of the three victorious powers held in Potsdam opened on 17 July 1945. U.S. President Harry Truman, sworn into office only four months earlier, chaired the opening

day of the conference, which from the start was marked by disagreement. The first dispute centered on the Soviet Union's unilateral decision to place large portions of German territory occupied by the Red Army under Polish administration. Pointing to the unilateral influence of the West over Italy and Greece, Stalin rejected British or American interference in the affairs of Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, or Romania.

Stalin also noted that most of the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia were already being expelled. "The Czechs are giving them two hours to pack up their bags, and then they kick them out." When it was suggested that Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš be invited to the conference so that he could personally inform the Big Three on the situation in his country, Stalin replied, That would be like handing out the mustard after the meal is done. Beneš was not invited.

The conference dragged on, and in the middle of it, Churchill was replaced by newly elected Prime Minister Clement Attlee. Several major crises marked the conference, and more than once it seemed like the

participants would part company in bitterness with few issues resolved. Truman, fortified by news of the first successful test of the atomic bomb in Los Alamos on 16 July, refused to make any further concessions to Stalin. He firmly rejected Stalin's demands for control of Libya, for full access to the Mediterranean Sea, and for international administration over certain parts of western Germany. However, since he felt that America would not be able to defeat Japan without Soviet aid, he hinted at concessions in other areas.

Finally, a compromise suggested by U.S. State Secretary James F. Byrnes was agreed to: Stalin would give up some of his global strategic demands, while Truman and Attlee would agree to turn a blind eye to the Soviet Union's moves to have its own way in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe. The so-called Potsdam communiqué confirms these compromises on August 2 1945.

The final reports of the conference were made up of nonbinding statements of intent, ambiguous recommendations, opinions, agreements, and several joint declarations. It is not

## The Czech press

**Engineers**Radek Adamec, *Lidové noviny*

Just days before the 28th anniversary of the August 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Office for Investigation of Communist Crimes announced that it had started criminal proceedings against 19 former members of the former Communist State Security Service (StB). The 19 defendants are accused of applying psychological and physical pressure on "bothersome" citizens, especially the signatories of Charter 77. The StB campaign, code-named ASANACE, was aimed at forcing such dissidents to leave the country. In a front-page editorial published in *Lidové noviny*, Radek Adamec looks at the issue.

Only one year ago, the Office for the Investigation of Communist Crimes chose to unveil their latest case some days before the symbolic date of 21 August. This year the office chose the same symbolic month to stage another offensive against the forgotten crimes of communism.

Nineteen top officials of the infamous secret police will have to answer, in a court of law, to the fact that they systematically forced people to leave their own country. For many years, the political climate required them to perfect the methods of controlling life and freedom down to the last detail.

For many years, they were the real and unyielding engineers of people's fates. Now someone else will decide on their fate. Most of them are retired and want to enjoy of

**LIDOVÉ NOVINY**

their free time. However, instead of gardening and fishing they're facing a different future. Of course, they'll tell the judge that as loyal office workers they served their superiors, especially in the world of impersonal orders and official duties. Today they would probably gladly trade a view from behind bars for the chance to voluntarily leave their country, an option they used to offer other people. One almost feels sorry for them. The Communist state was not a legal state, as some people claim. It was symbolized by its brutal disregard for human rights and freedoms. Whoever once decided to take on an unlawful task cannot simply disown their responsibility for it today.

The Office for Investigating Communist Crimes doesn't have an easy mission. Its employees, headed by former dissident Vaclav Benda, have been criticized as unfit for the job. Large portions of evidence were forgotten long ago. Many pieces have been destroyed. The case of a hospital in Semile which recently destroyed documents pertaining to the persecution of monks under the previous regime is an example.

The road to justice is long, and at its end lies a court of law. Only the courts can address the professionalism of the Office for Investigating Communist Crimes and our longing for coming to terms with the past.

a formal agreement of the kind that is ceremonially signed and then ratified, nor an administrative agreement that heads of state conclude amongst themselves but that are no less binding for that. It does not even bear the signatures of the three leaders. On a piece of paper that is later stapled to the document, the three most powerful men in the world informally sign their names: Stalin, Truman, and Attlee, in that order.

**German expulsion**

The concluding statement of the conference mainly deals with the political and economic administration of the defeated and devastated Germany. Article XIII of the agreements, concerning German citizens in other countries, approves the eviction of Germans from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, with the requirement that it be carried out in an orderly and humane fashion. It is left to the Allied control commission to set the schedule and extent of these evictions taking the current situation in Germany into consideration. The governments in Warsaw, Prague, and Budapest are asked to temporarily

suspend any further evictions of their German citizens. As a result, the expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia was in fact suspended for almost half a year.

Contrary to popular belief, the Potsdam conference did not expressly agree to the plans for the expulsion of the Germans, or even order them to be carried out. The original documents from Potsdam merely show that the Western powers "recognized" that the ongoing transfer of these residents could not be completely halted. They decided to at least render the transfer into as relatively orderly and "humane" a process as possible.

The British conservative press, led by the Times, continually stated that they could not see why the Soviet Union was supporting the mass resettlement of people in the region. The actual reason was to ensure that Central and Eastern Europe would be dependent on the Soviet Union, which would protect the region from German *revanche*. Another reason for sending more than 13 million impoverished and homeless people to live in a completely wretched coun-

try whose infrastructure had been annihilated by the war was to create massive sociopolitical problems in western Germany, and so destabilize Western Europe in general.

**Western leaders criticized**

Upon their return from Potsdam, the inexperienced Truman and Attlee were severely criticized by their countries' respective legislatures and media. They were reproached for the fact that they had left the nations of Central and Eastern Europe at the Soviet leader's mercy. Churchill declared in the British House of Commons and that he never would have signed the Potsdam agreements.

In his memoirs, Truman later wrote that the Western powers had been presented with a *fait accompli*. He agonized over the fact that the pressure of existing circumstances had forced the West to concede to almost all Soviet demands. In 1949, Congress set up a special committee to investigate the Potsdam agreements. In its final report, the committee rejected, among other things, any U.S. responsibility for the expulsion of the Germans. ■

## What About that Minority Question?

By Ján Mlynárik, *Lidové noviny*

Imagine a highly placed European Union official asking his Czech counterpart whether the Czech Republic's minorities are adequately represented in the country's legislature. Or if there are any minorities in this country at all. An experienced politician might answer that there aren't any. Others might allow that the country does have a negligible minority population, and thus there is little need for minority representation in the legislature.

Most politicians in the Czech Republic are under the illusion that this country is a homogenous state. In reality, a number of different minority groups reside in the Czech Republic. Yet during the recent election campaign not a single political party or movement took the existence of minorities into account – with the exception of some candidates who ran as independents. At present the Slovak, Hungarian, Polish, German, and Romani communities of the Czech Republic have no representation in the 200-seat Czech Chamber of Deputies. I consider this to be scandalous.

While Czech law does not discriminate against minorities, even offering them some protection from other forms of societal discrimination, it is also true that the specific needs of minorities are not being addressed. For example, some would say that it is too much to have a certain number of parliamentary seats reserved for the elected representatives of various minority groups. Still, it would definitely be easier for Slovak citizens of the Czech Republic to communicate with their parliamentary representative in their mother tongue, as it would be for the country's German or Polish minorities. The country's Jewish or Romani citizens might also find it easier to deal with deputies who understand their specific needs. In this sense, it is a mark of disrespect towards these people – who would like to live in peace with their fellow Czech citizens on the principle of a civil society – to be politically marginalized. Under the current system, they're subjected to a process of political and spiritual assimilation.

