



# Czechoslovak Daily Herald

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## Czechoslovakia: An Interim Report

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*"October 17 was a classic coup d'etat, the capture of governmental power by a small minority, carried out, in deference to the democratic conventions of the age, with a show of mass participation, but without mass engagement."*

Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*,  
Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1991

*"We are witnessing a coup."*

Yevgenyi Dodolev, Moscow host of "Vzglyad"  
TV Program,  
*New York Times*, January 12, 1991, p. 4

*"The terrible thing is not that we have a new dictator, but that the whole world loves him"*

Mr. Tomkus, Member of Soviet Parliament,  
*New York Times*, January 16, 1991, p. 8.

It is now clear that without broad, voluntary and participatory engagement of the masses of ordinary citizens, no "revolution", no perestroika, no reform and no democracy can succeed anywhere in the USSR or Eastern Europe. No level of foreign media hype, financial or material assistance, proclaimed personal friendships or self-inflicted myopia of wishful thinking, can significantly affect the inevitability of failure. It is only the *internal* engagement, understanding and support at home, rather than a popular "show" abroad, which matters in the end.

No government or politician in the USSR and Eastern Europe has taken this "internal engagement" road towards a more lasting prosperity; instead, they have turned out and abroad for a "quick fix" - and thus brought upon their own nations a protracted era of economic misery of abnormal proportions - to be cut short only by dictatorship.

Traversing the wrong road to capitalism,



Prague, Czechoslovakia

no matter how swiftly, radically or "shockingly", is not (and cannot be) preferable to proceeding more slowly *on the right path*. Thus, all hasty reforms are going to fail and revert to dictatorships in the name of law-and-order, anti-chaos and anti-freedom.

New strategies are urgently needed: not only in the East, but primarily in the West - too much of the Eastern failure can be traced to Western encouragement, subconscious or wishful,<sup>3</sup> of the "external road": the non-engagement, technocratic quick fix.

Czechoslovakia is rapidly going awry and astray with its political, social and economic reforms. The onset of economic crises and political breakups has begun and the persistently chaotic and doggedly incompetent measures of the new OF Government are increasingly responsible.

Economic failures, pessimism, gloom, lack of trust and paucity of governmental competency are clearly plaguing the governments in Poland,

Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and USSR. This indicates a more general pattern, leading to the inevitable collapse of the hastily assembled governments, which are (on surface) eager and willing, but essentially incompetent, dangerously unqualified and irretrievably wedded to the practices, thinking and habits of the past. Propping up incompetency at the top, no matter how determined, is bound to prolong the material and psychological suffering of citizens at the bottom.

Most of current human misery in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe can be safely traced to the administrative incompetence, political inexperience and economic naivité of half-hearted leaders. Czechoslovakia, unfortunately (and in spite of its often claimed "traditions"), is no exception.

The information reaching the West is very incomplete, highly selective and habitually collected from "rounding up the usual suspects", i. e., the former dissidents, now members of the very establishment committed to the policies of censorship, coverup and misinformation. Why? Why were the students of Prague, during the first anniversary of "their" November 17, shouting "We want a new government" and carrying signs

*"Civic Forum Tells Lies"* - all in spite of President Bush's presence and endorsement of the status quo? Students have renamed the "velvet revolution" to "stolen revolution" - but few remember the students anymore. President Bush's public hailing of Havel and Dubcek as "two great heroes" <sup>4</sup> was received with

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<sup>2</sup> Brian Crozier, "The Enduring Soviet Global Threat, *Global Affairs*, Summer/Fall 1990, p. 5-6: "K.G.B. has managed to salvage a substantial part of its Eastern European Network."

<sup>3</sup> For example, the "shock" and "surprise" about Shevernadze's resignation does not square well with the November 29, 1990 press release of IAN (Information Agency Novosti), which announced that E. Shevernadze is leaving his post, will be replaced by Primakov, and is being considered for either Vice president or Premier. Most East European newspapers carried this crucial news item at that time.

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incredulous smiles and even some exasperation: after all, the U.S.A. stands quite high in the eyes of both younger and older Czechoslovaks.

One has to walk the streets, talk to people, understand their language, live with them, work with them and even drink with them - only then one can begin to understand. One cannot simply talk to ministers or governmental spokesmen. People do not trust their government, they feel cheated and manipulated, and they are increasingly fed up with the incompetence, lack of vision and day-to-day "dousing of fires", now so clearly manifested and practiced.

