György Konrad
Per Wästberg
Danilo Kis
Jiří Gruša
Amos Oz
Alain Finkielkraut

THE UNOFFICIAL WRITERS SYMPOSIUM BUDAPEST 1985

István Csurka
Timothy Garton Ash
Hungarian statement
Czechoslovak statement
With extracts from
A Besieged Culture:
Czechoslovakia Ten Years After Helsinki
Including Václav Havel
Eva Kantůrková
Ludvík Vaculík

International Helsinki Federation
For Human Rights
Vienna

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CULTURAL SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM

Budapest 15-17 October 1985

Panel
François Bondy
Hans Magnus Enzensberger
Alain Finkielkraut
Timothy Garton Ash
Jiri Grusa
Danilo Kis
György Konrad
Amos Oz
Susan Sontag
Per Wästberg

15 October
19.00
Evening gathering and dinner for all IHF symposium members as well as for especially invited Hungarian guests and international press

16 October
14.00-18.30
Chairman: Per Wästberg
"WRITERS AND THEIR INTEGRITY"
Speeches
Audience discussion

17 October
14.00-18.30
Chairman: Susan Sontag
"THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN CULTURE"
Speeches
Audience discussion
Amongst the audience:
Sandor Csoori
Miklós Meszoly
Istvan Csurka
Gaspar Miklos Tamas
György Bence
György Krasso

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INTERNATIONAL HELSINKI FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
The Cultural Symposium, Budapest, 15-17 October, 1985

The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) is a non-governmental organisation that seeks to promote compliance of signatory states with the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act.

The IHF represents national Helsinki Human Rights Committees in Austria, Canada, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.

The IHF organised seminars in Madrid and in Ottawa in connection with the CSCE meetings. At the European Cultural Forum — the first CSCE meeting to be held in a Warsaw-Pact country — it was natural for the IHF to wish to organise a cultural symposium during the opening days of the Forum. It was our understanding that the regulations regarding the activities of non-governmental organisations in Budapest would be the same as those applied at the Helsinki Review conference in Madrid.

Our purpose was to discuss in an open fashion questions of European culture in order to complement and enhance the private deliberations. We invited a panel of writers of great international reputation: Susan Sontag, François Bondy, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Alain Finkielkraut, Timothy Garton Ash, Jiri Grusa, Danilo Kis, György Konrad, Amos Oz and Per Wästberg.

The topics to be discussed fell under two general headings: "Writers and their Integrity" and "The Future of European Culture". The audience was to consist of members of the IHF and its national committees, delegates to the official Forum, members of the international press and interested Hungarian citizens.

For the purpose of this conference we rented a conference room in a large, central Budapest hotel. All the participants and the panel members, a group of more than 50 people, arrived from abroad without any difficulties. On 14 October, the day before our program was to begin, we were informed that the conference room would not be available to us. Other rooms that we rented for this purpose were also cancelled soon afterwards.

During negotiations with the Foreign Ministry, we were asked to submit a written request to hold our meeting in a rented, public place. Our request was apparently considered at a very high level. Some hours later we received an official denial which was confirmed that evening at a press conference given by the Hungarian authorities at the Cultural Forum. The reasons given for the refusal were that "the Hungarian government did not guarantee to assure the conditions whereby there could be meetings initiated by private persons or private organisations" and that "the meeting... could disturb the atmosphere and the work of the Forum".

The symposium, however, was held in private apartments with between 150 and 200 people present at any time. Crowded rooms with people sitting on chairs and floors — the atmosphere could not have been more *gemütlich* and at the same time electric. All participants were aware that they were part of a unique, historical event.

For the first time in a Warsaw-Pact country, private citizens from many countries — including Austria, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Rumania, Sweden, Switzerland, Yugoslavia and the United States — met freely without constraint to discuss and air their views, at the same time as members of 35 governments were holding an intergovernmental conference.

We hope that this will be one of many such meetings of citizens where people from East and West can discuss and debate freely and peacefully and, yes, even disagree in the true spirit of international cooperation symbolized by the Helsinki Final Act. **GN KJvS** ■

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The writers' symposium is about to start in Budapest. Facing an expectant audience which filled the large premises to capacity are seven of the speakers (*L to R*): Jiří Gruša, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Per Wästberg, Amos Oz, Gaspar Miklós Tamás, György Konrad and Susan Sontag.

Incomprehensible action

The following statement was issued in Budapest on 15 October 1985.

The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights regrets that the Hungarian authorities have forbidden us to use public facilities for the citizens' cultural forum we had planned to hold in conjunction with the inter-governmental cultural forum that is being held in Budapest. In our view, the Hungarian government's action violates the 1975 Helsinki accords, which it signed, and the Concluding Document of the 1980-83 Madrid Conference, which it approved.

In Madrid, where it was determined that an inter-governmental cultural forum would take place in Budapest at this time, the Hungarian government and 34 other governments, committed themselves to take steps 'to ensure satisfactory conditions for activities within the framework of mutual co-operation on their territory, such as sporting and cultural events, in which citizens of other participating States take part'. Further, the government of Hungary and 34 other governments committed themselves to 'implement the relevant provisions of the Final Act, so that religious faiths, institutions, organisations and their representatives can, in the field of their activity, develop contacts and meetings among themselves and exchange information'.

In our view, the citizens' cultural forum that we planned is just the kind of activity contemplated in the agreements reached at Helsinki in 1975 and at Madrid in 1983. In offering facilities to other governments for the inter-governmental cultural forum, we believe that the Hungarian government assumed a special obligation to comply with the letter and spirit of the agreements at Helsinki and Madrid in facilitating a citizens' cultural forum.

To the best of our knowledge, our proposal to hold a peaceful forum in public facilities open to the public did not violate any laws or regulations that the Hungarian government ordinarily applies either to Hungarians or to visitors to Hungary. Moreover, we consider that the Hungarian government is obliged to apply its own laws and regulations in such a way as to seek to comply with its undertakings at Helsinki and Madrid.

We consider that our citizens' forum would complement and, we hope, enhance the inter-governmental forum. Our purpose was not to disrupt the inter-governmental conference. An essential part of the Helsinki process is that it is furthered not only by contacts between governments. It is also furthered by contacts between citizens from the participating states.

Under all the circumstances, the actions of the Hungarian authorities are incomprehensible to us. We call on the Hungarian government to reconsider its decision and to declare that citizens' groups seeking to further the Helsinki process are welcome to do so without hindrance by the Hungarian government. We also call on the 35 nations taking part in the Helsinki process to support our efforts to hold peaceful citizens' meetings in furtherance of the Helsinki process and to limit future inter-governmental meetings to those places where firm assurances are provided that peaceful citizen meetings are unhampered and, indeed, welcomed. ■

Last year in Budapest

Reflections and testimonies from a remarkable unofficial symposium

'Let authors' works be printed as they were written, and let them not be persecuted because *they have written them. A writer does not need any higher authority to decide about his works or permit or forbid him to travel abroad. It is time the state stopped treating us like unruly children. It is absurd that we should be afraid because we write.'*

These are the words of Hungary's best-known novelist, György Konrad. At first reading it might be thought that there is nothing particularly significant about them. Isn't that what you would expect a Hungarian writer to say? And especially a Hungarian writer, many of whose works have gone unpublished in his own country, appearing only in samizdat and in translation abroad.

Perhaps — but I would not have expected György Konrad to be speaking in these terms at an international writers' conference in his native city of Budapest. Yet, on 15-18 October last year there took place in the Hungarian capital an event without precedent in the Communist part of Europe: an unofficial symposium on 'The Writer and His Integrity', organised by the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights to coincide with the opening of the European Cultural Forum, which was held in Budapest as part of the Helsinki process of consultations and conferences.

Taking part in the official Forum were delegations from all the 35 states participating in the Helsinki Accords in 1975, with government representatives leading the delegations from Eastern Europe. The idea behind the 'alternative', unofficial symposium was to demonstrate that culture — literature and the arts — is not merely the business of governments and official institutions but, above all, of the writers and artists themselves, and of their readers and audiences, of ordinary people the world over. For this reason the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights invited 10 writers (Susan Sontag, François Bondy, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Alain Finkielkraut, Timothy Garton Ash, Jiří Gruša, Danilo Kis, György Konrad, Amos Oz and Per Wästberg) to discuss topics such as 'Censorship and Self-Censorship', 'Writing in Exile', 'Ethnic Identity in Literature', 'The Rights of Minorities' and 'The Future of European Culture' in front of an audience consisting of a large number of members of the Hungarian democratic opposition, as well as many journalists from all over the world, who seemed to find the symposium more interesting than the proceedings of the official Forum.