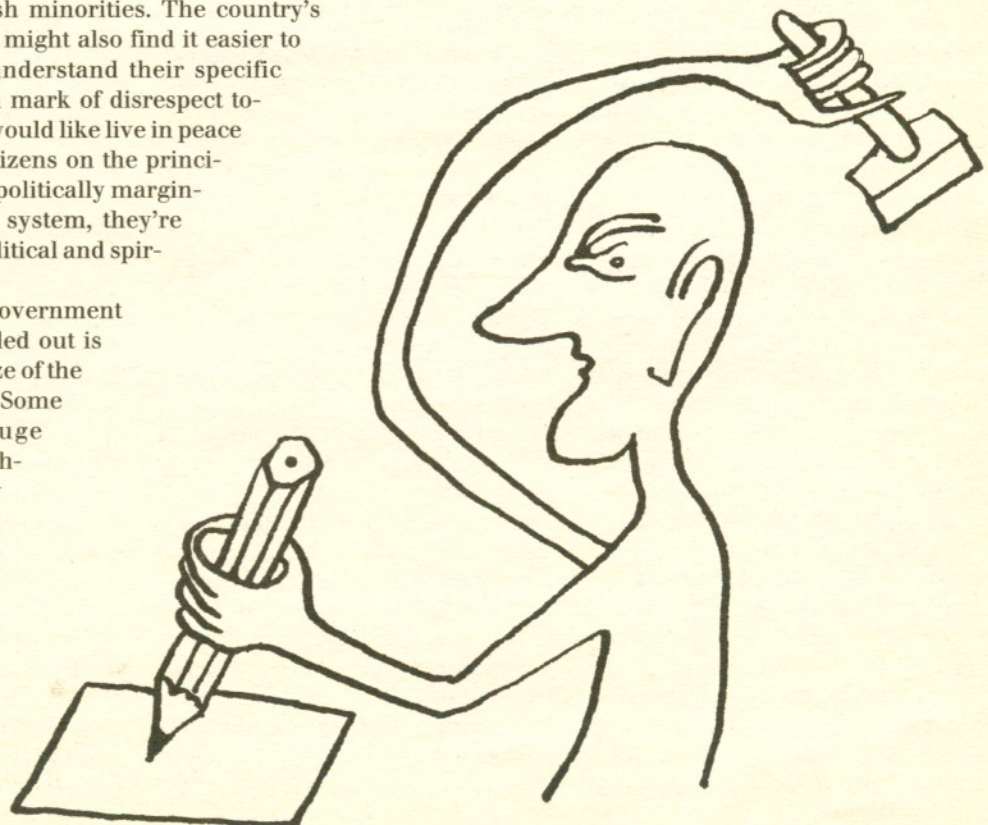
The manner in which government subsidies are currently doled out is not based on the relative size of the different minority groups. Some minorities receive a huge amount of support, while others receive significantly less, and still others get nothing. The system has formed the basis for schisms, envy, and antagonism within minority groups, as well between various groups.

## LIDOVÉ NOVINY

For example, one minority of more than 100,000 people is currently receiving only slightly more funding for its publications than another of 30,000 people.

The Czech government has refused to help the country's different minorities to set up community centers. Each group has been begging for such a center since 1993, via personal meetings with various ministers and requests sent to the prime minister. The German community has managed to set up such a center, but only because it turned to the German government for funding. Recently, a Slovak group turned to Slovak Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar for help in establishing their center.

Memories of the Sudeten German question may have turned the Czechs against granting concessions to minorities in general. However, an adequate system of state protection for minority rights is one of three political prerequisites for entrance into the European Union. In this sense, Czech officials may be taking a big risk if they continue to pursue a policy of almost completely ignoring minority questions. It will be interesting to hear their response to EU officials when asked: So what about those minorities, anyway? ■



## Should ethnic Hungarians receive autonomy?

### Yes, we want self-administration

By Gyula Bárdos

The hysterical reaction of Slovak politicians to a resolution adopted at the Budapest conference called "Hungary and Hungarians living abroad" reflects the absence of political willingness to seriously solve the legal status of minorities in Slovakia. According to statistics, more than 10 percent of the Slovak population are people of Hungarian ethnicity. Altogether, more than 14 percent of the population are people who are not of Slovak ethnicity.

In a democratic state, it is unthinkable to consider a group of the population as second-class citizens. The majority cannot have privileges over representatives of national minorities.

If we really want to establish the rule of law, if it's our real need, and not just a declaration, we must respect the principle of equality. The current government's policy program, the laws that its deputies have passed, and its day-to-day practices prove that nationalism is a higher priority for it than civic relations. Instead of a civic state with the rule of law, we are building a nationalist state, where minority members are not equal citizens.

Through their legitimate representatives in parliament, the largest minority has tried several times to clarify the legal status of minorities by introducing bills that would clearly and unambiguously set the rules for both the majority and the minorities. Instead of serious dialogue and discussion, we have witnessed a lack of political will and a condescending attitude.

In this current confrontational atmosphere, many polit-

ical representatives see autonomy as something evil, negative, or even dangerous, jeopardizing the territorial integrity of the Slovak Republic. Nonsense. Autonomy, or self-administration, is a legal framework enabling a citizen, or several citizens to decide about their own matters. Attempts to establish autonomy are the opposite of attempts to establish a centralized system. Autonomy is a term commonly used in international documents. In Slovakia, it is a demonized taboo, due mostly to political reasons.

Some people claim that autonomy, or self-administration, is a tool being used to join the southern territory of Slovakia to Hungary. This is a lie. We are not questioning borders; we do not want to join anyone. We only want decisions about us not to be made without us. According to the constitution, we have the right to participate in decisions concerning national minorities and ethnic groups. But in practice, there are no laws or regulations that guarantee us effective participation in the decision-making and control process.

We are citizens of the Slovak Republic. Our ancestors lived here, and we want our children to live here as well. We want to sort out the legal status of minorities in a legal and democratic way, so that we can feel at home in our native country. ■

Gyula Bárdos is a member of parliament from the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement.

Translated from Slovak by Jana Dorotková

## THE SLOVAK SPECTATOR

### No, they already have equal rights

By Zdenka Anettová

The Slovak political scene was disturbed this summer after a report from a conference in Budapest called "Hungary and Hungarians Living Abroad" declared that "the basic prerequisite for the preservation of the identity of Hungarians living outside Hungary... is the institution of autonomy." The notion of autonomy in southern Slovakia has also been advocated at several public meetings organized by Hungarian political parties in Slovakia.

The word autonomy is of Greek origin and has two meanings: self-government within a greater whole and sovereign independence. What kind of autonomy are the political representatives of Slovakia's Hungarians after?

Educational autonomy? Our system of minority-language schools that teach in Hungarian has few parallels. From nursery to secondary schools, pupils receive all their lessons in Hungarian, and learn Slovak as a foreign language.

Some teachers are trained in Hungarian at Nitra's

teacher-training college. The Ministry of Education has a special department to administer schools of ethnic minorities. The quantity and distribution of Hungarian-language schools is far more favorable than that of Slovak-language schools in southern Slovakia. Educational autonomy was achieved a long time ago.

Cultural autonomy? Hungarian folk and ethnic culture are allowed to develop in an unrestricted environment. The state budget finances two professional theater companies, and Hungarian-language newspapers, magazines and books are all available on Slovak soil. Cultural events for the Hungarian minority are organized by Csemadok, a cultural association whose employees are paid by the state. In most towns and villages of southern Slovakia, Roman Catholic and Reform church services are held in Hungarian. So we can conclude that the minority has cultural autonomy too.

In other spheres of life—health, social services, business, and economics—all citizens have equal rights, regardless of their ethnic origin. That leaves only one form

(cont'd p. 20)

## The English Language press

(from p. 19)

of autonomy: territorial self-rule. Autonomy for the region of southern Slovakia, inhabited by half a million Hungarians, but also by a million Slovaks. Autonomy for a region that would very quickly join the Hungarian mother state.

The creation of Greater Hungary is the dream of ethnic Hungarian politicians, and unimaginable for millions of Slovak citizens. Autonomy is also rejected by thousands of "normal" Hungarians in the region with whom I have lived since childhood. They also reject the constant trouble that is being stirred up between people of the two nationalities.