In recent local elections, the Communist Party (KSC, with unchanged name) has gained, the Civic Forum (OF) has sharply declined, and the people (who apathetically stayed away) have again lost.

Czechoslovakia is probably the most disappointing case because there the expectations were (justifiably or not) the highest.

### The Political Putsch

The fact is that the clear majority of ministers, governmental officials and especially foreign office appointees are past members of the Communist Party. President Havel is now directly responsible and increasingly blamed for his persistent appointments of communists, both at home and abroad.

The declining popularity of V. Havel is further amplified by large number of unpopular or inexplicable "moves": appointments of incompetent friends and relatives; emphasis on symbolism and metaphors (names, titles, uniforms, medals, BMWs, etc.), no practical economic concerns or actions; unwise and premature amnesty for hard criminals; meaningless and results free travels abroad; no economic or social vision of the future;

<sup>4</sup> A. Dubcek was Communist party apparatchik all his life: Party secretary in 1949-1951 in Trencin, 1951-1952 in Bratislava, and 1953-1955 in Banska Bystrica. In 1955-1958 he studied in Moscow, in 1958-1960 became Candidate to the Slovakian Central Party Committee, Secretary to the Czechoslovak Central Committee in 1960-1962, Member of the Czechoslovak Central Committee and the First Secretary of the Slovak Central Party Committee in 1962-1968, during 1968-1969 the First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Central Party Committee, and in 1970 Czechoslovak Ambassador to Turkey.

ignorance of both the agriculture and industry management; personal attacks on great entrepreneurs and enterprises (e.g., on F. Cuba of DAK Slusovice); and so on.

The most popular joke in Prague goes as follows: "Do you know the difference between Havel and Premysl The Ploughman [the first Czech king]? No? Premysl The Ploughman left his oxen below the Castle."

A flood of open letters and articles criticizing V. Havel and his OF appointees has now filled the popular press (*Zmena*, *Tyden*, *Express*, *Spigl*, etc.). Published criticism is being routinely labeled as fascist, trash or irresponsible by "the Castle": there is no attempt for official response, explanation or clarification of the allegations. Such attitudes increasingly widen the gap and isolation of the Castle from the people. The talk of the "new totalitarianism" is common in the streets and in the independent media.<sup>7</sup>

### The Economic Putsch

The conviction that so called economic reform is nothing but "an economic putsch of the bureaucracy" has been voiced by economists and by the independent press. This warning has remained mostly ignored by the governmental "reformers". They do not feel any need to answer: "You have freely voted for us, so do not criticize us now," or "We cannot tell you our future steps, the same as a chessplayer would not tell you his future moves," are typical pronouncements, reflecting the fatally misunderstood and misused notion of democracy.

Czechoslovakia's economic reformers are also (much too willing) prisoners of out-of-date, worn out way of thinking of the post-war years.

The naivité of this thinking has been publicly documented by K. Dyba, minister of economic planning, and T. Jezek, minister for privatization.<sup>13</sup> They write:

*"The first step [of privatization] will be to allocate ownership among the federal, republic and municipal*

<sup>5</sup> "Agenti stale pusobi," *Lidove noviny*, December 12, 1990, p. 1 and 3.

<sup>6</sup> V. Bartuska, *Polojasno*, Ex libris, Kladenska 43, 160 00 Praha 6, October 1990.

*levels of government. The federal government will maintain control of industries of national importance, including, for example, telecommunications, transportation, national defence ...*

*Appointment [sic] of new management (who, the law will provide, may not be employees of the enterprise), will be overseen by the sectoral ministry ... in consultation with newly organized inter-ministerial commissions.*

*Company's shares will be owned by a National Assets Foundation (Naf) to be attached to the federal and republic ministries of privatization. The Naf might also retain a certain number of "golden shares" for itself.*

*To establish value [of enterprises] ... is simply to give a portion of the nation's capital to its citizens and let people create a market by trading the shares."*

Such backwardness in economic thinking, so publicly professed, is bound to publicly backfire within the first few months of 1991.

Finance minister V. Klaus, a favorite son of Wall Street, has (in November 1990) become "the Least Trusted Man" in all Czechoslovakia (according to the Institut pro vyzkum verejneho mineni, the official public opinion institute), "beating" even the infamous communist Vasii Mohorita and the radical Slovak separatist V. Moric. No economic reform can be based on such deep and manifest mistrust of the common citizenry.