The unofficial event got off to a bad start thanks to a last-minute change of heart by the Hungarian authorities, who withdrew permission for the symposium to be held in a conference room at the big Duna Intercontinental Hotel. Even the first alternative venue – a large restaurant in the centre of Budapest, whose management initially welcomed the prospect of some 100 or more customers — had to be abandoned when the organisers received an apologetic phone call to the effect that unfortunately some windows in the establishment had to be repaired, so that the booking had to be cancelled!

The unofficial symposium was finally held in a private flat belonging to a well-known film director.

*Apart from Jiří Gruša, a Czech poet and novelist now living in exile in West Germany, the symposium was also addressed by another exiled Czech writer, the dramatist Pavel Kohout, who expressed his thanks to the Hungarian authorities for allowing him to visit Budapest; the last time he had tried to do so he was arrested and put straight on a train back to Vienna, where he lives. Altogether, Czech writers figured prominently at the symposium, as the words of some thirty of them were available in a book produced for the occasion by the International Helsinki Federation and the Charta 77 Foundation in Stockholm (*A Besieged Culture, *available from the Charta Foundation, Box 50041, S-104 05, Stockholm, or from* Index on Censorship, *price £7).*

The book was distributed to all the delegations at the official European Cultural Forum.

Opening the unofficial symposium, György Konrad called it 'the first step to improving the situation of European writers and intellectuals, who should be able to meet freely and hold discussions'. The Hungarian novelist then went on:

'The writer must have the right to express views at variance with the official view. The parallel, unofficial culture in Hungary and elsewhere came into being just because the uniform, official culture had proved too limiting.

'Censorship — that is culture surrounded by barbed wire. And in a country where books are burned, the entire society is accessory to the crime. Literature must have absolute freedom — writers may be guilty of compromises, literature must not.

'In liberal democracies there are censors, but no Censor with a capital 'C'. Where they do have a Censor with a capital 'C', it is difficult to manoeuvre.

'The Cultural Forum will now meet for four weeks behind closed doors. What have they got to hide? We're meeting here quite openly, not as delegates or representatives of anything, but as individuals. We are here because we wish to be here, not because someone has sent us. We represent no states, only ourselves.'

George Theiner

György Konrad

A modest request for reforms

'Europe is made up of individuals, not governments. We have gathered here so that the message of the Europe of writers might be heard, besides that of the Europe of states'

1. There are three wishes which I believe we writers all share: to see our work printed as it was written; not to be punished or discriminated against because of what we have written; and finally, to be able to make a living out of writing, if those in the trade and the reading public value our work at all.

If there exists an interest shared by all writers, and resulting from an absolute human right, that interest is freedom of expression. Every writer is concerned with the liberty of literature all over the world.

2. The censor is present in those who believe they have outwitted the censor. Even the one who transgresses the rules laid down by the censor feels the weight of his hand: he knows he is trespassing and because of this knowledge his work assumes certain moralistic-criminalistic overtones.

You will not get far by attempting to avoid prohibitory signs either. For there is not only the kind of self-censoring that makes one afraid to write something down, there is also the fear of according too much significance to warning signals.

In Budapest there is no law to prevent armed men from entering my room and reading my diary. I may possibly find a sealed letter advising me that my manuscript has been tried and found guilty and sentenced to death. Customs officers have the right to forage in my bag and confiscate my manuscript; are deemed worthy judges of what books I may not receive by post — my own, perhaps, in case I should tempt myself.

The phenomenon is rather anachronistic. To my delight I find that in the West policemen and customs officers are not in the least interested in my authorial activities. I am a normal everyday citizen, foolish or wise, likeable or repugnant as the case may be, but the idea that I might be dangerous occurs to no one.

3. It is our lot to be each and every one of us subjects in a case-book of liberation. We all know best what we fear, what we consider awkward or delicate, what must be avoided at all costs; what we suspiciously assert to be of no interest to us, what lessons we have learned.

Censors exist in liberal democracies, but there is no Censor with a capital 'C'. Where there is no centralised power there is no centralised censorship. Centralised censoring belongs to one-party regimes and will assert its right of supervision over culture as a whole.

In liberal democracies there are powers and there are censors and it is left to the individual to navigate between them. But when it is The Censor that we have to face, it is difficult to manoeuvre our boats, to play off one medium of communication against the other, however adroit we may be. In such cases it is far more likely that the censor will wear us out than that we shall wear out the censor, the only questions are: who puts up what kind of open or cunning resistance, who suffers defeat despite what kind of stout defence. Defeat it must be, for we are condemned to observe this Gorgon-head all our lives and in the watching our eyes too are turned to stone.

4. When we assemble here it is not because we were sent to assemble, it is because we wished to see each other. We are not delegates, we are not spokesmen for the state, we are ourselves.

We sit here like another Europe. Writers from both sides of the military line, who are not here to represent their state but themselves. A little like the hommes des lettres in the 18th century, who wandered enthusiastically all over Europe to seek each other out. Borders and calamities separated them but they created the Europe of reflection beside the Europe of kings. The ideas of the enlightenment flowed over the borders. From Paris to St. Petersburg the censors and customs officers were worsted.

From Voltaire to Flaubert a hundred years sufficed for French authors to overcome censorship. In the eastern half of Europe two hundred years have not sufficed. In the eastern half the censor and the customs officer is not a comic figure. The smile freezes on our lips when he takes our

György Konrad, Hungary's best-known novelist, has had several of his books published in translation abroad as well as in Hungarian samizdat but not officially in Budapest. His most recent book, *AntiPolitics*, came out in English last year (Quartet Books). His latest novel, *Kertei mulatság* ('Garden Party'), is shortly to be published in Germany, Sweden and the USA (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).

Eloquent contrast

In spite of the last-minute cancellation by the authorities of the hotel conference room the unofficial forum does in fact go ahead very much as planned, in a private flat. The authorities do not, in practice, prevent anyone from attending. Most of the leading figures of the Hungarian opposition are here — including one who was under house arrest until a week ago. It is a beautiful attic flat, with stained wooden beams, parquet floors and a view from the balcony across to the Buda hills, magical at twilight. The faded rugs, the Transylvanian pottery, the old glass-fronted bookcase — every detail speaks of individual taste, of private and independent life. There could hardly be a more eloquent contrast to the antiseptic corporate interiors of the Novotel. As with the furniture, so also with the speeches here and there.

There the Rumanian delegate glowingly describes the cultural freedoms enjoyed by the Hungarian and German minorities in Transylvania. Here we learn the true story of increasingly harsh discrimination and persecution: Hungarian-language teaching largely abolished, Hungarian magazine and book publishing reduced to a trickle, Hungarian writers prevented from writing, Hungarian priests beaten and even (in at least one case) killed by the dreaded Rumanian *Securitate*.There the delegate from the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic proclaims — in Russian — the glories of a culture bureaucratically subordinated to the socialist state in its 'struggle for peace'. Here we listen to one of many outstanding Czech writers persecuted and expelled by that state. Here, too, we can hear the responses of Czech writers still in Prague to a questionnaire which asked them what that state could do for their culture. ■

Timothy Garton Ash, *The Spectator*, 26 October 1985.

notes from our bags, thumbs through them, confiscates them perhaps, takes them away.

We can utter words of indignation: Reactionary hangover! Feudal anachronism! Such things are simply not done in a civilised country! He shrugs, cites provisions and rules of law, and believes he is serving the people's state, socialism, and says: 'It is in our common interest not to be allowed to read everything we are interested in.'

All this is so grotesque. Even the fact that we are speaking about it here and now. Censorship is the most obsolete institution in the world. Of course, the state likes to dress it up in a youthful disguise; to pass it off as the guardian of the budding future, as the preserver of noble interests, as the interceptor of pollution. What was the novelty in the burning of books? That it was followed by the burning of humans.

Today the breakdown of communication heightens the danger of war. In the transgression of the rules of censorship is the making of peace. In literature there exists only one Europe; literature is not guided by the military.

We can break out of the cocoon of nation-state intelligentsia. Our nation-state is but one subordinate unit of the state-block, and our block is but one subordinate unit of the block-system. Our lives bind us together. If you are a victim today, I may be one tomorrow.

5. We are intellectuals, the first international class in the history of the world. Our common mission and our personal interests to all intents and purposes coincide. Our primary interest is our intellectual freedom, which is at the same time the basis of our power.

The history of the intelligentsia is the history of its emancipation, made dramatic by terrible regressions.

We are not innocent; our errors and cowardice make us accessories to the great crime of obfuscation. Behind every act of terror there have stood authors furnishing ideas.

Our primary interest is to recognise the coincidence of our interests and to establish, gradually and peacefully, a regional and international network of anti-censorship solidarity among authors; it should be an informal network. The trans-national solidarity of writers is an attainable goal. For the whole of world literature is one dazzling match between author and censor.

6. Ladies and Gentlemen, I consider it a favourable sign that this Cultural Forum is taking place; I am glad that it is taking place in Budapest and I share in the pride of the hosts.