The representatives of Hungarian political parties in

Slovakia should come to terms with the fact that visions of a Greater Hungary are not only against the interests of Slovakia's citizens, but also contradict international law, since no international legal document acknowledges the collective rights of minorities.

The friendship and cooperation treaty between Slovakia and Hungary is based in principle on the concept of individual rights for people belonging to ethnic minorities. These rights are respected in Slovakia to standards far beyond the norm. ■

Zdenka Anetová of Matica Slovenská Bratislava is the organization's former director in Komárno.

Translated by Paul Kaye

## Curtains for Slovak Theater?

Marion Blackburn, *The Prague Post*

# THE PRAGUE POST

Unwelcome changes from above could prevent the curtain from rising on the Slovak National Theater in September. In an alarming move, the government has gone after a former dissident who now holds a top position at the Slovak National Theater (SND) while an artistic director has already been fired, apparently for political reasons.

Furthermore, two ethnic Hungarian companies have seen their programs cut or eliminated.

Martin Porubjak, who as dramaturg of the SND, hold primary responsibility for selecting the scripts for the theater, has come under increasing pressure from Culture Minister Ivan Hudec to resign. Porubjak chaired the Slovak movement that led demonstrations against the communist government in 1989, and also served as first deputy chairman of the Slovak government under Jan Carnogursky after 1989.

Government leaders defend the changes by saying they want to create a more efficient theater network. They are also proposing other changes – such as merging the SND with the Nova Scena and Chamber Opera next year. These changes could alter the shape of Slovak theater, ultimately placing every stage, actor, and spotlight under direct government control.

Culture Minister Hudec, who mandated the changes, says he believes theaters must show more national sentiment, but the actors sus-

pect him of darker motives. They fear Vladimir Meciar's government seeks central control, similar to the communist normalization of the 1970s.

Hudec has told central Slovak theaters they must become "more Slovak" to receive government funding this year, and theater companies in other parts of the country fear similar restrictions.

"These methods are not used in pluralistic society," says actor Stanislav Danciak of the SND. "You can't do this without the public participating. In the arts, this is not the most appropriate way of communication. It's not a dialogue."

Hudec, appointed by Meciar, has said he wants all theater administrators to answer to him. This means more than administrative control: He wants the government to have a say in the plays chosen and how they are produced. Hudec claims theater has lost its national focus and must rededicate itself to the common good.

The national directive, along with the mergers, could spell an end to what has been one of the nation's most powerful voices for democracy.

In what the actors call an unprecedented interference, Hudec forced artistic director Peter Mikulik earlier this summer. Ladislav Paulovic, a former actor, replaced him, despite the actors' objections.

Insiders believe this move will allow Paulovic to fire Porubjak, who is considered a constant source of

irritation for the government.

Actors, administrators and government leaders are set to meet Monday, Sept. 2, to determine their future course, but that could be too late. The government wants to push through changes while most people, including members of the press, are on vacation, the actors say.

They also face another problem: lack of unity. The actors only recently joined forces to oppose government meddling. It's already too late for the merged theaters in east Slovakia: A weak protest in January by actors there failed to put a stop to that shotgun wedding.

In a show of cross-border solidarity, a group of Czech actors sent a letter in August to the Czech press demanding Hudec's resignation.

"We call on the Slovak government and particularly on Prime Minister Meciar to prevent further liquidation of culture in Slovakia, part of which is the operation of cultural institutions of the ethnic minorities living in Slovakia," the letter said. Hudec, it continued, "caused the disintegration of the advanced Slovak culture by his activities and decisions."

Hudec's office would not comment on its actions. It's unlikely Hudec will find the actors amenable to his ideas when they meet again. ■

Editor's note: As the magazine went to press Culture Minister Ivan Hudec was facing a no-confidence vote in parliament.

## Artists, actors, and poets: Parties name their Senate candidates

Siegfried Mortkowitz, *The Prague Post*

While most candidates for the Senate have solid political credentials, some say the large number of artists on the ballot could hurt its credibility.

Calling it a "cabaret" and "home for former federal deputies," politicians and observers say they fear that the number of artists, actors, and poets running for the Czech Senate will harm its credibility as an institution.

While the majority of candidates nominated for the two rounds of elections, scheduled for November 15-16 and November 22-23, possess sound political credentials, nominees such as film director Věra Chytilová, singer Pavel Bobek, actresses Uršula Kluková and Helena Růžičková, and poet Karel Sýs have led one candidate to suggest that the Senate could end up resembling a cabaret.

Vladimír Datka, mayor of Zlín and a Senate candidate for the ruling Civic Democratic Party (ODS), said August 29 that it is irresponsible "for the Senate to be composed of ...actors, as well as directors, poets, and writers." His opponent for the Senate seat from Zlín is Chytilová, who is running on the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) ticket.

While admiring Kluková for her provocative smile, Datka said he could not imagine her thinking seriously about laws.

Datka conceded that "some (actors and actresses) are more fit for political work than many of our politicians," but added, "I just don't think this particular selection is very fortunate."

Datka's remarks were seconded by Prime Minister Václav Klaus, who on August 31 called the artist's intention to run for the Senate unreasonable.

The controversy surrounding the candidacy of non-politicians was rekindled by remarks made by Růžičková, a candidate for the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) in the city of Louny. In an interview published September 12, she told the Czech daily *Lidové noviny* that her main motivation for running was her desire to help abandoned children.

She added that she would have run for any party that asked her, and was a KSČM candidate because the Communists were the first to approach her.

Sýs, also a KSČM candidate, said that he had agreed to run for the Senate because the Czech Republic "is becoming a place where it is not possible to live, to fall ill, to warm oneself, to use the subway, the bus, to switch on the light, take a bath, or pick two baskets of mushrooms."

Sýs went on to say that "to divide (politicians) into professionals and amateurs is very deceptive and never helped anyone."

Bobek, a candidate for the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA) from Svitavy, said that he believes he has sufficient political experience for the role of senator. "In

## THE PRAGUE POST

1990, I was a candidate for the Civic Forum," he said. "And before the revolution, I worked at the Institute of Science and Technology Information preserving and monitoring the residential environment."

While admitting that he was nominated as much for his popularity as a performer as for his political expertise, Bobek, a trained architect, said he had agreed to run only after lengthy consideration.

"I had to think it over and decide if I am right for the Senate," he said. "But I am a citizen and a patriot, and I decided that I can do something for the country, especially in the area of city planning and ecology."

Jiří Pehe, senior analyst for the Open Media Research Institute (OMRI), said that the format of the election had moved parties to nominate candidates with popular appeal.

"The majority system of voting favors strong parties, such as the ODS and ČSSD, because the second-round runoff is usually between candidates from the strongest parties," he said.

One way to try to counter the disadvantages of the system, he said, "is to nominate someone who is popular and may pull off a victory against the odds."

The effect of this strategy, however, is that the parties are "underestimating the value of the Senate and the work it requires to be a senator," Pehe said.

"These people will have to determine the quality of the laws passed by the Chamber of Deputies," he said. "They will have to read every law. This requires political maturity and the ability to endure monotonous work."

Josef Lux, chairman of the Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL), told *The Prague Post*, "The importance of the Senate will be determined by how the senators function and behave."

Citing Růžičková's comments as a negative example, Lux said, "If the Senate gains prestige and respect, then so will the country."

Other headliners putting themselves in the Senate race include writer and former ambassador to Germany Jiří Gruša, former Culture Minister Pavel Tigrid, Czech Ambassador to the United States Michal Žantovský, former Czech Prime Minister Petr Pithart, Výbor Dobré vůle (Goodwill Foundation) head Dana Němcová, former Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia Chairman Jiří Svoboda, Bohemian and Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions Chairman Richard Falbr, former Environment Minister František Benda, former Economy Minister Karel Dyba, former Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Jiří Dienstbier, communist-era Czechoslovak Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec, former Defense Minister Antonín Baudyš, former Czech National Council Chairwoman Dagmar Burešová, Komerční banka CEO Richard Salzmann, and Prague Mayor Jan Koukal. ■



# Open Up !

Lord Ralf Dahrendorf gives his opinion on various aspects of the potential entry of the countries of East-Central Europe into the European Union.