Inexplicably, V. Klaus continues to be referred to as a "formidably clever man" or "the nation's second-most-popular political figure" by some journalists in the West.<sup>14,18</sup>

He has continually strengthened the role of the state, entrenching the existing industrial structures and delaying the function of free markets

In his political barnstorming efforts, he likes to be driven in a pink-painted ministerial Tatra 613, his gigantic color photographs are prominently displayed: he has clearly pleased the old Communist nomenklatura and black-market millionaires, but he has also shocked the West by declaring:

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<sup>7</sup> The case of ing. Eva Petrasova is well known. She was the first journalist to criticize V. Havel and point out the "stolen" revolution in a Slovak weekly *Zmena* (August 24, 1990). Today she is without job, followed and harassed at every step, her son attacked, her daughter raped, continually being threatened with courts and psychiatric incarceration, etc. Foreign journalists remain silent.

<sup>8</sup> Miroslav Dolejsi, "Senzacni odhaleni pozadi udalosti lonskeho 17. listopadu," *Express*, October 1990.

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Large sign of Vaclav Klaus in a Prague Street

"There is no known way to distinguish dirty money from clean. Communists were not necessarily richer than others. The real rich, even under communism, were the protected traders, bootleggers, black marketeers and currency changers." (Financial Times, 19 November, 1990.)

This represents a remarkable shift in identifying political adversaries, not at all shared by the citizenry of CSFR.

Klaus is adamantly opposed to the concept of private corporation, employee/management ownership, employee participation and profit sharing, that is the very ideas which are sweeping the industrial West.<sup>15</sup> He refers to employee ownership and participation as:

"... the residual of the old dreams (again) of the economy where those who work in the enterprise are also the owners. It is something we do not accept." (Financial Times, 19 November, 1990.)

Yet, it is precisely what majority of people wants and most successful companies in the West (Avis, Lincoln Electric, Levi Strauss, MacDonald's, etc.) vigorously practice.

The strange inability to accept that the employees could (and should) become also owners is part of the even stranger scheme to keep

most of the Czechoslovak citizens and employees in the "hired-hand" status. This clears the way for the international speculative capital and control.

Such scheme is bound to backfire very soon, because even the foreign capital would be much more attracted to the enterprise with highly motivated, secure, innovative and totally dedicated workforce - i.e., employees who are co-owning and co-sharing in the enterprise.

Klaus's state-controlled public corporations, badly managed, unmotivated and purposeless, with their control thoroughly diffused, are *totally unsuitable* for Czechoslovakia, a small country with educated, skillful and traditionally enterprising workforce.

Mr. Klaus's philosophy, when clearly expressed in words, can be surprisingly chilling in its stark, un-Czech vulgarity: "We cannot again leave the economy in the hands of irresponsible intellectuals."<sup>16</sup>

Such words have been heard, written and acted upon before. The Communist bashing of intellectuals is well remembered and the danger of dictatorship and fascism remain to be ever present.

The great movement from public to private corporations, currently sweeping the West, go officially unnoticed, ignored and unacknowledged in Czechoslovakia.<sup>17</sup> V. Klaus has now influenced the government so much, that *all* references to employee participation, sharing and ownership have been struck from privatization programs and labeled "bolshevism."

The moral turpitude of the economic-reform "scenario" has been magnified by publicly manifested arrogance of official economists. "This program will definitely have

some negative consequences for industrial output and employment. There is no wayaround that. There will be dissatisfaction. There may be social unrest. But you have to try it, and then we'll see," says V. Klaus.<sup>18</sup>

This is the "professionalism" which so called economic reform has been turned into in the Czechoslovakia of today.

Hard-to-explain disregard for people is also being voiced: "People voted for a Government that promised hardships, lower living standards and some unemployment. It's one thing to be for a market economy, and another thing to experience the not-so-nice side of the market economy," says K. Dyba.<sup>19</sup>

Yet, there is no market economy in Czechoslovakia, and a form of state capitalism is being quickly ushered in, supported by free state-monopolistic price forming. This makes such talk about "not-so-nice sides" surprisingly unprofessional and morally doubtful.