The cultural politics of the Hungarian government have a share in making this meeting possible. They have brought the two Europes a fraction closer together, and to a certain extent have brought the system and the writers closer as well.

Since 1956, the question whether our state should be a member of the Warsaw Pact seems to be one that Hungarians cannot decide. Only international treaties, sanctioned by all the powers concerned could bring a definite change of status. Such an agreement, to which the Austrian treaty might serve as a model, can as yet be only dimly conceived, as occurring in the distant future. Until then we consider as given our geopolitical situation and dispute even among ourselves only over what our lesser and greater allies will tolerate from us under the given circumstances.

At all events our city is pleasanter than the other cities of our region insofar as our censorship has proved more amenable and accommodating.

The advantages of our country — as compared to other member-states of the Warsaw Pact — are an achievement of the whole of Hungarian society. I include the Hungarian political class and today's leaders. Some things they promoted, others they thwarted, and a lot of things happened against their will. To these they have resigned themselves. They do not lack a certain cool and realistic intelligence.

Let us make the various kinds of censorship the subject of discussion behind open doors. Let us observe this reality from many aspects. Let each bear his own type of censorship like a cross.

The censor is inside you. The censor is the fear of the other person. An opaline bell-jar of ideological prejudices. We are all distorted in the manner of our own censorships.

7. If our guests look down from the windows of their hotel rooms to the square nearest to the Erzsébet bridge they will see the statue of Sándor Petöfi, the poet. At the base of that statue candles are placed on 15 March each year by the citizens of Budapest. Since 1848 this day has commemorated a victory: it was the day on which the poet — in the name of the people — took possession of the printing press and printed his poem without the consent of the censor.

Behind him stood the citizens of Budapest, holding umbrellas and waiting for the poem to be read. With this gesture the revolution of 1848 began, a revolution which among other things proclaimed the freedom of the press. On our greatest

'Uncle Nick odes'

In the spring of 1975 the papers published a new Communist moral code, drafted by the General Secretary, President Nicolae Ceausescu, himself. A special meeting was called at the offices of our weekly. The Deputy Editor asked me, as he had others, what I intended to write about it. 'Nothing,' I replied. Soon, I was not an editor any more but a proof-reader; I was banned from publishing, as it turned out, for two years; and I was interrogated by the State Security two or three times a week for a period of four months. All this because of one word. My colleagues came to visit me at home, trying to convince me that I was behaving foolishly; one of my best friends even proposed to write the article for me, if I was really unable to do it. After three years I emigrated to Hungary.

Please don't misunderstand me, I was not a hero, my refusal dictated by sheer disgust. And, perhaps, vanity. The authorities know that a so-called 'Ceausescu article' (or 'C poem', or 'Uncle Nick portrait') shames its author. It is part of their tactics: once agree to this kind of humiliation and you are theirs forever. There is no way out, if you keep on refusing you face unemployment, or worse.

The right to silence is not easily granted. Those editors and publishers who protect some outstanding authors by not demanding 'Uncle Nick odes' from them, produce the odes themselves and so sacrifice themselves. I'll never forget the remark one of my colleagues made during the 'punitive' meeting held after I refused to write the Ceausescu piece: 'Do you think you're better than the rest of us? Why don't you do the dirty work like everybody else? We are protecting our weekly! Do you want the Transylvanian Hungarians to be deprived of a literary journal?' There were tears in his eyes as he spoke.

Does all this mean that there is no decent literature in Rumania today? Not at all. Poets such as Nichita Stanescu, novelists like Alexandru Ivasiuc, playwrights like Marin Sorescu or András Sütö, essayists like Constantin Noica or György Bretter are no worse than their best counterparts in happier parts of the world. It is not intrinsic value but moral dignity that is in jeopardy.

The darker side of life, the hunger, the cold, the humiliation are not spoken of. And this undermines the credibility of everything.

G. M. Tamás, 'Censorship, Ethnic Discrimination and the Culture of the Hungarians in Rumania', International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Vienna, October 1985.

national holiday it is an infringer of the rules of censorship that we celebrate.

8. I would like to call your attention to the essays by György Bence and Gáspár Miklós Tamás. Bence [whose essay may be published in a future issue of *Index on Censorship*] indicates the areas surrendered by retreating Hungarian censorship, and those it has kept under strict supervision. This higher degree of complexity suits the requirements of the current stage of state socialism, which has now passed beyond totalitarianism to authoritarianism. The political élite would like to dissociate itself from the unpleasant memories of totalitarian irrationalism, which for us signifies not only the past but also contemporary reality if we think of the situation of our Rumanian, Transylvanian colleagues.

Mr Tamás's sparkling essay [see extracts this page] confirms that in Rumania today totalitarian irrationalism has reached its peak, and is accompanied by the political paralysis of the population. The leader speaks, the people listen, whisper among themselves, and from time to time the majority of writers ritualistically extol the wisdom of the leaders. There is no dialogue.

I remember the discussion of Tibor Déry's novel in 1952. The chief censor called together all the Hungarian writers for this great public event, and charged him with a list of deficiencies — everything that should have been written in it for it to be a good socialist realistic novel — in thunderous tones. Today no one tells a Hungarian writer what to write, and he is rarely told that this or that text, section or paragraph is unsatisfactory. Every étatism has its own special type of censorship.

9. Censorship has moods, convulsions and remissions, tantrums and moments of enlightenment.

From Prague and Warsaw it is news of regression that we hear; censorship is getting harsher, more severe, more convulsive, more paranoid; it may ease up again.

In Hungary today, in the autumn of 1985, I feel there is a certain progress. Censorship is becoming more rational, reducing the circle of its supervision, slackening its bonds, if we consider its tendencies over the last decade.

In this modest process of rationalisation it would be a natural development if the state were to stop considering people who hold different opinions and express those opinions by means other than the official channels of publicity the potential subjects of criminal investigation. Many crude propagandistic effects are necessary in order to incriminate the opposition — defamation, demonisation — with which, in the long run, the government obscures its own mind most of all.

It has become commonplace in this city that political reforms should be considered beside economic reforms, and recently suggestions for cultural reform can also be

Rumania: 'I was an editor'

In general terms, guided (as opposed to autonomous, independent, or simply free) culture is much the same in all the countries under Communist dictatorship. Publishing houses, newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations are all owned by the state; all universities, colleges and teacher-training institutions are owned and controlled by the state, while all professional unions and artists' organisations are mere extensions of the respective departments of the Party Central Committee. All top appointments are made by the Party and government according to closely observed and regularly updated *nomenklatura* lists and regulations. What is reported by the media is rigorously determined by the immediate interests (and sometimes hysterics) of the Party Centre.

A peculiarity of Rumania's control over the media and the arts was the preliminary censorship which was in force until the mid-1970s. As I was an editor of a literary weekly in Transylvania from 1972 to 1978, I can describe the censorship process in some detail.

Our deadline was Saturday morning. Having read all the manuscripts, the editor selected the more important (or more 'sensitive') ones and sent them by courier to an official of the regional Party committee — he was at the same time a lecturer in philosophy at the University and is now himself the editor of an important Hungarian-language monthly in Rumania. He would then telephone his opinion on Sunday to the editor's home or on the following day to the office. The sooner this was done, the better, since the suppressed articles had to be replaced before we could print. On Monday morning we corrected the proofs, in the afternoon the pages, which were then taken to the Party official, Comrade R, in the evening. He would give his views on the general 'concept' of the issue and say, for instance, that there wre too many explicitly Hungarian topics in it, or that the titles, if read together, might suggest a note of pessimism. At the same time the pages were taken to the censor himself — an official of the so-called Press Directorate. He attended to the details, deleting the names of unmentionable authors (e.g. St Thomas Aquinas, Stalin, Milan Kundera), adding a Rumanian allusion or two, italicising the name of the General Secretary, and so on. He could also suppress entire articles or poems, in accordance with his most recent, undisclosed, instructions. Although he was only a minor *apparatchik*, his decisions were final. We saw him seldom, he communicated with our editor over the telephone on Tuesdays.

I remember the case of an essay of mine in which I drew a historical parallel, carefully adding the words '*mutatis mutandis*'. Perhaps the censor had forgotten his school Latin, perhaps he didn't have any, but he pronounced the parallel inadmissible. As the editor discussed the matter with him on the phone, he had to defend my text without alluding to the censor's ignorance of Latin phrases. 'But, you see, he says,' I heard the editor say, 'that the parallel is not to be taken literally, since he has added "mutatis mutandis"...' 'Never mind,' replied the censor, 'he *says* it...' 'Yes, but he adds "*mutatis mutandis*"...' 'Never mind...' The exchange continued for two hours, until finally the editor gave up and told me: 'Damn it all, can't you see that you can't be careful and a culture vulture at the same time?' The issue was delayed and my essay never published.