**1. Do you believe that the existence of the European monetary union might prevent the acceptance of new members into the European Union (EU)?**

A partial monetary union, including only half a dozen members of the EU, would make the acceptance of new members even more difficult than it is in any case. This is particularly the case if such a partial monetary union should involve fixed exchange rates for all members. One must, therefore, hope that enlargement will come first and monetary union later.

**2. Could you describe the sorts of changes the EU will have to undergo before admitting new members?**

My personal view is that no particular changes are needed if we are talking about three new members, i.e. the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary. . . I understand that Germany now makes the introduction of majority voting an absolute condition of enlargement. Thus, my view is likely to remain a minority view.

**3. Is the EU prepared for the**

**introduction of rules for majority voting?**

In some areas, yes, even perhaps beyond the present arrangements but in essential matters the EU is clearly not prepared for majority voting.

**4. How would the countries of the EU react to the appear-**

ance of populism in East-Central European states and in Russia? Everywhere advocates of the open society have to react with the emphatic assertion of the need for rational debate.

**6. Do you think the EU will require strict conditions concerning the "quality of democracy" in respect of East Central European countries, or will they adopt a more tolerant attitude?**

The EU should not set unnecessary economic conditions for membership and should allow long transition periods. At the same time, the political conditions should be clear and unambiguous. Without the undoubted commitment to democracy, there can be no membership of the EU.

Lord Ralf Dahrendorf, 66, is one of the best-known European liberals. He was Professor of Sociology in Kostnizi and was FDP candidate for the West German Bundestag in 1969.

After being secretary of state for the West German Foreign Ministry, he became a commissioner of the (then) European Community in Brussels. Between 1974 and 1984 he was chancellor of the London School of Economics and Political Science. Later he became vice-chancellor of St. Anthony's College, Oxford University. Queen Elizabeth II appointed him to the House of Lords. In the upper house of the British parliament, Lord Dahrendorf concentrates on European policy.



**ance of populism in East-Central European states and in Russia?**

"Populism" is one of those interesting new phenomena which are rarely clearly defined. If it means the attempt to mobilise emotions where rational debate is needed, then it is equally dangerous in Eastern Europe and Western Eu-

# Liberalism Its Roots, and our Future

Jakub Camrda

At a conference in Prague in the summer of 1996, the American sociologist Professor Steve Holmes, who teaches at the Central European University in Budapest, pictured liberalism as an "elegant limousine rather than a terrain vehicle", because it functions smoothly and quietly on a straight paved road, but it cannot cope with obstacles.

If this is the case, then it does not have much future in Central and Eastern Europe, as here the political landscape is rather bumpy. The prospects of liberalism in a new Europe, which has experienced the collapse of communism in the East and is simultaneously undergoing a crisis of the welfare state in the West, was the theme of the Prague conference of American and European liberal thinkers, organised by the Central European University. No wonder then, that the following questions were raised at the conference. Is liberalism of any further use? Can it be successful in countries where liberal values have no historical roots? Is liberalism possible without liberals? What is really happening to liberalism in post-communist countries?

Jacques Rupnik, a professor of political science at the Université de Sorbonne, pointed to a difference between two types of liberalism by saying that: "economic liberalism has won at the expense of political liberalism." It is interesting to note that the governments of Central Europe each have selected one small part of liberalism as their guiding principle – even the former communists governing Poland and Hungary.

Professor Ilja Šrubař of the University of Erlangen depicted the striking similarity of Friedrich

von Hayek's teachings with Marxism. Both thinkers were characterised by economic reductionism – a belief that everything except the economy is unimportant. Therefore, a politician must always give way to the view of an economist.

Why did such a narrow and relatively extreme political stream gain such popularity here, when there were so many orientations to choose from? One answer may be, that it was easy to accept the easy solution of neoliberalism as dogma – "let's privatise and the market will solve everything for us." This is also extremely comfortable, since we do not have to be concerned regarding real changes in values or institutions.

It was not by accident, that the participants of the conference noticed that the Czech representatives talked only about economic numbers. Not a word about building a state based on the rule of law, human rights, freedom of the press, and protection of minorities. It seems that Czech neoliberals are completely indifferent to all of these traditionally liberal issues.

The conviction of some Czech governing officials that economic reform means social reform is not unique by any means. Most Eastern European governments of various political orientations have liberalised the economy, while neglecting other areas. Unfortunately, they are being reinforced by some western thinkers. At the conference, Countess Donhoff (the publisher of the liberal weekly *Die Zeit*) told the following illustrative story: "At the beginning of the nineties, *Die Zeit* had invited Jeffrey Sachs to Hamburg. (Sachs is an enthusiastic supporter of the free market economy – in 1990 he was just about to im-

plement an economic reform program in Poland). About ten of us were sitting with him, including Helmut Schmidt and some colleagues from the economic section of our paper. When the discussion began, I said I could hardly imagine a successful transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy and from a totalitarian society to an open society, without building some structure of basic democratic institutions first. Sachs's response was: "You've got it completely wrong. Only two things are necessary: creation of private ownership and deregulation of prices. The market will take care of the rest."

To what extent has the Czech government succumbed to the dangerous illusion that economic freedom automatically brings political freedom? As was frequently mentioned at the conference, such a conclusion has never been proven. We know of authoritarian regimes which restrict political activity while still allowing citizens space for economic activity. Examples include Franco's Spain, Pinochet's Chile, and today, China. And what about Mečiar's Slovakia?

It seems that the transformation process – which arguably involves a combination of economic and political liberalism – in the former Eastern Bloc has not come to an end. On the contrary – the struggle for real, inner (not just formal) freedom is still ahead of us.

Despite all that was said, the conference did not end up on a pessimistic note. Steve Holmes quoted one of his Hungarian colleagues by saying: "nothing works in Central Europe, not even pessimism."

Jakub Camrda is an editor of *The New Presence*

# Back to the Future

## What is Prague really like?

The city of Prague is quickly renewing its traditional links with the rest of Europe, and is fast becoming a lively and active part of the European urban network. The proof of this is in the continuous and steady increase in visitors, information, and good flowing into Prague. At the same time, the city is now competing for investment, tourists, sporting events, and international prestige with other European urban centers.

Even to the favorable observer, Prague appears to a somewhat introverted community, unconcerned with its competitors in the Central European region. In this respect, the Prague City Council seems to be neglecting the city's strategic development. Even though tourism to Prague is one of the Czech Republic's most significant assets, the city does not have a well developed strategy concerning the development of this industry.

