

CZECHOSLOVAK NEWSLETTER

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VÁCLAV HAVEL SICK IN HOSPITAL

Czech playwright Václav Havel, who was sentenced for political reasons to 4½ years in jail, is suffering from a severe case of pneumonia. On January 23, his temperature rose sharply, he had hallucinations, and he repeatedly lost consciousness. The prison authorities therefore decided to transfer him from the Bory prison near Plzeň [Pilsen] to the Pankrác prison hospital in Prague. On February 7, his sentence was temporarily suspended so that he may be sent to a civilian hospital in Prague. Václav Havel, who is in intensive care, said that his transfer from Bory was one of the worst experiences of his life. Despite high fever and chest pains, he was handcuffed and his request that his handcuffs be removed so that he could lie down was rejected.

COUNCIL'S LETTER TO THE MADRID DELEGATIONS

The Council of Free Czechoslovakia sent the following letter to the Western delegations at the Madrid Review Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which reconvened on 8 February, 1983:

The Council of Free Czechoslovakia appreciates very much the steadfast position that your delegation has taken at the Madrid Review Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe on the issue of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the communist states of Central and Eastern Europe. Your vigorous insistence on Principle VII and on the fulfillment of the pledge concerning Cooperation in Humanitarian and Other Fields has kept alive our people's faith that the

free nations--signatories of the Final Act--have not abandoned their commitment to the defense and promotion of the inherent dignity of the human person and of every man's civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

We support, therefore, all amendments to the Final Act that were proposed by the Western European delegations and that aim at strengthening its provisions on human rights and fundamental freedoms and at making these provisions a genuine international obligation of every signatory.

We expect that the Soviet Union and its satellites will try to deflect the attention of the Review Meeting from a consideration of human rights and fundamental freedoms to a debate on nuclear weapons in Europe and the so-called Soviet peace offensive. The cause of tension and conflict in Europe does not, however, lie in nuclear armaments but in the generation-long suppression of human rights, fundamental freedoms, national self-determination, and political independence in Soviet-dominated Central and Eastern Europe. The enclosed copy of the letter by Charter 77 to the Dutch Interchurch Peace Council expresses poignantly the sentiments of the Czechoslovak opposition on this issue.

We urge you, therefore, to reject most vigorously this Soviet attempt and to keep the focus of the Review Meeting on Principle VII and Basket Three.

While the Madrid Review Meeting is in session, the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the communist states of Central and Eastern Europe continues unabashedly, and the persecution of all who rise in defense of their fellow citizens' rights and liberty has actually become more widespread and brutal.

We urge you, therefore, not to allow the final communique of the Madrid Review Meeting to gloss over the issue of human rights in the manner in which it was done in the Belgrade communique in 1978. On the contrary, only an explicit and vigorous position on violations of the human rights provisions of the Final Act and an equally explicit and vigorous recommitment of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe to their defense and promotion can save the Final Act and the Conference itself from becoming a fruitless attempt at genuine security and cooperation in Europe.

Sincerely yours,

New York, January 25, 1983

[signed] Jiří Horák
Secretary for International Affairs

CHARTER 77 WRITES TO PRESIDENT HUSÁK

Charter 77 sent the following letter (reproduced in abridged form) to President Gustav Husák, first secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the show trials in Prague:

Mr. President,

We write you because you were one of the victims of an unjust and illegal trial [Gustav Husák was sentenced to life in April 1954, after spending nearly

three years in prison for "bourgeois nationalism"; he was later rehabilitated]. November 1982 marked the 30th anniversary of one of many trials of the 1950s, the trial of the "anti-state center," also known as the Slánský and Co. trial. It has become a symbol of the times: False accusations, confessions extracted by means of physical and psychological methods, and torture. The campaign against "enemies of the peoples' democratic order" affected some 200,000 innocent citizens; 233 were sentenced to death and 178 actually executed--178 murders. People were driven from their homes where their families had lived for generations. Religious orders were liquidated. Priests, laymen, and entire churches were persecuted. Scores of individuals lost their jobs and had to flee into exile before the border was tightly sealed.

The media raged with enthusiastic approval, and "peoples' resolutions" calling for severe punishment were put through. Those moving for sanctions even included many representatives of the so-called progressive culture. An absolute majority of the scared nation remained silent. The guilt feeling touches many more than the ruling elite alone.