It has to be borne in mind that every text reached Comrade R and the censor after it had been thoroughly examined by the senior staff, the various editors and heads of department (criticism, poetry, etc), so that a great deal was deleted before it ever went 'upstairs'. Cuts were made for political reasons against which the authors were — and are to this day — completely defenceless. They were, as a rule, not allowed to read the proofs, and the cuts (or sometimes additions) were made in their absence and without their authorisation. Future literary historians may well wonder why a normally critical author had suddenly indulged in some inane panegyrics — well, the editors were too pressed to ask him if they might add a few words of praise when mentioning the General Secretary. Or they might wonder why a good poet suddenly reads so badly — well, because a strophe is missing from the poem.

The Press Directorate was later disbanded, but control has been tightened by other means.

G. M. Tamás

heard. One of the most interesting questions over the next few years will be: whether the socialist state is capable of legitimising the opposition, of suffering its freedom of expression; will the state be capable of a certain civilised self-restraint?

10. In Hungary and in other socialist countries new enterprises spring into being.

As enterprising young mathematicians have set up software companies so humanistic intellectuals are establishing private publishing companies.

They want to be legally recognised as publishers and editors. Let the police allow them to work in peace. Let them not be harassed with penalties, confiscations, police surveillance.

Let readers judge whether they need these books and periodicals or not; let them decide whether they want to buy them. The employers of the party centre, the Ministry of Culture and Education, the Ministry of the Interior should have nothing to do with these transactions.

It is not a very rational state of affairs when the state maintains and sponsors publishing offices out of its own budget. So be it. But let it allow the small private publishers, deficient in funds, to function; let it recognise their legitimate right to exist.

11. The private publishing of alternative, parallel, independent publications or 'samizdat' is an age-old activity in our country. The originals of the bronze statues standing in our public squares, Széchenyi and Kossuth, Táncsics and Petöfi, names to which we call our foreign friends' attention, were all transgressors of the laws of censorship and masters of samizdat. Their successors are not criminals, but people working on their own initiative, who desire to revivify the atrophied limbs of communication.

One of the most important steps of cultural reform would be the legitimising of alternative publication.

Let there be censorship, formally established, and let action be brought against author and publisher if the public prosecutor charges them with violation of national interests. The disciples of progressive reform would like to reach the stage of development that Hungarian publishing attained in the 1930s in a regime which can by no means be called democratic. Censorship in the Horthy regime was post factum. No authorisation was needed for periodicals if no more than ten issues were published in a year.

12. As you have seen, we are modest in our desires. It is not a group of disreputable, dishevelled, dangerous trouble-mongers you are supporting by declaring your solidarity with our aspirations for reform. ■

Per Wästberg

The writer and his integrity

'I have noticed in all continents an increasing pressure towards that frightened and brutal conformity which is simply barbarity in a new guise'

I am a writer from a country which is non-aligned but also neutral in a specially defined sense. Yet it likes to be involved in international affairs, particularly in peace-keeping missions and in different tasks in the Third World. I am much the same: I like to be non-aligned, floating around, not constantly forced to take sides. I have my own small preoccupations in the Swedish woods. At the same time, as a traveller and reporter, as President of International PEN for the last six years, I have seen too much to stay neutral in my heart. Constantly split, I wish to be both sensual and ascetic, both a traveller and a recluse, a committed fighter for human rights and a scholarly poet who turns his back on that sea of daily events and says: Oh there you are again, but I don't care!

Literature is always on a collision course with the autocrats, not because writers always speak for freedom but because they create in their work people who can observe, reason and make essential choices themselves. Autocrats wish their people to feel unworthy of justice, private life and independent thinking. Literature tries to counteract people's belittling and despising of themselves, and that means trouble.

One of literature's tasks is to help people understand their own nature and make them realise they are not powerless. Therefore, it is not only writers who are hit by censorship but most of all their readers.

When a reader is denied access to a book, his freedom is menaced, his possibility to glimpse the truth is diminished. The censor fears the artist because he does not express in mathematical, logical or political terms what he really means. He tells stories instead, writes poems and recites them ,as in Soweto, South Africa, so that people suddenly behave in unexpected ways.

The censor fears the unconventional and divergent even when it is not politically charged: thus the mistrust of art and literature that try to break new ground. Perhaps true works of art are always critical and attack something which openly or unconsciously is taboo in society.

Censorship likes to create a façade of unanimity, thus showing that the authorities cannot make mistakes. Suffering may not be portrayed because that shows that something has gone wrong in the social planning. History must be revised, memories of the past explained away so that the power of the day may be seen as legitimate.

There is also a slower process, less easy to grasp, that seems built into our industrial way of life, also in democracies. That is that the individual voice is becoming bureaucratised and computerised. Vocabulary shrinking and becoming impersonal. Concrete sensual words, close to everyday life, give way to abstractions and euphemisms that breed prejudice and favour square ways of looking.

Art has become a reservoir for freedom in a time more and more unfree. Unfree not in a purely physical sense but spiritually, because so much is explained in terms of socially or genetically given patterns of behaviour. It becomes more difficult to relate to one's environment in a way that is at once private and responsible. Existence becomes a cage. Then art becomes a breathing space for the individual, for within that sphere man is still magnificent, enigmatic and inexhaustible.

Freedom of expression is no luxury, not even in the poorest countries, for all sorts of

Per Wästberg, Swedish poet, novelist and journalist, was born in 1933. Today President of International PEN, he has been Chief Editor of the *Dagens Nyheter* daily (1976-82), having worked as literary critic and columnist for the paper since 1953. Co-founder and Vice-President of Swedish Amnesty (1964-72), he has been Secretary of the Swedish Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, which he also co-founded, since 1959. Since 1983 a board member of the Swedish Institute for African Studies. Has published 12 works of fiction and 18 non-fiction, the most recent being a novel, *En avlägsen likhet* ('A Distant Affinity'), 1983.

ideas need to be treated, thrown away, even hated. During that process of choosing between ideas we may take a step forward instead of stumbling one step backward towards oblivion.

A task more necessary than ever is to give young people a language that is innovative, unfrozen and sensual, vaccinating them against despair, routine and authoritarian temptations. 'Literature does not need freedom, it *is* freedom,' said Heinrich Böll. No government or community can claim to give literature what it has by nature. A writer has to go far across invisible borders to know how far he can go; nobody can really tell him beforehand. Therefore, literature cannot provide law and order, because it is dynamic, a process without an end, not a function or an institution. It is an unruly child whom nobody can keep quiet.

Literature points towards experiences that cannot be measured and weighed. It says the man is unforeseeable: he can never be entirely defined and thus cannot be used as a tool by others. No geometry, no government or computer bank can chart the needs of man. Therefore, every work of art liberates. Therefore, it has the censor at its heels. Therefore, so much energy is devoted to prevent and destroy fragile things like fantasies, thoughts — and their creators.

Fiction — being friction against the hard edge of the universe — shows us that reality is manifold and complex. A literary work cannot be pinned down to its innermost motivation or ultimate consequences. A writer cannot guarantee or authorise what he does, because he produces metaphors, images loaded with hidden intentions. There ought to be nothing tragic or destructive in such an anti-authoritarian view, but many regard diversity and change as a threat to law and order. An open attitude, hopeful or energetically sceptical, ready to try another route or let itself be corrected and revised, is often seen as a kind of nihilism.

Committed or non-committed — the old question is not for the writer to ask. Any published line is a social action. To make public one's inner experience is to admit that nothing we do and feel is private which, paradoxically, is the opposite of state controllers peering through our window, because when *they* say that nothing should be hidden they like to make it their own statistical property.

Many writers are committed in the sense that they live in an atmosphere of urgency and frustration. They try not only to protect their freedom of action but also to seek a way of acting. They take the side of the powerless and impotent, they write of victims of the arbitrariness of others, they sing no songs in praise of the victor.

At the same time the writer is, often enough, a connoisseur of power. In his very profession lies the power to influence. It is in this double role — it seems to me — that the writer can be important: he knows the essence of power through his own job as a persuader just as the politician must know his. He knows the attraction of power, but also life in the shadow of big power. On his insight in these matters depends the weight of his words.

Perhaps every society gets the literature it deserves. Writers who feel themselves above society have a society that permits them to feel that way and thus remain bound to that particular society. Literature is seen as a mirror only by those who fear it. A sick society does not tolerate the shifting image in the mirror, because it likes to look at itself in a certain way regardless of reality. In a conservative society you blame the mirror for its lies, in a dictatorship you outlaw mirrors and commission nice and naïve posters. An open society does not mind the different pictures in the mirror but, unfortunately, does not always care about them much either.

Literature should, of course, not be judged as a mirror or a protocol of what is happening in society. Literature is not a branch of sociology. The immediate usefulness of creative writers is uncertain. Art does not abolish tyrannies. Still, Lorca's work remains while Franco is gone. Literature is subversive simply by not serving a particular purpose — which is often enough to make the ruler angry. Literature is content merely to exist, to express dissatisfaction and longing.