## Symbolic competition

Urban planners use the label "symbiotic competition" to describe the rivalry between cities. The status of large Central European cities has changed over the course of this century, but today, they again find themselves on a level playing field with each other. Prague is competing with all of the major Central European cities, such as Vienna, Berlin, Bratislava, Budapest, Warsaw, Dresden, and Munich, as well as more distant urban centers like Rome and Athens. In the 1970s, the distance from Prague to Vienna was further, figuratively speaking, than from Prague to Moscow. This competitiveness represents a renewal of a tradition that was twice interrupted by the two world wars. Even though the development of intercity relations after 1989 can be viewed as a return to the situation that

Foto Jaromír Čejka

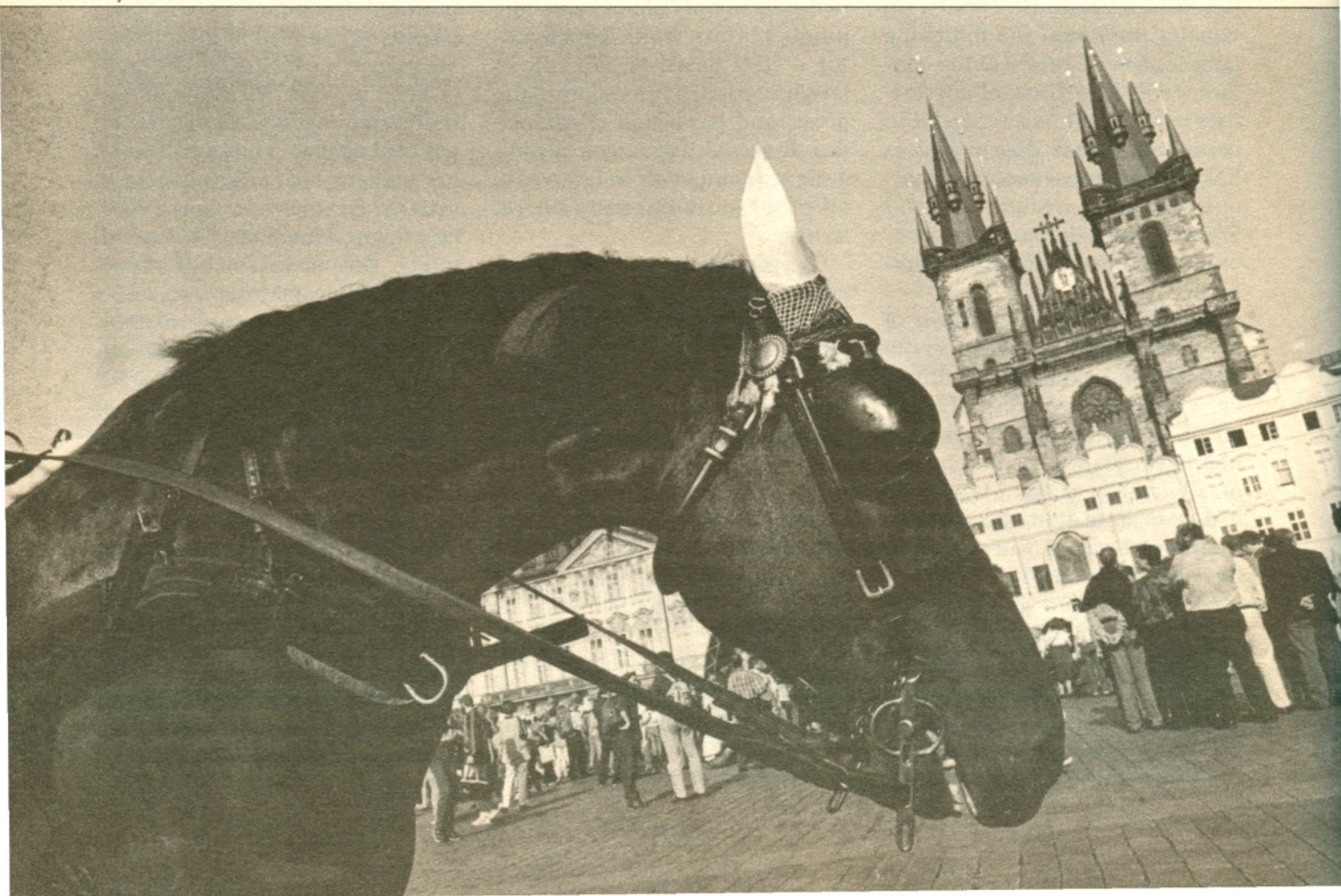




Foto Jaromír Čejka

existed before World War I, it is new in the respect that these relations literally had to be rebuilt from scratch.

A city must know its own strengths and be aware of the competition, and it must pursue certain development strategies. In the first place, Prague's residents should take an active role in the decision-making process. Aside from a few protests against some insensitive architectural decisions, the inhabitants of Prague rarely engage in discussions about the city's urban development. It is not so much that the people are passive but that the politicians in charge should encourage public participation in decisions on the city's future, and they should create the necessary mechanisms for the average citizen's active involvement. But in order to have such participation, information must be made available on the city's potential.

The potential of any city is dependent on two things: its inbuilt advantages and qualities, and its relations with neighboring cities in Central Europe. Nevertheless, Prague should be seen in the context of its historical position in Europe as a whole. A glance at the city's history should help to illuminate Prague's role in the development of the region.

## **Good times, bad times**

Prague's historical position, like that of other Cen-

tral and East European cities, has gone through many changes over the centuries. Three times in history, Prague was considered an important European city. The first and obviously most significant of these periods was during the reign of Charles IV [1346 - 1378] and the years before the Hussite wars [1419 - 1434]. At that time, Prague ranked among the 10 largest European cities. Prague was the seventh largest town in Europe in 1400 with about 95,000 residents. The second was the era of Rudolf II [1576 - 1612], and the third was the period of rapid growth in the second half of the 19th century during the industrialization of the Czech lands and the subsequent establishment of an independent state in the interwar years.

## **Prague's potential - by category**

### **Geographical potential**

Prague is ideally located for integration into the Western European urban network. Nevertheless, it still lies outside the main European traffic routes, and the city will need to improve its connections to the continental network by upgrading its railroad, highway, and air links to the outside world.

### **Economic potential**

Prague's status in terms of economic potential is quite average or perhaps slightly above average, and even compares badly with smaller European



Foto Jaromir Cejka

cities like Turin and Lyon. This means Prague will have to improve its existing industrial structure, especially with regard to the latest technologies, in order to attract both home-grown and foreign industrial, commercial, and financial investment.

#### **Technical potential**

Prague's technical infrastructure - especially its telecommunications - is somewhat below average by European standards. The city's educational infrastructure, however, fares better in terms of its universities, colleges, research institutes, and technological services.

#### **Financial potential**

Prague's financial infrastructure is average, but is improving steadily. With a somewhat developed network of business and marketing services, management and legal consultancy, with the inefficiency of its state bureaucracy and an inadequate legislative framework for business and commercial activities, Prague's potential in this respect is below average. It certainly compares badly with Budapest, not to mention Vienna and Berlin.

#### **Social potential**

Although it is very complicated to evaluate the social potential of any city, Prague's performance in this respect seems to be slightly above average.

This is reflected in the city's generally "open society" with its cosmopolitan attitudes, its tolerance of foreigners, different nationalities and ethnic groups, and its freedom of thought and Bohemian lifestyle. The people of Prague are flexible, dynamic, and in tune with the modern era.

#### **Cultural potential**

Culture is one of the strongest elements of Prague's overall potential. The city has a very rich architectural heritage, a wealth of cultural activities like the world-renowned Prague Spring in June, and an extraordinary selection of art galleries and museums. In the cultural domain, therefore, Prague is above the European average, even though the city's potential is probably not being exploited to its fullest.

#### **Political potential**

The quality of Prague's city administration and the stability of the country's political structures are slightly above average. In particular, coordination between the central government and the city administration is of a high standard in comparison with other European cities.

#### **Environmental and housing potential**

Prague suffers from a lack of good quality housing. The environment is poor, roads within the city

limits are in a bad state of repair and police standards being low. The city clearly has an efficient public transportation system – even though many of the inhabitants of Prague believe the opposite. Moreover, the city is blessed with numerous areas of outstanding beauty in its immediate vicinity as well as with a vast array of cultural outlets – including theaters, cinemas, concert halls, and so on. All this means that Prague is approaching the European average in this field.