The "last straw" and the beginning of the end for the Czechoslovak experiment was the unexpected decision to keep secret the economic prognosis report (of the Ministry for Strategic Planning) for 1991, because: "... the government was afraid that the alternative trends of possible development of the Czech economy could cause panic."<sup>20</sup>

Czechoslovakia's economic reforms have been slowed down to a virtual standstill: little has improved or even changed during the past year, the economy has been perceptibly worsened, and except the recent and inexplicable "liberalization" of the state-monopolistic prices (prior to any privatization!) even less is being planned for 1991. **Continued on page 4**

<sup>9</sup> These removed or "lost" files allegedly include those on V. Havel, I. Havel, J. Dienstbier, Z. Dienstbierova, J. Sabata, A. Sabatova, V. Klaus, R. Slansky, J. Kanturek, E. Kanturkova, P. Pithart, Dr. Danisz, J. Hajek, M. Hajek, P. Uhl, M. Palous, R. Palous, and many others.

<sup>10</sup> Among the better known "Formers" we find such names as Calfa, Dubcek, Dienstbier, Pithart, Klimova, Slansky, Dlouhy, Uhl, Kanturek, etc.

<sup>11</sup> Andrei Codrescu, "A World Apart," *American Way*, November 15, 1990, pp. 63-131.

<sup>12</sup> "Bolshevism with a New Name," *The New American*, December 3, 1990, pp. 19-22.

<sup>13</sup> K. Dyba, T. Jezek, D. Arbess, "The second Czech revolution," *Financial Times*, October 18, 1990.

<sup>14</sup> John Lloyd, "Populist slayer of dreams,"

*Financial Times*, November 19, 1990.

<sup>15</sup> Sanderson and Hayes (*Harvard Business Review*, September-October 1990, p. 40) write about: "... an almost complete absence of managerial talent and experience [in Eastern Europe]. Worker participation programs, which seek to tap the full potential of an organization's work force - and whose logic is sweeping the rest of the manufacturing world - require precisely what East European countries lack."

<sup>16</sup> John Lloyd, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> See for example Michael C. Jensen, "Eclipse of the Public Corporation," *Harvard Business Review*, September-October 1989, pp. 61-74. Jensen writes: "The publicly held corporation, the main engine of economic progress in the United States for a century has outlived its usefulness in many sectors of the economy and is being eclipsed. New organizations are emerging in its place - organizations that are corporate in form but have no public shareholders and are not listed or traded on organized exchanges." Why should Czechoslovakia be prevented from following this modern trend for which she is so exquisitely suited?

<sup>18</sup> Steven Greenhouse, "Czechs Begin Shift to a Free Market," *The New York Times*, 1 January 1991.

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### The Opposition Efforts

The opposition against the Government is growing from the right, from the left and from the middle. It encompasses economic, political and cultural spheres of life. All political parties and groupings have now quit the Civic Forum (OF) movement, reformed by V. Klaus into "political party" with no program, in spite of the pre-election promises and pledges that OF would not be turned into a party at the expense of more traditional parties.

The nature of thinking at the top can be gleaned from V. Havel's recent interview, entitled "It was easier to write about politics."<sup>21</sup> Among the views expressed therein, we find:

On former communists: "I cannot imagine political life without the many people who came through the Communist party but freed themselves from their previous illusions. Let me mention randomly Petr Pithart, Jiri Dienstbier, Pavel Rychetsky, Vladimir Dlouhy and others. I am against the principle of collective guilt, against that if somebody was a member of the Communist party he has no more chances."

On Europe: "[Slovak nation] ... should pass through this phase very quickly, because the future of Europe lies in supranational entities."

On dictatorship: "Governments of 'firm hand' are now appearing in all post-communist countries and are apparently the necessary stage of evolution. I, personally, being guided by the interests of the republic, will be able to affirm and sharpen my position, but only within certain bounds. I'll never become a Bonaparte."

On federation: "There are only two [positive political forces on federal level], the Communist party and the Rom Civic Initiative [movement of the Gypsies]."

On free market: "We live in the atmosphere of certain fetishization of the market economy, as if the purpose of history resided only in the market. The cult [sic] of the market economy is especially marked in Bohemia, less so in Slovakia."

On Charter 77: "I have always stressed that although regimes change, the idea of Charter 77 shall remain. Charter has the prerequisites to be moral correlate [sic] of power. I do not see any other institutional form of moral mirror, none of the existing political parties and none of the newspapers is fulfilling this function."

Such views can hardly bring about the needed sense of reliability, responsibility, competence or moral certainty, neither at home nor abroad. The opposition therefore becomes inevitable and spontaneous imperative of the long subdued nations. But this new opposition is likely to be met with the "firm hand" of the new breed of post-communist "velvety" dictators.