Nobody in the modern world dare trust any state or any government completely. If patriotism says we must, then patriotism becomes a lethal ailment. Allegiance, however deeply felt, must in the nuclear age remain conditional. Loyalty is valued by governments, and so we witness even in Western democracies how the combination of a powerful security police and refined technology makes it more possible than ever to control individuals — for their own benefit, as we are commonly told. Many countries behave in fact as if they were in a state of cultural and moral siege, threatened from East or West.

The task of the serious writer is to probe beneath the surface of biased information and to pose dangerous questions in search of the essential human truths. In doing so the writer will often be seen to oppose the

Inhuman isolation

Something extraordinarily important is happening here today. For the first time we aren't talking about two cultures but about one culture. In the same way there exists only one Czech and Slovak culture. It is absurd for this culture to be split into two — the official and that of samizdat and exile publications. That is contrary both to the Helsinki Accords and to common sense.

I realise that things can't be changed overnight. It took the Hungarians many years before it was possible to hold this symposium. But there are two things which I think *could* be changed, so to speak, overnight: There could be only forbidden works and not forbidden authors. When an author is banned, his or her entire *oeuvre* becomes inaccessible. And secondly, it would be possible to lift the absurd, inhuman isolation imposed on so many Czech and Slovak writers over the past 16 years.

Pavel Kohout, Budapest, 16 October 1985

Important principle

I was invited by the US government to be a member of the official American delegation to the Cultural Forum, and I thanked my government very politely — even a little more politely than I'm used to speaking — and said that I would prefer to be a delegate in the unofficial delegation.

This is not because I think that I'm more free in this grouping — I would say exactly the same things if I were going to the official Cultural Forum — but rather because I wanted to support the principle that meetings which are not government-sponsored can also take place. That is one of the chief meanings of the Helsinki Agreement.

I was extremely pleased to find out that the Cultural Forum was going to take place this year in Budapest, and look forward to our meetings as well, as part of the Helsinki process. What most interested me in the topics we have under discussion was the topic of Europe: the idea of European culture. I am an American writer, an American citizen born in the United States, but what interests me is Europe: the idea that there *is* a European culture, that Hungary *is* part of Europe, and that the present political situation in Hungary does not make Hungary *not* part of Europe. As many of you know, there is this phrase 'Eastern Europe', which is often a way of excluding a number of countries from Europe.

That is one of the purposes of our meeting, as well as the all-important principle of private, informal meetings of colleagues and writers and intellectuals all over the world.

Susan Sontag, Budapest, 15 October 1985

powers that be. From the platform of International PEN, I have noticed in all continents an increasing pressure towards that frightened and brutal conformity which is simply barbarity in a new disguise. The prospect ahead may be bleak, yet to resign is to conform.

The persecution and isolation of any writer in any country is a disgrace for all nations. No common good can be founded on a common lie — and the lie, propagated by many states and bureaucracies, is that there is no truth in imagination. The good writers debase hypocrisy. Where politicians work in a spirit of tactical pragmatism and uneasy compromise, which indeed they should do even more, writers by being single unorchestrated voices can afford another kind of sincerity.

To resist official decrees that go against your conscience is not always easy, and there are better ways of living than to suffer exile or be forgotten in labour camps and mental hospitals, or simply be counted as one of hundreds of 'disappeared'. But — as a Swedish poet said — 'if we cannot avoid serving as hodmen at the domes now being built, let us at least carve our impotent no in the bricks we carry'.

The freedom of the writer worth defending does not always look the same. I would like to quote the definition made by Nadine Gordimer:

> To me it is the writer's right to maintain and publish to the world a deep, intense, private view of the situation in which he finds his society. If he is to work as well as he can, he must take, and be granted, freedom from the public conformity of political interpretation, morals and tastes.

There are numerous pressures aimed at authors beside police state brutality. Especially common in the Third World is the demand that writers show solidarity with their country in times of crisis, disruption from within, enormous debts, etc. Such a nation, it is said, cannot afford criticism or even the free exchange of opinion. The demand for loyalty and unity leads to self-censorship.

In the developing countries, over the years, we have seen poets who campaigned against colonialism and foreign intervention fall silent when their countries become independent. They don dark suits and take jobs in embassies and agencies, some are in prison, others have gone into exile and resurfaced inside UNESCO or at posts in England or France, the mother countries they once despised.

Truth changes from one generation to the next, there is no single entire truth. The best we can hope for is a fragile harmony of

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Danilo Kis

Censorship/self censorship

'The fight against censorship is open and dangerous, therefore heroic, while the battle against self-censorship is anonymous, lonely and unwitnessed, and it makes its subject feel humiliated'

At the height of the events in Poland, just at the time when the trade union Solidarność was being outlawed, I received a letter stamped NIE CENZUROWANO. What exactly did these words mean? They were probably supposed to indicate that the country from which it came was free of censorship. But it could also mean that letters *not* bearing this stamp were censored, a token of the selective nature of this office, which apparently mistrusts certain citizens while trusting others. It could naturally also mean that all letters bearing this stamp actually did pass through the censor's hand. At any rate, this symbolic and ambiguous stamp gives a profound insight into the nature of censorship, which on the one hand wants to establish its rightfulness, while at the same time attempting to camouflage its very existence. For, while censorship considers itself a historical necessity and an institution destined to defend public order and the ruling political party, it does not like to admit that it is there. It sees itself as a temporary evil, to be applied during a state of war. Censorship, then, is only a transitory measure which will be scrapped as soon as all those people who write letters, books, etc are politically mature and responsible, thus exonerating the State and its representatives from having to act as guardians of their citizens.

Since censorship is obviously a result of necessity and strictly temporary, it can even regard itself as practically *abolished, a thing of the past*. Therefore, it does not acknowledge its own existence and attempts to hide behind the mantle of democratic institutions with completely different functions, such as publishing houses, or masquerades in the person of the editor (of a book, a newspaper, or an anthology), of a reporter, publisher's reader, etc. In case a subversive message should none the less escape the vigilant eyes of all these substitute censors — who can perform this task without a twinge of conscience since they are not censors, or rather *not only censors* — there still remains a last resort: the printers who, as the most responsible elements of the working classes, will simply refuse to print the incriminated text. This apparently democratic measure is one of the most cynical aspects of dissimulated censorship, when the interdiction of a book or text is not brought about *in extremis* by a judiciary organ — the substitute of censorship — and in the name of public opinion, in a country where there is no public opinion.

Among the other, less well-known aspects of censorship is the widespread phenomenon of 'friendly censorship' — representing a sort of transition between censorship and self-censorship — when the editor, himself a literary man, suggests that *for your own good* you should eliminate from your book a certain paragraph or sentence. If he is unable to convince you of his good faith, he will apply moral blackmail and make your conscience a repository of his fears. His own fate, as well as yours, depends on your willingness to take upon yourself the role of censor, thus concealing censorship from the public. In other words, either

Danilo Kis was born in Subotica, on the Hungarian-Yugoslav border, in 1935. Has lived in Hungary, Montenegro and Belgrade, now resides in Paris. Graduated in comparative literature and has taught Yugoslav languages and literature at the universities of Strasbourg, Bordeaux and Lille. Translations into Serbo-Croat include works by the Hungarian poets Petöfi, Ady, Radnóti and Attila, as well as Mandelstam, Yesenin and Tsvetayeva from the Russian, and Corneille, Baudelaire, Lautréamont, Verlaine, Prévert and Queneau from the French. His own novels, essays and plays have been translated into many languages. Two of his novels, *Garden, Ashes* and *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*, appeared in English in 1985 (Faber).

you will be your own censor, or you will ruin his career and his life. In exchange, he will not only publish your book, he will even conceal the fact that it contained certain passages which, had they been published, would have destroyed you both.

Whichever way you look at it, censorship is the tangible manifestation of a pathological state, the symptom of a chronic illness which develops side by side with it: self-censorship. Invisible but present, far from the eyes of the public, buried deep down in the most secret parts of the spirit, it is far more efficient than censorship. While both of them induce (or are induced?) by the same means — threats, fear, blackmail — this second ill camouflages, or at any rate does not denounce, the existence of any outside constraint. The fight against censorship is open and dangerous, therefore heroic, while the battle against self-censorship is anonymous, lonely and unwitnessed, and it makes its subject feel humiliated and ashamed of collaborating.

Self-censorship means reading your own text with the eyes of another person, a situation where you become your own judge, stricter and more suspicious than anyone else. You the author know what no outside censor could ever discover: your most secret, unspoken thoughts which nonetheless you feel must be obvious to others 'between the lines'. Therefore, you attribute to this imaginary censor faculties which you yourself do not possess, and to the text a significance which it actually does not have. For your *alter ego* pursues your thoughts *ad absurdum*, until the dizzy end where everything is subversive, where to tread is dangerous and condemnable.