But the spirit of the 1950s, somewhat altered but no less dangerous, permeates our lives again. Revived is the ideological blindness and opportunistic servility. A new interpretation of the Penal Code was published in 1980. It is based on ideological and political considerations, not on legality. Political trials excluding the public are being staged again. Sentenced in this way were J. Bárta, R. Battěk, V. Benda, V. Havel, J. Gruntorád, R. Hložánek, F. Lízná, P. Pospíchal, P. Uhl, and many others.

It would serve no good purpose to forget the trials of 30 years ago. Timid and opportunistic behavior helps to generate an atmosphere where nobody cares to seek citizen opinions--except during police interrogations. Non-elected "peoples' delegates" decide on their behalf. Citizens learn about price increases after they are decreed. Our environment is getting increasingly unhealthy, arable land and forests are shrinking, some regions are an ecological disaster, but nobody must know. The struggle for peace is led by selected cadres. "Open trials" are witnessed by reliable and approving spectators.

Charter 77 published a number of documents proving that the spirit of the 1950s lives on. It has tried to replace it with the spirit of honest partnership, the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act. In that sense it is useful to remember the 30th anniversary of the Slánský trial.

Prague, November 27, 1982

[signed] Dr. Radim Palouš, Anna Marvenová,
Ladislav Lis, Charter 77 spokes-
persons

(Charter 77 document No. 33/82)

Charter 77 Protests the Arrest of Its Spokesman

On January 5, Charter 77 sent a letter to the minister of interior, Dr. J. Obzine, protesting the arrest of Ladislav Lis, Charter 77 spokesperson (Czechoslovak Newsletter, Vol. VIII, No. 1, p. 8). Ladislav Lis was replaced by Jan Kozlík.

Mr. Lis' wife, Alena, wrote the prosecutor general, Dr. Ján Fejěš, on January 7, complaining that her husband's whereabouts are being withheld from her despite her request for such information.

RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

Letter to Vladimír Janků

On January 10, Charter 77 sent a letter to the newly appointed head of the Federal Office for Religious Affairs, Ing. Vladimír Janků, reminding him of the Charter 77 document on socialist legality and religious persecution (Czechoslovak Newsletter, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 1983, p. 3). It drew his attention to the imprisonment of clergymen, including František Lízna, Štefan Jevorský, and Rudolf Šmahel. Hope was expressed that the change of the agency's head would bring about a different attitude by the Czechoslovak government toward the implementation of the Helsinki accords. The letter was signed by Dr. Radim Palouš, Anna Marvanová, and Jan Kozlík.

Matej Lučan Receives Church Dignitaries

The Vice-Premier of the Federal Government, Matej Lučan, who is responsible for church affairs, received on January 25 representatives of the government-sponsored Catholic organization, Pacem in Terris, and the Protestant organization, Christian Peace Conference. As usual, what was discussed was not church affairs but rather the Soviet peace propaganda. According to an official press release, the representatives "expressed full support of their churches for the world congress on peace and life and against nuclear war to be held in Prague this coming June." They also "expressed gratitude for conditions in Czechoslovakia, which make it possible for citizens to enjoy a full religious life." The vice-premier "praised the patriotic activities of Pacem in Terris and the Christian Peace Conference" and promised full government support (Rudé právo, January 26, 1983).

In its previous issues Czechoslovak Newsletter included reports on the growing religious persecution in Czechoslovakia. The two organizations mentioned above are not regarded as representative of genuine religious life in the country.

Billy Graham and the Peace Movement, Continued

In reply to a letter the Council of Free Czechoslovakia had sent to Reverend Billy Graham expressing surprise at his statements during his visit to Czechoslovakia last November (Czechoslovak Newsletter, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 1983, p. 2), The Billy Graham Team Office (Crusade Information Service) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, responded to the Council with a press release defending Rev. Graham's declarations. Addressing church leaders the American evangelist had stated: "The era of churches which exercise great political power is over in many countries. In modern secular societies, east and west, churches can be relevant only if they concentrate on proclaiming the Gospel and serve the needs of people in the name of Christ. Although there are various regulations, there are also many opportunities available to the churches of Czechoslovakia and to individual believers." Rev. Graham had expressed hope that "perhaps a new era of better relations between church and state has begun."