Remaining vestiges of plurality and democracy have now been destroyed: all parties and movements have either left or been forced out of the Civic Forum (OF and VPN) "coalition". The OF stands alone. It has been split into the conservative and liberal wings - and the conservative wing is "running" the country into the inevitable crisis. Because of the self-destructive OF policy, only the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia has gained in the local elections in November 1990. The Republican Party has been *de facto* outlawed, denied access to the state-controlled media and its leaders labeled fascist. The Christian Democrats (CSL) are now boycotting both the Federal and Czech governments and are preparing to withdraw their ministers and form a full-fledged opposition party.<sup>22</sup>

Inexplicably, these dissident Republican and Christian democratic parties are not receiving even a modicum of moral support from the U.S.A.

An example of new citizen self-protection dissent is also Movement '90 (Hnutí '90), formed in September 1990.<sup>23</sup> This Movement charges that the promises of the 17th November 1989 have not been kept. The "chosen way" leads

to:  
 "... the obvious impoverishment of the majority of citizens, the legalization of unfairly amassed great fortunes, and the entrenchment of the great inequalities among citizens. This 'chosen way' is uncritically and forcefully dictated by the government and the opposing views are totally repressed."

Movement '90 is starting to mobilize people all over Czechoslovakia. Its short-term requests are very concrete, almost painfully specific and very significant:

1. Objective and official examination of the facts espoused in the Analysis of the November Events (by Miroslav Dolejsi), full publication of the results, drawing of ethical and criminal conclusions, and the immediate stoppage of the hysterical campaign against the author and the independent press.
2. Delaying the realization of the so called economic "reform" and reworking the proposal so that all citizens are assured equal opportunity and starting conditions.
3. Immediate recall of central directors of the Press (CTK) Petr Uhl and the Television (CsTV) Jiri Kanturek<sup>24</sup> for using the totalitarian and antidemocratic methods in running their institutions.

One of the long-term goals of Movement '90 is forming a coalition of opposition parties (Republicans, Christian Democrats, Small Entrepreneurs, Free Bloc, Libertarians, Agrarians, etc.) against the totalitarianism of OF and VPN. The removal of all Communists (especially the "Formers") from all public offices and functions is becoming increasingly non-negotiable demand of the opposition. Continued on page 5

<sup>19</sup> Ditto.

<sup>20</sup> "Rok 1991 - rok zlomu," *Hospodarske noviny*, December 10, 1990, p. 1. The Government of CSFR decided not to publish the official report "The Strategy of Cs. economy until the year 1992." It was leaked and the intentional desinformation was subsequently admitted.

<sup>21</sup> Snazsi bylo o politice psat, *Lidove noviny*, December 7, 1990, pp. 1 and 5.

<sup>22</sup> *Lidova demokracie*, 7 December 1990.

<sup>23</sup> Address: J. Velat, Hnutí '90, Vysehradská 39, 128 00 Praha 2, Czechoslovakia.

<sup>24</sup> Both former Communists, one a Trotskyist.

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Among the many U.S. experts and sovietologists, only one, Richard Pipes of Harvard, appreciates the K.G.B. directed putschist environment in Eastern Europe today.<sup>25</sup>

*"A quiet coup d'etat is taking place. ... the generals, the K.G.B. establishment and the nomenklatura of the party - are moving into a position of authority and forcing Gorbachev to choose, and he has chosen to go with them."*

All other leaders in Eastern Europe have chosen the same, "Gorbachev's way". All of them are, as of today, on their way out.

Following Gorbachev is, at best, only a temporary solution. Establishing law and order, desirable as it may be, will not solve any of the endemic problems of the system, which brought about the present crisis, concludes Professor Pipes.

Events themselves are providing the best analysis and speak most eloquently: K.G.B. chief Kryuchkov, in his "stalinist" speech, denouncing Western economic help and warning of bloodshed (December 22, 1990), even invoked the words of the U. S. Secretary of State: *"The question for the Soviet leadership now is not whether reforms will succeed, but how to prevent anarchy and chaos."* The IMF and World Bank study concluded (in December 1990) that further financial aid to the USSR would be wasted. President Václav Havel's uplifting words to the American Congress: *"If the U.S.A. wants to help Czechoslovakia, it should help above all the Soviet Union ...,"* are still ringing in the ears of all of us - confirming the absurd, unbearable lightness of incompetent recommendations influencing even the U.S. foreign policy.

It is the people and their families, enterprises, communities, lands and republics, not the Centrum and K.G.B., which have to be understood, supported, and helped.



An endless line of people on Wenceslas Square to view President Bush on November 17, 1990 .