The self-appointed censor is the *alter ego* of the writer, an *alter ego* who leans over his shoulder and sticks his nose into the text *in status nascendi*, to prevent any ideological *faux pas*. And it is impossible to win against this self-censor, for he is like God — he knows all and sees all, he came out of your mind, your own fears, your own nightmares. This battle with one's *alter ego*, this intellectual and moral concentration must necessarily leave obvious scars in the text; unless all these efforts finally end with the one and only morally acceptable gesture of destroying the manuscript and renouncing the project. But even this renunciation, this victory, has the same effect: a sense of failure and shame. For whatever you do, your *alter ego* comes out victorious. If you chase him away, he taunts you for your cowardice.

And so this *alter ego* of the writer succeeds in undermining and tainting even the most moral individuals whom outside censorship has not managed to break. By not admitting that it exists, self-censorship aligns itself with lies and spiritual corruption.

If the writer does manage to overcome the radical act of self-destruction and by using all his talent, concentration, courage and ingeniousness succeeds in fooling his tempting *alter ego*, traces of this battle will appear in his writing — in the form of metaphors. It is a double victory: not only did the text, in spite of temptation to the contrary, finally get written, but through the ruse of reducing the idea to a metaphor (etymologically, the transposition of the real into the figurative sense) self-censorship has transformed the idea into a figure of style, transplanting it into the field of poetry. This could lead to interesting conclusions regarding the history of literature and literary theory, and based on this criterion — the pre-dominance of the metaphor — one could analyse the genesis of numerous literary works, for example, in the Russian avant-garde literature of the twenties. Self-censorship gives this avant-garde literature a specific colouring and tone. The prose of Pilnak and Babel, the poetry of Mandelstam and Tsvetayeva emerged from this fight against self-censorship with the highest literary honours. A bitter and tragic victory.

Self-censorship is the negative pole of creative energy, it distracts and irritates, but sometimes, when it comes into contact with the positive pole, it can produce a spark. When that happens, the writer, overcoming his fear, kills his *alter ego*. And in this violent collapse of years of prudence, shame and humiliation, metaphors disintegrate, circumlocutions fall apart, and there remains only the raw language of action, the pamphlet. No more self-censorship to discover something between the lines; everything is written black on white, down to the last atom of your discontent. (It is at such a time that Mandelstam writes his poem about Stalin, the second one which was his liberation from self-censorship and humiliation. The one which cost him his life.)

The victory of the moral principle kills either the writer, or the literary work.

The censored I, which for a long time has supported the tyranny of fear, chooses the pamphlet as an avenging sword. It is this victory over his despotic *alter ego* that has made more than one writer sterile in emigration. Victims of self-censorship for years, they have suddenly crossed this space which separates art from propaganda; a state

continued opposite

Jiří Gruša

Ex-prophets and storysellers

'We who must offer our words like wares cast envious glances in the direction of our brothers in the East'

Whether he's the type of latter-day prophet found east of the Prater, or the — shall we say — seller of tales found west of the Prater, the man of letters likes to talk of his integrity.

He dreams of his integrity as though it were Paradise Lost. But ever since he began seeking another paradise, this time on earth, his dreams have been more or less in vain. It seems to me there is a connecting link between the two.

The monk, or lord, of yesteryear, predecessors of today's man of letters, were wont to write more naturally, the former to the greater glory of God, the latter as time and inclination took him. While we, the sons and daughters of a solid middle class, write to fulfil ourselves.

We believe stubbornly that there must be something good inside us that only needs to be brought out. It suffices, we say, just to have the will. Nurtured on this belief, we have lent ourselves to all the mechanisms of disintegration of the last two centuries. There is no piece of

Jiří Gruša, Czech poet and novelist, was born in 1938 in Pardubice. In the 'liberal' 1960s co-founded the *Tvář* ('The Face') literary magazine, which was banned after the Soviet invasion of 1968, when Gruša himself became a 'non-author'. Helped to distribute the samizdat Petlice ('Padlock') edition and in 1978 spent two months in custody for writing and distributing his novel *Dotazník* ('The Questionnaire'). Went to the USA in 1980 when he was awarded a grant to go to the MacDowell Colony, and the following year was prevented from returning to Czechoslovakia when the Czech authorities deprived him of his citizenship. Now lives in Bonn.

tastelessness we have not helped to cook up. Our inclination towards the prophetic (again in that spirit of self-fulfilment) was a welcome assistance to the work of renovation when the present was used to destroy the past, when we set about laying down that Brave New World like a broad avenue stretching into the future.

We were to be the prophets of a sanitised new megapolis in which the people, free at last, would live each according to his or her need. And, of course, this people would be composed of children like ourselves, gifted minds who can turn to writing interminable tales of self-fulfilment.

With the discovery that the megapolis was more like a megacamp and that our services were needed less and less the closer it came to being realised, sobriety caught up with us. Particularly in the land east of the Prater, where nowadays you find only ex-prophets.

West of that great Viennese pleasure park we still lack that sobriety, but we make up for it in domesticity. They've found a wonderful placebo: they want our words, but they want them merely as merchandise for the market. So we are ex-prophets too, unwitting, guileless ex-prophets.

Getting to that stage was a hard slog. The yearned-for integrity somehow didn't measure up to the myth of self-fulfilment.

In the lands where tales are sold we yearn after those prophetic times like havens of integrity. We who must offer our words like wares cast envious glanes in the direction of our brothers in the east.

And this leads to misunderstanding. For those prophetic traits of our brothers in the east are paradoxically simple traits of a passionate anti-prophecy. Don't be deceived by their occasionally overdone gestures or baroque choice of phrase. Don't be deceived by their own life-story, so full of dramatic narrative itself, so full in fact that both literary imagination and those twin false gods of the world of merchandise, originality and creativity, have nothing on offer to compete with it.

Those in the east really only bear witness to the essential ambivalence of Western literary modes. They remind us of what we already know or can discover, if we take the trouble to explore all the sources of our writing, including the dark ones.

People like myself, who have known both worlds — the world of the ex-prophets and that of the word-vendors — are surprised at how little the West (which considers itself the best) takes account of this ambivalence.

In the West, it's automatically assumed that writing has to do with decency — and integrity.

A man sobered out of his prophesying may well become a preacher of slowly dying passions. But he is never likely to become a scintillating super-commentator of the kind you come across in the West. The world of commentators is the kingdom of the safe insurance, a kingdom in which the strange incident, the sudden and the unexpected, are regarded as mishaps. Therefore, where there is a dearth of good tales to tell you can well understand this desire to produce commentaries on anything and everything. And here we get back to our old hubris.

Even ex-prophets understandably try now and again to market a story, usually their own. And when they don't succeed because the story happens to be too true, they revile the corruption of the West (just as I'm doing now), often aiming at quite the wrong targets.

They are arrogant and vain and they well know the dark side of writing. Nevertheless when we talk of the integrity of writing let us not forget their experience.

When we come to consider literature in exile let us not forget that it was Western (in the meaning of the culture common to us all, thus including the East) men of letters who were godfathers to the ideas which have driven people from their homelands. And when we talk of censorship let us never forget it was we who glorified the modern state, first as the embodiment of all that was godly, then as the ultimate source of all welfare. So we should not be surprised when it takes an interest in what we write even before we've lifted the pen. And when we consider the identity of literature let us not forget the myth about self-fulfilment which knows only one identity — the ego. Thus the principle of self-preservation and the extension of existence at all costs: no wonder our works are turning more and more into textbooks à la 'The Joy of...' something or other. And when we come to dwell on the rights of minorities let us never forget our underlying contempt for all majorities, our provocations and our abuse of the public at large, our theories on whether a majority should be considered simply a numerical one or a real one. And finally, when we come to speak of the right to one's history, let us never lose sight of the fact that our patriotic odes are to be found in all the schoolbooks of Europe, works which played such an important part in the catastrophe of this continent because they were the first to see history as the El Dorado of nationalism.

But I exaggerate. I know there were those who, in the struggle with the illusion of unlimited originality and creativity, fulfilled something more than just themselves.

But it is not they I'm talking about today. It has been my intention to invoke a certain scepticism, a necessary scepticism, which should be employed when we leaf through that favourite comic book of ours we call Progress. A message from the fields and glades where we prophets dwell. In acquiring such scepticism we might yet create the basic conditions for a world (and thank God we still live in a world in which a story can be enjoyed without the storyteller having to be offered up as a sacrifice to some bloody tribal idol) in which ex-prophets will not just be left to sink into the parochialism of their loneliness.

I'm a Czech and so I know what I'm talking about. And György Konrad knows why I gaze with admiration upon his *res ungarica*. ■

Translated from the German by Donald Armour

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different voices. Every attempt at total unity, national or international, will end in the prison camp, in the dictatorship of the mass grave.