Rev. Miloš Rejchert Answers

Rev. Miloš Rejchert, pastor of the Czechoslovak Evangelical Church and Charter 77 member, sent the following letter to Rev. Billy Graham (reproduced in abridged form):

Dear Brother,

I read in Rudé právo of November 5 that you will remember your days spent in Czechoslovakia. I am not one of those who view your visit as totally negative. From your statement that your impressions exceeded expectations, I conclude that you had to correct your conceptions in more than one way. I do not see the situation of Christians in Czechoslovakia in a black-and-white, Manichean way.

The police questioned me last week about who had given me a ticket to your meeting in the Salvator church (I could not attend. My duty in the boiler room, where I have worked as a stoker for the past 10 years since my permit to do pastoral work was revoked, made it impossible). I refused to tell the authorities. The Evangelical Church has among its documents the "Four Articles of Prague" of 1419. They stipulate that "the word of God should be proclaimed freely and without hindrance and preached by Christian priests in the Kingdom of Bohemia." To my knowledge it was the first time in the history of the Czechoslovak Evangelical Church that services were conducted for the invited only. This shocked me deeply. The police said the church itself had made the arrangement. It is embarrassing to many. The communists alone are not responsible for everything.

You mentioned peace many times. For the Czechoslovak Christians it is a very touchy point. The peace rhetoric of some of our church dignitaries has become a magical formula for obtaining otherwise unavailable permits to travel across the continents. Perhaps it would be useful to analyze first the correlation between the words "struggle" and "peace." The struggle for peace slogan appears frequently in the media reports. Each struggle has its purpose: Either to preserve what is or to gain what is not. The purpose is always human. Like other human conditions it is not an absolute value for a Christian. Sometimes the respect for life and neighborly love, or the Christ-or-Genghiz-Khan syndrome mandates us to renounce the preservation of the existing peace. After returning from a Nazi concentration camp, Mrs. Božena Komárková, a believer, wrote that "we should kneel next to our torturers [but] we sought war because we had experienced something even more evil."

[Božena Komárková, born in 1903, was active in the YWCA and spent the war years in a Nazi concentration camp. She taught history at a "gymnasium" (academic high school) in Brno from 1945 to 1948, when she was purged by the communist regime. She signed Charter 77 and published essays in the samizdat "Padlock Publications." One of them, "The Secularized World and the Gospel," appeared in Czech in Switzerland (Konfrontation, Zurich, 1981).]

Human peace is deceptive like the human heart. We know that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17, 9). Noble ideals turn easily and unnoticed into idols. From our recent 20th Century experience we know how difficult it is to distinguish noble human ideals from unselfish efforts turned into idolatry. Peace for which one can struggle is human reality. To preserve it it is necessary to fight at times. Occasionally it is necessary to fight against peace (in violation of the Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill"). The correlation between struggle and peace reminds us of the strange aspect of sinful human existence mentioned by Paul. "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7, 19). Besides the dichotomy of human peace, there is the peace of God, the unambiguous peace, the peace for which we cannot fight, only beg. The Gospel does not bless peace fighters, only peacemakers (Matthew 5, 9).

Allow me to summarize the peace movement of many Czechoslovak Christians and ex-Christians alike by quoting a Czech thinker and philosopher, Emanuel Rádl (1873-1942): "Not without sympathy I watch the pacifists. Why are their numerous

societies so little respected by the actual course of events? One of their weaknesses is their struggle in the abstract against wars between states, pretending to be able to halt the catastrophe with brochures and congresses of good-natured citizens. A war because of faulty ideologies occurs slowly. Long before the most peaceful slogans are still to be heard beyond its borders, citizens are being mobilized in their country. Let us oppose domestic wars, the creation of domestic adversaries. It would then be easy to oppose wars between states."

Prague, November 16, 1982

[signed] Miloš Rejchert, pastor of the Czechoslovak Evangelical Church

Copies to: The Synod of the Czechoslovak Evangelical Church, Prague;
The Central Office of the Fraternal Unity of Baptists, Prague;
The Christian Peace Conference, Prague;
Prof. Božena Komárková, Brno.

(Informace o Chartě 77, November 1982, p. 5)

Czechoslovak Clergy Honored

The International Committee for the Support of Charter 77 in Paris awarded the 1982 Jan Palach Prize to "priests, pastors, and laymen, members of Charter 77, for their steadfast and resolute defense of religious freedom in Czechoslovakia." Names of the Catholic and Protestant activists cannot be revealed to avoid their harassment. The award carries a prize of 25,000 French francs, the result mainly of collections among Czechs and Slovaks living outside their country.