### The future

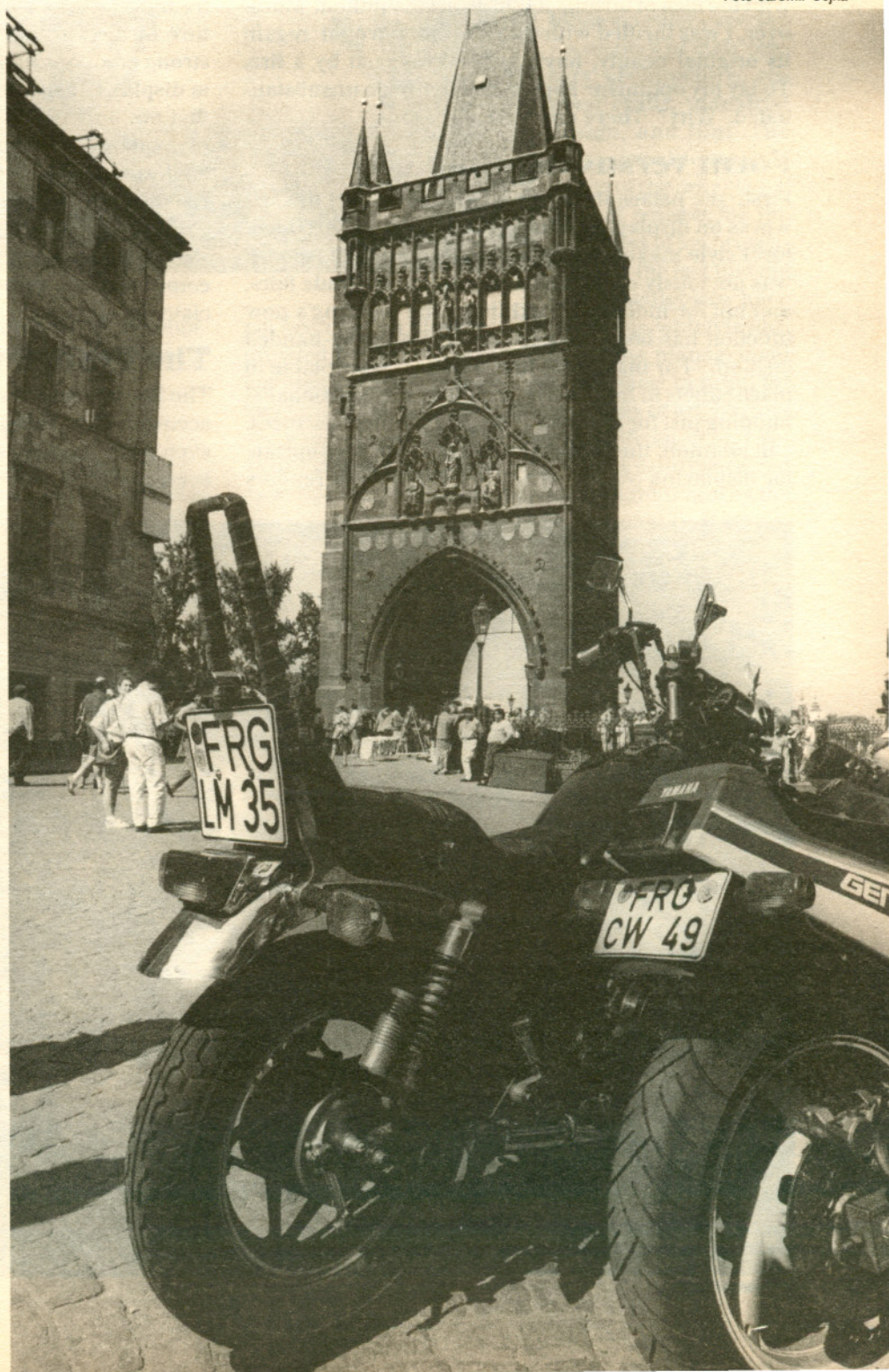
Prague has had both fortune and misfortune in modern times. Fortune in the sense that – as opposed to many neighbouring cities – it was spared the destruction of both world wars. Misfortune in that it has experienced much cultural and political instability. The inhabitants of Prague have gone through nine political regimes during the course of the 20th century, and not one of these has lasted more than 20 years. Due to the world wars, the Holocaust, and the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans, Prague has lost its cultural diversity. The city of three cultures has turned into a somewhat inwardly self-satisfied city that lacks competitiveness. In its relations with the outside world, it has too often remained reserved and negative. But despite this attitude, there is an emerging ability to understand the new situation, to improvise, to be pragmatic. Prague is still a city of adroitness, inventiveness, and talent, drawing on its industrial and artisan traditions. It is a city combining a rational approach to the world with a poetic one, a city with a feeling for humour and irony, for flexibility, which at the same time is marked by the uncertainty of a society in rapid change, whose hopes have been disappointed so many

times. It is skeptical and waiting.

Nevertheless, objective and measurable data indicate a large inner strength that, through a combination of adroitness and luck, will turn Prague into a major European metropolis once again. ■

Jiří Musil is a professor of demography and sociology at Charles University in Prague. In the years 1990-1992, he was the director of the restored Sociological Institute within the Czech Academy of Sciences and in 1992-1994 he was the director of the Central European University's Prague branch. He specializes in problems of urban sociology, living conditions, and so-called cultural sociology. In further issues, we intend to carry sociological portraits of other Czech cities and towns.

Foto Jaromír Čejka



# Why We Still Do Not Have a Gallery of Modern Art

Jiří Seifrt

I was very glad when the Trade Fair Palace in Prague was finally wrested from the claws of the Communists with the idea of turning it into an art institution. Moreover, I was thrilled with the idea that it would regain its original beauty, having been ravaged by a fire. Today my optimism appears to have been unsubstantiated. Why? There are several reasons.

## Form versus function

First, the palace itself is too big for most of the artworks on display. Although its functionalist architectural style makes a deep impression on the visitor, it was obviously conceived as a location for trade fairs, and not for modern art exhibits. The building's new function has been imposed on it in a heavy-handed fashion. For instance, I find it quite unacceptable to place panels in front of the windows of a functionalist building just for the sake of displaying more pictures.

In addition, the artificial lighting is not appropriate for displaying objects of art. For example, it renders

the sculptures into unintelligible forms. This also applies to an otherwise excellent exhibition of Otto Gutfreund's works by Stanislav Kolíbal. The architecture of the vestibule and balconies, which inspires strong emotions in the visitor, should have been used to display equally powerful works of art. This means that not only should the exhibits themselves be of a high quality, but that they should also be placed in an environment that enhances their potential. This is precisely what is lacking in the current layout of the gallery. The visitor, in so far as he or she has the desire to communicate with the work of art, has to become oblivious to the surroundings in order to appreciate the art itself.

## The French Collection

The fate of The French Collection, as we have grown accustomed to calling it, is particularly sad and could even be described as lamentable. The collection has been uprooted from the Šternberk Palace garden, a



Foto Jaromír Čejka

location that was created especially for it. The Šternberk Palace garden was such a natural backdrop for Rodin's *St. John the Baptist* that it seemed to have been the sculptor's original intent to put it there. Now the statue has become an eye-sore, having been placed in a location that is too insignificant for such a commanding work. The same is true for Maillol's *Pomona* and for Bourdell's *Ingresse*. Their positioning and the way that they are illuminated absolutely ruins their effect. This also applies to the paintings, both to the older works and to those of Picasso and Braque.

The layout of the exhibition affords a wonderful opportunity to peep behind the scenes. I cannot forget the various flaws of some of the exhibitions, the gaps between exhibits that afford views of dusty corners where one half expects to see an abandoned and forlorn broom

leaning against the wall. It reminded me of the communist era when unfinished bits of architecture were adorned with limp plants.

### "Economic despotism"

I thus went home from the museum angry and offended, but my feelings were replaced by a sense of lost opportunity. I searched for a good reason for this, and I came up with a concept of economic despotism. The French collection, for example, was kidnapped from its former location and moved to the Trade Fair Palace in order to fill the museum's coffers with money from dedicated art-lovers. The charm of the former gallery was destroyed. The same was done with other collections, although not quite as blatantly.