Charles Bridge in Prague .



View of St. Vitus Cathedral and Prague Castle.

<sup>25</sup> The New York Times, December 22, 1990, p. L9.

# Something's wrong in Czechoslovakia

Josef Kucera

For the first time in my adult life I had the opportunity this past November to visit Czechoslovakia, the birthplace of my parents and land of my ancestors for several hundred years. A year ago such a trip would have been impossible due to my involvement with a Czechoslovak newspaper in Chicago with a hard line stance against the former communist regime.

It was a once in a lifetime experience. I was taken in by the beauty of Prague, by the hospitality of my relatives, the emotional response of meeting my brother and sister for the first time, and the sheer joy in seeing my ancestral homeland free at long last. What an awesome country this could have been were it allowed to follow its true destiny and become the pride of Central Europe.

It would be difficult to imagine a more perfect trip with so many positive experiences. However, I was cautious not to allow myself to completely enter a state of euphoria whereby I would be prevented from having a true perspective on the situation there.

My father had fled for his life in 1948, leaving behind two small children, a four thousand acre estate, a very promising future. Being wealthy and a political conservative made one an automatic enemy of the communists who had taken power in February of 1948, and thereby someone who they needed to keep under surveillance. They did so by having one of his longtime neighbors monitor his actions to make sure that he would not leave town in a hurry. He was negligent in his duties however, and my father was able to escape through the forest taking only what little he could carry along.

Meanwhile 42 years have gone by and this neighbor still lives at the same address, only his once modest home has been replaced with a modern 2 story one and one of the biggest in the village. Ironically, our once prosperous family farm and home to generations of my ancestors is directly across the street, abandoned, having been nationalized, with the house demolished with only the concrete cellar popping out of the landscape like a bunker.

A depressing site and even more depressing thought considering that my father would have been executed had this neighbor succeeded in guarding him. And what is sadder, these people continue to be the elite of the country, even today, with little or no hope of ever being brought to justice.

However, not everyone was able to escape. One such man I met in Prague, a former political prisoner who served 7 years in the forced labor uranium mines in Jachymov. He told of how he would spend a month at a time down in the mine, and forced to eat dogs and rats to survive.

He showed me a moving book of prose and poetry that he had written while there. He now only has one eye and the side of his face is badly deformed, yet he is not bitter, although he does complain that too little is being done to assist the thousands of cases such as his. He states that over 8,000 were killed during interrogations alone in the early 1950s while possibly as many as 200,000 were imprisoned, for nothing.

Today he survives on a meager pension while his prison guard, who is alive and well, as are many of them, is collecting a pension triple that of the political prisoners. And moreover, these former guards have little to fear from the changes of the velvet revolution, and little hint of ever being prosecuted, unlike their Nazi counterparts who are continually discovered



Mr. Jaroslav Stara, who spent 7 years in Jachymov mines, showing me his book of Poems he wrote in the labor camp. Is anyone interested in his story? They don't seem to be in Prague.

and brought to trial and punished.

And ironically, in Czechoslovakia today it seems like an unpopular subject, this bringing to justice of communist thugs and murderers. While Elie Wiesel is hailed throughout the world as a hero for bringing to justice Nazi criminals, a similar counterpart has not been found to bring communist criminals to justice, and in fact the very idea is frowned upon.

Why does there exist such a double standard? Because it is more convenient for the new government of Czechoslovakia to avoid such a problem? Maybe because the new government is saturated with former communists. Can there ever be true democracy, freedom, and prosperity where there is such injustice?

I also had the opportunity to speak to a lawyer in Prague about the properties nationalized, or more like stolen, beginning in 1945 by the National Front, a collaboration of Communist, National Socialist, Social Democrat and Peoples (Christian Democrat) parties and later even more ruthlessly in 1948 after the Communist coup.

The return of these properties is of importance not only to people in Czechoslovakia, but to Americans as well being that there may be perhaps thousands in the U.S. who have left properties and belongings behind only to have them literally stolen by the communists.

The lawyer replied that for now, only properties nationalized in 1955 and later are being considered.

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The once proud family farm, home to generations of my family, now in ruin.



The neighbor who "guarded" my father in 1948, living comfortably today.



Site of the student protests in November of 1989. Sign put there by students asks when will you (The Government), explain what really happened.



President Bush's historic address on November 17, 1990 in Prague.