ECONOMIC INFORMATION

Scarce Commodities

The communist regime in Czechoslovakia has concentrated its attention on exports. The public was informed that some commodities, originally earmarked for the domestic market, were exported during the past two years to earn sufficient foreign currency to cover the purchase of imports. In spite of the scarcity of some goods, the regime is reluctant to introduce rationing. Instead, it tries to regulate the market through higher prices or by restricting the supply of some goods or halting the supply of others altogether.

The situation has become bad enough to force the government to create a "Government Commission for Insuring the Supply of the Domestic Market with the Most Essential Commodities" (Nové slovo, No. 4, January 27, 1983). The public is being conditioned to face scarcities for at least two years. "The improvement in the supply of some consumer goods is to be understood not only as an economic goal but a political one as well, to be solved by 1985," wrote Tribuna, No. 4, January 26, 1983.

Nové slovo of January 27 mentioned among scarce commodities "electromechanical appliances, kitchen utensils, leisure products, textiles, and synthetic-fiber apparel." Specifically listed were batteries, glassware, china, candles, light bulbs, linen towels, and rubber shoes. Tribuna, No. 3, January 19, 1983, defined leisure products as goods "mainly for young people," including inexpensive tents, sleeping bags, knapsacks, clothing, and shoes. It noted that hiking and other tourist activities are neglected in favor of touring by automobile. According to

the above-mentioned item in Nové slovo, "large industrial enterprises do not have enough capacity and manpower and do not regard such products as profitable." This kind of output is left to the production cooperatives and units associated with collective farms, which do not produce sufficient quantities.

The regime is now turning to small-craft industries it had previously dismantled, but when in October the Central Committee discussed assistance for private plots on collective farms and small gardens it was discovered that there was a shortage of hoes, spades, rakes, and forks. The discovery resulted in an extensive study, "The Function of Small Enterprises in the Economy" (Plánované hospodářství, No. 12, 1982). It conceded that "among the basic shortcomings of our economy is doubtless the essential backwardness of crafts." Small-scale production is to be assisted, but as Nové slovo wrote, "propaganda does not yield good results." Exhibits of scarce commodities were held under the slogan "In Search for Producers." One exhibition was in Bratislava in April 1982, displaying 164 scarce items. A total of 125 organizations was invited. Only 51 actually attended, and of these only 19 evidenced real interest.

Bureaucracy Blamed

The National Council of the Czech Socialist Republic blamed "bureaucracy" for economic shortcomings. At its December session it was noted that "one of the primary tasks of our economy is a reduction in the size of the administrative apparatus in both the production and nonproduction areas. Between 1982 and 1985, a total of 30,872 individuals, more than 10 percent of the administrative work force, will be phased out. An aggregate of 7,963 workers will be affected this year (Zemědělské noviny, January 27, 1983). But Rudé právo of February 2 is not optimistic. The number of national committee officers is growing. "ONVs" (County National Committees) have some 50 commissions, committees, advisory organs, and "aktivs" without jurisdiction, but meeting regularly. Their members are excused from work on this score. All of them are engaged in collecting documentation, all are active in spite of the common knowledge that no tangible results are evident.

Price Increase

On January 27, Radio Prague provided some information on the price increase for services going into effect on February 1. The hikes cover the mending of footwear, clothing and underwear, furs, watches and clocks, custom furniture, and cemetery monuments. Also, the cost of transportation for repairmen and some hotel and restaurant services. Going up, too, are the prices of hunting and sports weapons, toys, upholstered furniture, boats, knitwear, antiques, locksmith items, imported lawn mowers, pumps, and motor saws. The price of color television sets is being reduced, however.

Direct Export Sales

Some major industrial enterprises will no longer have to sell their products abroad through state-run foreign trade agencies, it was announced on Radio Prague on January 30. It is hoped that the new arrangement will boost exports, but the radio report also noted that Czechoslovakia at present is unable to expand production of exportable items because the needed capacities in plants are used for the production of unmarketable goods that go to increase inventories.