It was financial concerns that dictated the reconstruction of the Trade Fair Palace, just as it was financial concerns that demanded cuts in cultural programs. The subleasing of space became more attractive. Prominent architects came and went, only to be replaced by anonymous building engineers whose role in creating the current design is still one of the city's best kept secrets. The government took a similar approach in providing a loan for the building's renovation: the money had to be spent before the palace's opening day. This deadline was the reason behind the haste with which the reconstruction was undertaken, and is evident in the building's various little flaws and the overall shoddy workmanship of the renovators. For example, an ugly scratch mars one of the opaque glass doors - a minor detail, but an indication of the general approach to the project.

This approach also prevails in the financial management of the gallery. It has to cover 60% of its oper-

ating costs by leasing space, and so only 40% of its income comes from the taxpayer. Therefore, much of the space is empty or being used for other purposes. When the firms that leased these areas will actually begin operating in the gallery, visitors will have to endure the unnerving juxtaposition of two quite different worlds - art and business.

The ongoing uncertainty and turmoil with regard to these aspects of the palace, which are so vital for the

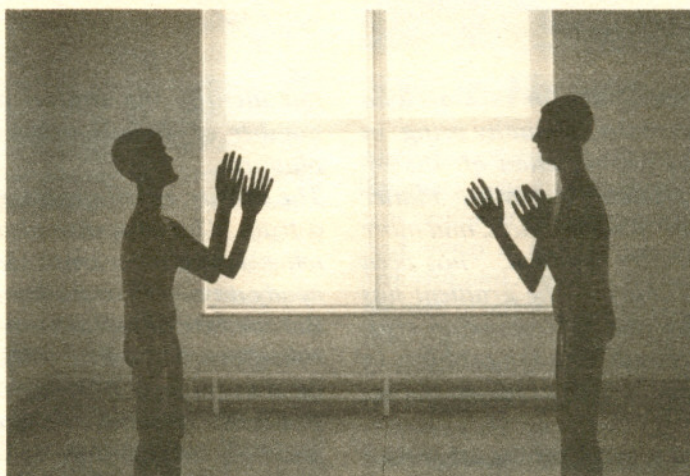


Foto Jaromír Čejka

concept of this complicated project, have been caused by what I call "economic despotism." Consequently, the gallery is not what the exhibition visitor expected - a display of 20th century architecture, applied crafts, industrial design, and film. The most convincing evidence of the organizers' lack of respect for the subtleties of art presentation is the fact that the Czech sculptures have

not been put on display in the vestibule which is illuminated by natural light. No doubt the management has some other financially viable project in mind for that part of the building. These works of art, however, cannot be properly viewed in artificial light. I believe that these sculptures should have been conceived as a separate exhibition, a point brought home by the display of Otto Gutfreund and his school. Here the visitor is treated as a partner who is offered a choice of what to focus on, and is not continually coerced - as in the palace's other exhibitions - to carefully pick out some particular aspect of an artwork.

The gallery has no cafe, no bookstores, no reading room, no place to get information about the exhibition, the artists, the period in which they worked, and what else they accomplished. There isn't even a place to rest - except for two armchairs which afford a splendid view of an architectural gem - a door. There is no information about artists who are not represented here, but who nevertheless have a place in the history of Czech modern art - standard practice in galleries all over Europe.

It is perhaps understandable that we cannot afford such luxuries at present. But let's not describe what is being offered as a Gallery of 20th Century Art. What is inside can be at best described as a failed attempt to offer space for temporary exhibitions with the exception of the Gutfreund display, of course. And let's not say "thank God for small favors", but mount a challenge to this economic despotism. We do not yet have a good 20th century art gallery. Let's do everything we can to get one.

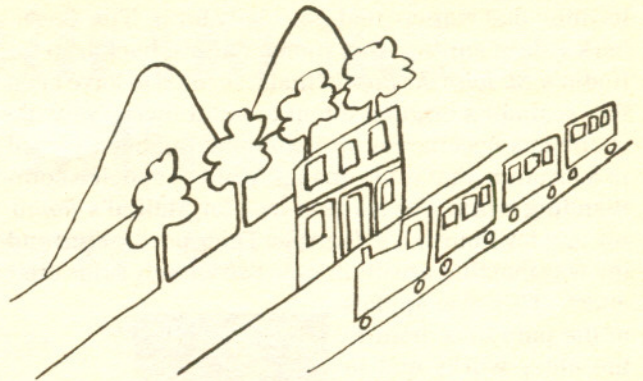
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Jiří SEIFRT is a sculptor and the chairman of the Mánes Artists Association



# Europe By Train

Miroslav Holub



*Travelling to Europe is a good idea for students who are not very good at geography. Actually being in Europe and observing the phenomenon of the so-called European density gradient is another matter altogether. Europe is denser in some places, and more diluted in others. This density gradient, has been here longer than any politburo – the gradient has been here since the Trojan and Merovingian eras, and is the fundamental reason why the problem in this country is not so much where to return to, but where to go.*

*I became more aware of this gradient the other day, while on a train ride from Germany to the Balkans. In Furth-im-Wald, a German police officer and a customs official got on board, greeted us, asked us for our passports, thanked us, and said goodbye in a clear voice. In Domázlíce, two Czechs got on sporting standard uniforms, did not greet us, stated their request, thanked us, and mumbled incoherently as they exited. In both cases the process took 20 minutes. In Kúty, the Slovaks arrived. There were three of them, they did not greet us, they made their demands, they thanked us, but did not even offer us so much as a farewell. Finally, four Hungarians got on, grumbled something, and slammed the doors.*

*Then, of course, came the 20-minute wait in the station of the Romanian town of Curtici, during which we went through five separate passport and customs checks. The officials asked us how many Deutsche marks, dollars, or francs we had on us, and without waiting too long for a response, disappeared in a somnambulant trance. This was followed by groups of passport control officers, of which the first group was satisfied with a simple look at the passport, while the others took our passports and then returned them with expressions of disgust. In all, about 10 stern-looking men took part in the process, making sure to strictly forbid us from shutting the doors to our cabin in order that other stern-looking men would not be delayed in checking us as well. Not being delayed took three-quarters of an hour, during which I conducted a detailed behavioral study of the pigeons sitting on the roof of the Curtici railway station. I noticed that these pigeons did not relieve themselves on the station masters uniforms as in the book *Closely Watched Trains*. Obviously they had undergone years of training. Or maybe it was because I could*

*not identify the station master among the large number of officials aimlessly wandering around the platform.*

*The density, or diluteness, of Europe is obvious from a train. This was also clear to me some time ago, when I was on a train ride out of Moscow in the heady days of Perestroika. I was struck by a diluted Europe extending into a relative vacuum. After heroic efforts in the Kiev railway station, I finally managed to make a seat reservation for that same day. The scrap of paper had been filled in with a pencil and bore no signature or stamp. Nevertheless, I was extremely proud of it. In the carriage in question, I was ushered to my place by two women with berets, wearing witch-like expressions. I did not enjoy my compartment for very long. About half an hour later four passengers arrived, clutching official papers similar to mine, with identical numbers filled in with the same pencil, but without a stamp. The conductor in the beret immediately decided in favor of the new arrivals, whom she had obviously already met in very material way. On the way to Kiev, three more families got on, furnished with seat reservations for the exact same places. I abandoned the compartment and found refuge in the luggage rack of another compartment occupied by a Czech worker, who was employed in Russia installing some sort of pipeline. He told me that everyone essentially writes their own seat reservations, bribes the conductor with a few rubles, and therefore the only ones who stand a chance, are those who have an edge on the newcomers. I decided that the mechanism was logical on the whole. Europe seems to no longer exist where seat reservations are invalid. To err is human everywhere, but basically Europe exists in those places that still possess the remnants of Hellenistic rational thinking, Jewish respect for the Word, and Roman orderliness.*

*We were saved from the European vacuum, at least as far as train tickets are concerned, by the orderliness of bureaucratic thick heads, the legacy of Irish monks, and Celtic shamans. In their day, simple-mindedness came into its own, as the famous comedians Voskovec & Werich said, but it had its limits. And today, Europe itself can still be found within those limits.*

Miroslav Holub is a poet, immunologist, and editor of *The New Presence*

## Letter from somewhere

**Dear friend(s),**

Warm greetings from the edge of the Czech Paradise. You haven't been here for such a long time, but though we've had one visit after another from most eminent people. We've been getting to know all sorts of things which have made us, being only village people, quite amazed.