Claims are also to be filed by April of 1991, however this issue is unclear. He pointed out that by 1955 very little was left to be nationalized and that the large majority of properties were taken in 1948 and 1945.

This may explain why the government feels free to sell off industries nationalized in 1945 such as the Skoda works, without regard to the former owners, namely its shareholders. Although one may applaud the sale as a means of bolstering the economy, it is basically the sale of stolen property. In a true democracy and market economy, the shareholders are generally consulted before the company is sold, not after. How different is someone who knowingly sells stolen property from the original thief?

It appears that the government has little desire to return nationalized properties to their rightful owners given all the restrictions involved and the hurried deadline of April, 1991, which few people seem to know about. It seems like the old communist axiom: "What's yours is mine, and what's mine is none of your business". How many American citizens may be deprived of their rightful properties in Czechoslovakia because of the bandit like attitude of the government there.

The desire to reclaim your once stolen property is not rooted in selfishness or greed, but rather in justice, which seems to be in short supply in Czechoslovakia. Perhaps this is something that Congress should investigate on behalf of American citizens before any large foreign aid packages are approved.

My visit also coincided with the anniversary of the revolution, specifically November 17. On my visit to the site of the student revolts on the National Boulevard (Národní Třída), I found a memorial with candles and flowers, along with surprisingly a sign put there by the students stating: "When will the truth behind November 17, 1989 be specifically explained"!, suggesting that the velvet revolution of 1989 may have been staged. A commission has been set up to investigate those events, however popular opinion has it that no conclusion will be reached.

Various theories on the revolution of 1989 have been published in several newspapers, suggesting that the revolution was organized by the KGB, and Czechoslovak Secret Police (STB), and that in return the former



My relatives, who were among those who proudly came to see President Bush.

communists would not be prosecuted.

It was reported at the time that a student named Martin Smid had been beaten and killed by the police. It was later discovered that no one existed by that name and that he was in fact a Lt. Ludek Zivcak, a secret policeman who had infiltrated the student movement and acted as student Martin Smid, faked this scene by playing dead and being hauled away by an ambulance. The purpose being to provoke a hostile reaction from the public.

The overall plan was to replace Milos Jakes, the communists hardliner, with someone more in line with the Kremlins wishes. BBC also presented a documentary on this called, *Czech-mate: Inside the Revolution*.

Whether these theories are true remain to be seen. However, it is certain that there are many unanswered questions concerning the events of November, 1989, and the new Czechoslovak government. How serious was Vaclav Havel when he proclaimed "We will no longer lie to the people"?

In fact, had it not been for President Bush's historic visit on November 17, there may not have been any special commemoration on the anniversary to speak of. Such an anniversary should deserve a special celebration one would think, but not in the eyes of several prominent participants of the revolt, mainly consisting of students and professors of the film, music and theatre academy (FAMU), who issued a proclamation expressing their frustration over the lack of progress made in the year following the overthrow. Progress not necessarily involving economics, but more matters of bringing to justice former communist leaders and removing them from public offices. Tighter controls on former members of the secret police and a general "house cleaning" with regards to the former communist officials.

Continued on page 8



The estate that should have been my fathers, was first nationalized in 1945 and again later in 1948, and is now a school.



Myself, (front-kneeling) with some of my relatives including my brother and my father's 90 year old sister, both of whom he has not seen since 1948.

## Something's wrong in Czechoslovakia ...

I found it interesting that the communists feel little shame over the devastation that they have brought upon their own people. The Nazis, as bad as they were, at least felt some guilt for the atrocities which they committed. This was pointed out to me by a Czechoslovak living in exile in Germany for the past 40 years.

In contrast, the communists feel no guilt, maybe because they have virtually gotten off free with their atrocities, and it appears they will continue to. Yesterdays communists are today's capitalist entrepreneurs looking to invest their considerable capital and continue to be the elite of society while the average citizen still struggles to exist and at the same time further tighten the belt under the current economic hard times.

A year is a very short time in which to expect extraordinary improvement to occur. The problems facing that nation are enormous. But who caused those problems in the first place?

The idea of collective guilt has been promoted by the current leadership to somehow spread the blame for the problems of the last 40 years, suggesting that not only the communists, but everyone was guilty of helping to destroy Czechoslovakia. Everyone, even the tens of thousands of political prisoners jailed for no cause? The young people just now growing up? The senior citizens forced to live on meager pensions and settle for deplorable medical care?