WEST GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER IN PRAGUE

West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher was on an official visit in Prague at the beginning of February. He repeatedly stressed that the zero option to which the West aspires is the best alternative with respect to further disarmament agreements and arms limitations. Warsaw Pact capitals should have no doubt about the West's seriousness in reaching clearly understood agreements. Genscher hailed President Reagan's offer for a meeting with Soviet party chief Yuri Andropov and paid an unscheduled call on Archbishop Cardinal F. Tomášek.

The German press reported Mr. Genscher's response to the recent Warsaw Pact "Prague Declaration" which had important diplomatic overtones. With respect to the renunciation of force he said that it must not simply apply to future cases. Rather, it also has pertinence to the "on-going use of force," an allusion to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the Polish situation (German Press Review, Washington, D.C., February 9, 1983).

LITERARY SCENE

Nedela, a supplement of Nové slovo of December 2, 1982 (Nové slovo is the ideological weekly of the Communist Party of Slovakia) published the results of a poll about the popularity of Slovak literature. "The public's attitude toward its national literature is part of the cultural tradition and overall cultural awareness," Nové slovo noted in its introduction to the results. If true, the poll revealed that the current Slovak socialist literature has not taken deep roots among the public.

The most widely read poet is Janko Smrek, who died recently. He was not a protagonist of socialist realism about which he actually expressed open reservations. The most popular novelist is Margita Figuli. Her novel, "Three Chestnut Horses," got the most votes in the poll. This work as well as another, "Babylon," which has a religious theme, are not works of socialist realism. The chief ideologue of socialist realism, the poet Laco Novomeský, ranked only eighth while the novelist František Hečko, another advocate of this genre, ended up in fifth place. His novel, "The Wooden Village," regarded as the first typical example of socialist realism in Slovakia, was not even mentioned.

Under the title of "Our Love of Literature" Kmen, the literary supplement of the Prague weekly Tvorba, No. 2, 1983, complained about the decline in book reading, partly as a result of television viewing. "Something is happening to our traditional love of literature One proof is [the lack of interest] in collected works. There is no secret that they do not sell." The author of the article, Milen Blahynka, wrote that the collected works of S.K. Neumann, one of the approved old-guard communist writers, did not sell well although only 1,000 copies were printed. (Some 20,000 to 100,000 copies are printed of the popular novels.)

NEWS FROM NORMALIZED CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Irritation About Terrorism

The Prague weekly Tvorba, No. 2, 1983, attacked Claire Sterling for her book on international terrorism [The Terror Network: The Secret War of International

Terrorism, New York, Holt Rinehart, 1981]. "In Czechoslovakia the lady is known as the author of a pamphlet on the death of Jan Masaryk [The Masaryk Case, New York, Harper and Row, 1969]. Under new orders she switched to a new issue, international terrorism, and her book has become for all anticommunists a proof that socialist countries are responsible for terrorism in the West It is a paradox. Americans have the guts to blame others for terrorism while recent history is full of evidence that it is especially United States imperialism which uses terror in all its forms."

The Prague regime got stung by revelations of a Czechoslovak connection in the clandestine arming and training of various terrorist groups ranging from the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] and the IRA [Irish Republican Army] to the Italian Red Brigades (Czechoslovak Newsletter, Vol. VIII, No. 1, p. 7).

New Rules for Registration

A new law on registration went into force on January 1, 1983 (No. 135/1982). "Its purpose is to insure proper and speedy registration of all movements and citizens," Rudé právo of February 2 reported. The new law calls for the presentation of an ID card and a permit for using an apartment or room. Without such permit a person must submit a statement by the individual or organization offering the accommodation. Children must be registered not later than three days after their birth certificate is issued.

Endangered Forests

Toxic emissions from industrial plants endanger forests in Czechoslovakia. Rudé právo of January 10 reported that under existing ecological conditions forest renewal is lagging. "Roughly one-fourth of seedlings does not survive a year The damage from pollution is serious and stands as a warning. Almost a third of the forests in the Czech Socialist Republic [Bohemia and Moravia] is affected."

Trade with Afghanistan

The chairman of the Afghan Council of Ministers, Sulat Ali Kishmand, received a Czechoslovak trade delegation in Kabul on January 15. He and the Czechoslovak deputy foreign minister, Jaroslav Jakubec, signed a protocol on the exchange of goods for 1983. The total is to increase by 38 percent compared to 1982.