There is in art a secret, I would say a privacy, something that cannot be traced and put down in simple words. Therefore, art threatens a society that likes to discipline and survey its members. For by creating a work of art you create a private gathering of symbols and associations. The totalitarian state cannot allow anybody to have private relationships. At the same time such a state maintains secrecy over its own operations, for the more it becomes accessible, the more it is vulnerable.

Foreign ideas may also rip a hole in the authoritarian façade of unity, they dilute the control of society, therefore they must be stopped. And even more menacing may be the glimpse of everything as yet uncreated, waiting to be born. In the open space of all that is still unformed there is an invisible dance of freedom and possibility. ■

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which Czeslaw Milosz refers to as 'shrinking' then sets in.

What conclusion can one draw from all this? That the act of self-censorship inevitably leads to artistic and human catastrophes, no less lethal than the ones caused by censorship itself; that self-censorship is a dangerous mental manipulation with grave consequences for literature and the human spirit. ■

Amos Oz

Calling a spade a spade

'Tyranny, oppression, moral degeneration, persecution and mass killing have always and everywhere started with the pollution of the language'

There is no Hebrew word for integrity: perhaps we Jews lack this 'Roman' quality altogether. In my dictionary I found, among other synonyms for integrity, 'intactness, wholeness, being firm, in one piece'. We Jews are probably made of several pieces, not of one.

Can we really expect a poet or a storyteller to be 'whole' or 'intact' in any sense? Can the inventor of plots and characters, the creator of a substitute reality, be 'firm, in one piece'? Isn't he or she forever in the business of shattering and piecing together? Isn't the poet or the writer dealing with a mosaic rather than with a block of marble? Fascinated by the differential rather than the integral of things?

D. H. Lawrence once said that a storyteller must be capable of presenting several conflicting and contradictory points of view with an equal degree of conviction. Just like that rabbi in the old Jewish story, the one who decreed that both rival claims over a goat were right, and later on, at home, when asked by his son how both could be right, replied with a sigh, 'and you too, my son, are right'.

Poets and storytellers are sometimes regarded as witnesses. One tends to expect a certain integrity from a witness, at least integrity in the sense of honesty, sincerity and objectivity. Writers usually testify for the prosecution, yet they are also witnesses for the defence. Worse still: the poet is a member of the jury. Yet isn't he also the interrogator who has exposed, unmasked the accused? And isn't he or she at the same time a relative of the accused? And the family of the victim, too? He or she may act as the judge as well. He may secretly plot an escape while arming the jailer. Can such a dubious character have any integrity at all?

But let's consider the role of the writer as a defender of the language: the one who is equipped to act as the language's smoke detector, if not its fire brigade.

Tyranny, oppression, moral degeneration, persecution and mass killing have always and everywhere started with the pollution of the language, making it sound clean and decent where it should have been base and violent ('the new order', 'final solution', 'temporary measures', 'limited restrictions') or else with making the language sound coarse and bestial where it should have been humane and delicate ('parasites', 'insects', 'germs', etc). I said the writer ought to be a smoke detector, if not a fire brigade, within his or her own language because wherever a human being is referred to as a parasite or a germ, there follow, sooner or later, death squads and exterminations.

Wherever war is called peace, where oppression and persecution are referred to as security, and assassination is called liberation, the defilement of the language precedes and prepares the defilement of life and dignity. In the end, the state, the regime, the class, or the idea remain intact where human life is shattered. Integrity prevails over fields of scattered bodies.

Back to our dubious character whose integrity begins and ends within the domain of words: he can use his words for building castles, for playing brilliant games, for calling death a rose. But he is also capable, and therefore responsible, for calling a rose a rose, and a spade a spade. For calling villainy villainy, and torture torture. His way of screaming 'fire' makes him the terror of tyrants. Isn't every censorship in the world an indirect manifestation of awe and admiration for the power of the writer's words? We are talking about tyrants who usually have their lunatic integrity but who are terrified of those worldly characters who lack integrity. They are afraid of the writer because he knows them intimately, he knows them through and through — he has journeyed through their minds. Nothing is alien to this dubious character. Every madness, savagery, obscenity and ruthlessness in the

continued opposite

Amos Oz, Israeli writer and teacher, was born in Jerusalem in 1939. In the 1967 and 1972 wars he fought in the Sinai Desert and on the Golan Heights; since then he has taken part in movements seeking reconciliation with the Arabs. He is a leader of the 'Peace Now' movement. The latest of his 10 novels are *In the Land of Israel* (1983) and *A Perfect Peace* (1985).

Alain Finkielkraut

The autonomy of the spirit

'"Europe" is a certain idea of culture, which can best be defined by the words autonomy of spirit'

The two questions I want to deal with, are: What is culture? What is Europe?

Let me start with a simple historical remark. In the past three decades, Europe has not been one of the preoccupations of the French intelligentsia. In the fifties, sixties and seventies, the concept of Europe did not attract the attention of intellectuals; Europe was identified with the Common Market and as such left to the politicians, experts and technocrats. The intelligentsia, or at least its most influential part, could not have cared less.

Why such an indifference? For two historical reasons, I think: Hitler, and the process of decolonisation.

Hitler, as you all know, was moved by the idea of building a new European order. His intention was to preserve the ethnic, the Aryan integrity of Europe from the poisonous blood of the Jews and other barbarians. By nearly achieving this goal, he disqualified the very idea of Europe in the eyes of intellectuals who witnessed his crimes and survived his fall.

There is a very interesting and revealing passage in 'What is Literature?' — the essay written by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1947 — in which he says that after the war (under the shock of the war) neutral words like collaboration or Europe became derogatory, and even taboo. In 'Europe', Sartre says, 'you can hear the sound of the boots of Nazi Germany'.

On behalf of ethnic Europe, Hitler wanted to destroy, to annihilate the humanistic tradition of Europe. He did not succeed but, paradoxically enough, he

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distracted a number of intellectuals from this tradition by making the very word 'Europe' sound aggressive, racist and dangerous.

This trend was aggravated by the process of decolonisation. Where Third World countries started to struggle for their independence, they portrayed Europe as an imperialist might, whose humanism was just a cover for arrogance and the will to power.

So when you wanted to take the side of the poor and oppressed you had to stand against Europe. There was a divorce between the left and Europe, because in the worldly class struggle, Europe was just another name for oppression.

Here lies, I think, the root of the misunderstanding between French and other West European intellectuals on the one hand, and intellectuals who have to live under Soviet rule on the other. The repression of the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and the invasion of Prague in 1968 were denounced in Western Europe, but the Czechs and the Hungarians were not supported as Europeans claiming their European identity, they were supported as oppressed people, victims of totalitarianism. At that time, these two notions of European and oppressed were not compatible. There could not be such a thing as an oppressed Europe — this was a contradiction in terms. That is why, whereas everybody was very sensitive to the fate of the Czechs, the Poles and the Hungarians, nobody (apart from a few exceptions) listened to what they said about the meaning of their struggle. We sympathised with resistance to oppression, but we did not understand what was at stake in this resistance: the very survival of Europe in these countries.

Thanks in part to such figures as Milosz, Kundera, Kolakowski, and among the participants of our debate György Konrad and Danilo Kis, the misunderstanding is not so acute any more. We, French and Western writers and intellectuals, take into consideration the concept of Europe. It is part of our agenda again, as we can see from this gathering.

But our problem now is to decide what idea of Europe we stand for. Will it be Spengler's idea of Europe in 'Der Untergang des Abendlandes' ('The Decline of the West'), or Julien Benda's idea of Europe in 'Discours à la nation Européenne'?

I take these two names as symbols, one of the romantic approach to European culture, the other of the humanistic approach. For Spengler, Europe (or 'das Abendland') is a culture, which he defines, according to the romantic tradition born in Germany with Herder, as a unique spirit, a specific character, a soul, a 'Geist', which imbues all the activities of a given community. In that romantic tradition, everything you do, whether you are conscious of it or not, expresses your belonging to your culture and the artist or the thinker is a natural spokesman of the group where he was born.

For Benda, on the other hand, there might well be a specific European life style, but what defines Europe is the difference, the gap, maintained and safeguarded, between culture and 'Volksgeist'. Culture is never to be identified with the genius of a nation, of a people, of a community or of a continent. Culture is an independent realm, an autonomous field. 'La République des Lettres' is inhabited by individuals.

Behind these two meanings of the same word — culture — lie two antagonistic philosophies. For the romantic one, the individual is the expression of the collectivity where he belongs. The 'I' can never cut the ties that link him to the 'we': you cannot run away from Mother culture, nor should you.

I quote Benda: 'If you answer that you do not believe in the autonomy of the spirit, that your spirit cannot be anything else than an aspect of your being, then I say to you that you will never achieve Europe. Because there is no such thing as a European being (il n'y a pas d'Être Européen).'