This seems like a very convenient excuse to get away from identifying perhaps the biggest problem facing Czechoslovakia today, the fact that the communists, the turn coats especially, still have an important say in that country's affairs. It would actually be difficult to find members of the current national government, who at one time were not communists, whether pre-1968 or after. How different is a neo-Nazi from a Nazi?

I would have preferred to write that all is well in Czechoslovakia. It is perhaps unfair to be so critical after only one year of freedom there. But when should we start to get critical in the face of so many problems?

The Czechoslovak people always seem to need a hero to worship, someone who will do the leading while everyone else follows without question. Look where such an attitude has gotten Czechoslovakia.

First it was President Tomas Masaryk. Then President Eduard Benes. And now President Vaclav Havel. Despite of different international circumstances, Havel and Benes are particularly similar. In all fairness, both faced difficult situations while at the same time however both managed to save the necks of the communists. Benes formed a coalition government with the communists, while President Havel has a government of many former communists, mostly pre-1968 types as well as opportunists. Benes government ended abruptly in February of 1948, due mainly to the free reign which the communists were allowed.

It had been too late before they realized that the communists could not be trusted and that in fact they were the real problem. Too late before articles such as this one were written. Too late before they even realized that something was very wrong. I hope that it is not too late this time.

Josef Kučera president,  
The Czechoslovak Daily Herald  
Berwyn, Illinois

## To return or not to return?

Dr. Milan Zeleny

On February 25, 1991, Czechoslovakia has passed a new restitution law offering the return, to the original owners or their heirs, hundreds of thousands of businesses and other properties confiscated by the former Communist Government.

The claims are to be accepted until September 1991. About 40,000 people have applied so far. Emigrés, who were prosecuted, escaped or were expelled and settled in other countries (like USA), can make claims only if they return, take up residence and restore citizenship.

Czechoslovakia was "liberated" by the Red Army in 1945. In the period between 1945 and 1948 more than 60% of the economy was put in State hands through seizures, retributions and nationalization acts. So, the larger part of the economy remains in the hands of the State and in now excluded from any restitution or compensation. This involves also the well known Skoda auto works and Bata shoe company.

The State has already "disposed" of Skoda, by selling it to Volkswagen, without any referendum or consulting the original shareholders, for 22 to 30 million DM in personal bribes to the communist nomenklatura only. By 1995 Volkswagen should thus own cca 70% and the State 30% of Skoda. Similar fate is awaiting the Bata enterprises.

The next day, on February 26, 1991, the General Motors withdrew from a deal to produce gear boxes for its Opel cars with similarly State-owned Slovak auto company Bratislavské Automobilové Zavody (BAZ). Not all western companies and businessmen are ready and willing to "do business" with the State and thus sanction the unlawful seizure, confiscation, retribution and nationalization of private businesses between 1945-1948.

Former economics minister of CSFR Valtr Komarek stated that it should be possible to find a solution for the restitution of properties of Thomas Bata Jr., both morally and legally. Thomas Bata Jr. is an extraordinary personality in the gallery of world entrepreneurs. He has enormous experiences in global competition, great foreign contacts and connections and he wishes to do something for CSFR. He is a giant in Czechoslovak history. To bring lawsuits against him is at least as embarrassing as would be bringing lawsuits against T.G. Masaryk.

From our side, we should approach such matters with some flexibility. There is nothing to be afraid of from the side of Mr. Bata: he is absolutely solid and correct person. Originally, he did not even want to raise the legal issues. He simply mentioned that the property of his family and the inheritance after his mother have been confiscated unjustly and illegally.

If I analyze my short function in the Government of CSFR, I have to consider the times when I had the privilege of dealing with Mr. Bata and discussed the conditions of his entry into the shoe industry of CSFR to be the most valuable, said Mr. Komarek.

The citizens of Zlín have addressed a Petition to the President of CSFR, insisting that so called privatization should not extend to "state-owned" properties where the original owner is known and legally entitled to his claim. They ask for the revision of nationalization decrees from October 1945, enacted under the threats of Stalin and the communists, against the wishes of the people.

The Petition considers the exclusion of Mr. Thomas Bata Jr. from reprivatization to be the "World Embarrassment". They insist that Bata should have started the renewal of Czech shoe industry in the Spring of 1990. He was ready!

There was no answer or acknowledgment of the Petition.

The situation in Czechoslovakia, now fully under the control of former communists and communist nomenklatura, has now reached a crisis. Czechoslovak citizens and their Czech-American compatriots in exile are asking for help! Save Our Country! Save Czechoslovakia!



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