For example, the education minister recently announced in Jičín that everything was actually fine in the Czech education system; that history is taught often enough at secondary schools. Also, the minister didn't seem to have the slightest inkling of any problems within the elementary school sector/at basic schools. Unfortunately, we do!

The high point of his speech was his reminding us that municipalities are obliged by law to pay "school-fees" to various schools within the locality, but then have no chance to check up on whether their money has been actually used effectively for any one particular school. That's something that could be easily remedied by establishing good local or district school councils of the pre-war First Republic type. The minister simply declared that small municipalities should not exist independently. So this is how far we've advanced since 1990 in terms of returning autonomy to the smallest municipalities!

The minister (along with many others) does not realise what autonomy means for small municipalities. Our small villages and little towns have really improved and changed face over the past few years. People are beginning to make their local representatives care about their municipalities. Shops which the former cooperative society closed down as non-profitable are now open again. Craftsmen and small firms are doing well. At the same time, even the smallest municipalities have to make do with their budget because the subsidies they receive from the district are negligible and subsidies from the state are almost unheard of!

You know all about Staré Hradý - a little village with less than 150 people that used to be part of the town of Sobotka some three years ago. It became a separate village following a referendum. There is a castle here, which local people rebuilt themselves and which today houses the offices of the Literary Archive of the Institute of National Literature. Otherwise it's just an ordinary village.

This little village, headed by our young mayor Josef Míclík, has achieved great things all on its own. It's managed to finish an asphalt road surface, completed a part of the sewage system, repaired the morgue and cemetery, changed the roof supports and half of the castle roof, fixed a space under the corner of the castle where cracks appeared previously, painted windows and doors, mended gutters and roofing, etc.

Even local culture is flourishing under the patronage of Osvětová beseda. Last year alone, there were 16 exhibitions here (inter alia poster creation by Václav Ševčík, prints by Stanislav Holý, the art of lace-making by Gabriela Tumová, Books - Nonbooks by Ludvík Kundera), seven concerts (including choirs from Switzerland and Italy), poetry readings by Hanka Kofránková, three open round table discussions ... On top of that the castle is open to tourists during the whole year. There have been four issues of the local magazine, "The Staré Hradý Chronicle," local meetings, and a few dance balls. All of this without one paid professional!

The town library of Fráňa Šrámek has undergone substantial development in recent years, and the town is proud



## Staré Hradý near Sobotka

of it. Nevertheless, the library faced real problems when Šrámek's actual birthplace - which houses the library - was restituted to a private owner. It became necessary to find money to buy it back. So a foundation was set up; residents and friends of the town collected a considerable amount of money and even designers and writers contributed their work to the fund. Josef Dvořák, who owns a weekend cottage in nearby Plakánek, produced a play for the foundation called *The Fight for the Lime Tree*. In the end, even the town and the district contributed. The library no longer has any financial worries.

In addition, the Town Council wisely gave the library another room in the former Town Hall where they set up a beautiful children's department. The library is now full of life - not only are books and magazines read and borrowed here, but lectures and discussions take place here as well. Exhibitions of prints are held in the Gallery on the Stairs - located on the way to the first floor of the library - thanks another weekend cottage owner, František Pultr from nearby Hřmenín. Another favorite activity is the family club - parents can come to a lecture or a cultural program while their children are watched by the club's female volunteers.

We are a small area on the borders of the Czech Paradise similar to thousands of other areas within the Czech countryside. Even here we have problems with buses, and some fellow-citizens do nasty things to us as well - often people you would never expect it from. But at least we can hope that in the end good and common sense will prevail.

In conclusion, we hope you'll have many beautiful experiences like the one we recently had at an exhibition of sculptures by Jelínek from Sobotka's castle in Prague's Monastery of Saint Jiřina. It was exciting to see them in their original form and close up. Now they're back, flying and standing on the altars, organ, and baptismal in the renovated Church of Mary Magdalene, and they will remain there this whole year, during which we will celebrate the 400th anniversary of the church's existence.

Why don't you come and see them! And bring Jana Matějková with you, who, according to the columns of "The New Presence", is assistant to the editorial staff. Bring Mr Galuška and Doctor Holub too - you all know how to get here.

Best regards

Eva and Karol Bílek

*Editor's note: Staré Hradý means Old Castles. The Czech Paradise refers to an area of outstanding natural beauty about 100 kilometres north-east of Prague.*

# “Češi, Češi, Češi!”

Victor Gómez

Few phenomena link the individual with the concept of national pride more explicitly than international sport competitions. A strangely intense version of this link was on display at the late August World Cup hockey game between the Czech Republic and Sweden at Prague's Sportovní hala. As the players got on the ice, the fans in the packed stadium cheered ecstatically in an almost delirious display of support for their team. They sang the anthem, clapped their hands, and chanted "Češi, Češi, Češi." When the referee called a penalty against the Czech side, they whistled and jeered. But the team was having clear trouble on the ice, as it did throughout this tournament, and as the game wound down, Sweden was easily holding on to a 3-0 lead. By then, the fans had turned on their team with vehemence, and the piercing sound of whistling filled the stadium.

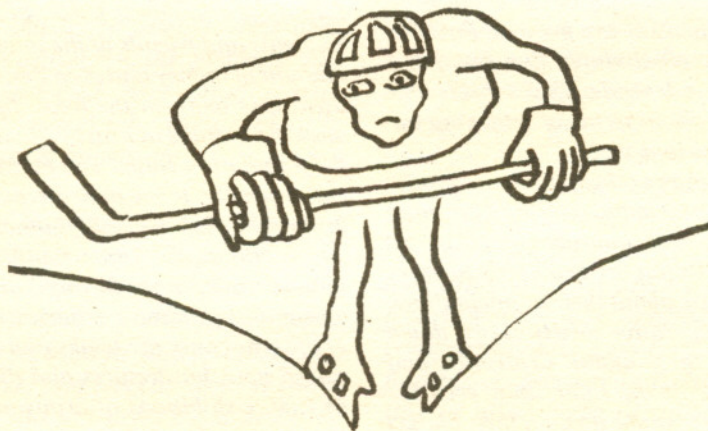
As the game ended, the disgusted fans launched a cascade of beer cans onto the ice. The referee even gave up on trying to clear the playing surface of the refuse and the last few seconds were counted out as the players stood almost immobile. When the final buzzer sounded, the Czech team quickly dashed off to their dressing rooms, leaving the Swedes on the ice to celebrate their victory. Then a fascinating thing happened. The stadium fans got up and offered the Scandinavians a standing ova-

tion. So in the span of one hockey game, the crowd had gone from adulation to disgust with their team, and in the end publicly disowned it.

Their reaction may have had something to do with the fact that tickets for this game cost 400 crowns as opposed to the usual 50 crown price of a Czech league game. It may have been related to the fact that the Czech national team boasted players making fat dol-

lar salaries playing in the National Hockey League, at least one of whom is a millionaire. Or maybe it was because the Czech team had put on a simply abysmal performance. But the main fact is perhaps that there was a feeling of national pride being betrayed. The fans had extended their full and open support to the team, perhaps seeking patriotic fulfilment in the team's performance. In the end, it was amply evident that this support was not given cheaply. The players

were not just individuals engaging in a game. They were representatives of the Czech Republic, representatives of the fans that had cheered for them at the beginning of the game. With their chants and cheers, the fans had directly identified themselves with their representatives on the ice. On this night though, the players left them less than proud of that identification. ■



Victor Gómez is a staff writer at the Open Media Research Institute in Prague.

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