Benda wrote that book in 1933, the year Hitler came to power in Germany. And we all know how costly to Europe was the belief in a European being, the triumph of the romantic trend over the humanistic tradition. This trend started with the German rebellion against the French 'Aufklärung' at the end of the eighteenth century. The same drama is now played again on a much broader scale, with the rebellion of non-European nations against Western rule. If you look, for instance, at recent UNESCO resolutions, you will recognise the flamboyant philosophy of romanticism translated into a dull, bureaucratic style. Culture, for UNESCO, is 'Volksgeist'. There is no culture beyond what is now called cultural identity. The role of the state and of world agencies is to celebrate the plurality of cultural identities, and to reinforce each of them. In other words, creativity, freedom, independence, all these qualities are transferred from the individual to his community. Culture and autonomy are collective attributes.

This romantic philosophy is what Marxist states have in common with fundamentalist states. Both violate the freedom of the individual on behalf of his community. Neither believes in the autonomy of the spirit; both think instead that the spirit cannot be anything other than an aspect of being, be it defined in terms of class or of religion.

What is Europe? What is culture? I think it is possible now to give the beginning of an answer. Europe is a certain idea of culture, which can best be defined by the words: autonomy of the spirit. This idea has been fought against within Europe; it is now under attack from outside. I believe we ought to resist this attack. I am not sure that we are doing it by simply rediscovering European identity or European culture. The social sciences, for instance, for all their positivism, blur and suppress the distinction between culture and custom. Their function is to absorb artistic or intellectual creation into their context. If we do not believe in their results we are mere idealists. We act as if creation was miraculously disconnected from its material conditions. But if we surrender ourselves entirely to their implicit philosophy, then romantic culture ('Volksgeist') prevails once again over humanistic culture ('Autonomy of the Spirit').

The idea of culture as an independent realm appeared in Europe quite recently with the Renaissance. What we call Modern Times can be described as the replacement of religion by culture. This period might very well come to an end. But I am not sure that its disappearance will even be noticed. Because if culture is replaced today it is replaced by something which is entirely different but which bears the same name. ■

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mind of the tyrant must have crossed the poet's mind as well.

I doubt if writers and poets have integrity, or even should have. I think though that some of us are capable of defusing the deadly integrity of the fanatic, the monomaniac, the raging ideologist, the murderous crusader. I think fanaticism is 'their' department, whereas comparative fanaticism is ours. Let them dwell in their marble monuments — we dwell in our patient and precise mosaics. ■

István Csurka

Unacceptable reality

'There is no victim of AIDS yet in Hungary, but many are victims of the reality virus'

'Accept the realities' — for a good decade now this political slogan has been circulating to and fro in the polluted and often blocked channels of the media. And the common man hears this and is forced to co-exist with the so-called realities since he, as a productive force or as a patriot on strike, created a substantial part of them, and he becomes more and more helpless as a result of this malodorous current. To his ears, it is an unusual slogan to be encouraging him. Earlier on it had been just the opposite. By every possible authority he had been exhorted *not* to accept reality, to change the world and create a better one.

Does it follow that we have to charge with bad faith all these organs which today broadcast the necessity to accept realities? No. Because the centres promoting such acceptance regard it as being *their* duty too. And it is hard to argue that they are recommending a wisdom unknown to history. In fact it sounds like a benevolent warning: 'Don't rush headlong into a wall'. Humanity has always lived with its realities. It has always been an integral part of the common sense of the bourgeois or peasant that he is able precisely to size up possibilities — the philosophy of keeping one's bearings.

But the present slogan has a different character.

It is a means of disarmament. It is aimed at taking initiatives away from the man against whom it is directed. To live with realities today means to accept the unacceptable. To live with realities means to accept the gradations of the lack of freedom. To live with realities today means surrendering oneself.

Is it a reality that man is sick?

Is Europe very sick?

Well, yes. The reality is that contemporary man, with his sclerotic heart, cannot become an Alpinist, with his varicosed artificial legs he cannot become a champion athlete, with his doped brain he cannot become a prodigy of mental arithmetic. This is the reality. We may take beautiful walks in pleasant parks, we may cheer the exploits of our athletes as we watch them on TV, and we can buy tickets to the circus where an artist of mental arithmetic performs his feats. We are robbed of a complete life, diverted from action, from the conquest of peaks, by the reality we have accepted.

Reality, as we live it today, settles heavily on nations, on whole continents, like a thick blanket of cloud that covers the sun for whole springs and summers. Reality has no springs, only smog and soot.

For humanity has only been able to advance, if it ever has advanced, by not accepting realities. There always emerged people who set goals, who did not accept the unacceptable, and millions followed their resolute gestures, however slowly and unwillingly, until at last the smallest cells of society shed their reality and tried to create their own ideal futures.

The most horrible of all that is happening in the world today or, let us say more modestly, in Europe, is that this solar energy of history seems to have become exhausted. The world is paralysed by the acceptance of reality.

The West, as it seems here to our envious and eager eyes, has become a masturbating society that lives in the spell of Money, as if it had totally wasted its earlier ability to provide a pattern for the organising of societies. The wealth of goods is not the same as the liberation of man, and liberal democracy is hardly more than a light French comedy of manners in the eyes of one who looks at the performance from the audience, one who bought his ticket with blood. To us here it seems, though we may be wrong, that the energies of the West have become immersed in the effort of self-sustenance; and the only thing it is still able to radiate to the world is an article of fashion, the 'consumer', which is morally no more than a miserable negativity. And if, terrified, man looks then to the South and to the East, he sees hunger, want and defencelessness. And, however much the economist strives to prove that there is no connection between the two, the Christian soul — the foundation of Europe — cannot accept this cruel backdrop to the welfare society.

No programmes for living are made in the West any more. The West is no longer able to offer a vocation to its sons. No new blueprints for society are born there, no new ideas rise.

The usual argument offered in reply to this observation is that it is all due to the immeasurable destruction that the guiding ideologies of this century have wreaked in the world. This is true. Yet its converse is not yet taken into account: the destruction brought by a life without ideas, by the acceptance of reality. This destruction does not so much kill those who are alive as prevent the birth of those who should be born. And it reduces the life performance of the individual being.

The East, which by now encompasses our Central European region too — in other

Maria Kovacs (*left*), György Konrad (*centre*), and György Bence.

words, socialism — is preoccupied with concealing and licking its terrible wounds. Let us face the facts: the great tragedy of our century took place here when hopes of the unity of the proletariat and of creating a new and better society dissolved. Until this happened, this hope gave a sense of vocation, a chance for salvation to whole generations.

This tragedy drowned the life of millions in meaninglessness.

Perhaps it is here in Central Europe that we see most clearly what resignation to the realities brings to individuals and to society. Hungary, whose fame was that she again and again questioned realities by her revolutions and wars of independence, after terrible lessons and the bitter experience of being abandoned, is now in the vanguard of the business transactions of the acceptance of reality. At the same time Hungary has attained first place in the world's lists of population decrease, suicide, alcoholism, and of the bad mood that produces jokes. If one takes a close look around here, one will see the monetary advantages in material prosperity and in services gained by the acceptance of reality, as well as the grave deformations of human nature it entails. There is no victim of the AIDS virus yet in this country — but many are victims of the reality virus.

Therefore, we can hardly do anything more wise and decent on the occasion of a cultural conference which explores the possibilities of cultural cooperation on the basis of political realities than point to the danger which an over-generalisation of political realities poses for humanity.

The acceptance of realities should remain once and for all on the negotiating tables of politicians. We should step over them.

Because acceptance of reality is, for us, the shortest route to inner barrenness. And let us at the same time state that the proposition according to which the final catastrophe can only be avoided by an acceptance of realities is not true. Much less so, because inner barrenness is also a final catastrophe.

Let us refer to Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher. He was quoting his predecessor and exemplar, Diogenes, when he wrote: 'There is only one way to attain freedom: by being ready to die for it.'

Yes, the acceptance of reality is the starkest counter-selection, which slowly takes away from humanity its heroes, saints, martyrs, apostles and poets. In such acceptance there is no Shakespeare, no Goethe, no Victor Hugo, no Tolstoy, no Sándor Petöfi; there are only dwarfs and yet smaller dwarfs.

The spirit should not be a galley-slave on the privateer of accepted reality. ■

István Csurka *is an Hungarian dramatist.*

Timothy Garton Ash

'A few ideas... nothing new!'

'In our time, it's quite as meaningful to talk of European barbarism as it is to talk of European civilisation'

When I return from Budapest to Oxford my neighbours will say that I have 'got back from Europe'. Britain is one of two European countries where people talk about Europe as a foreign land. The other is Russia. Now it is patently absurd to exclude all English literature from our definition of 'European culture', just as it is absurd for Milan Kundera to exclude the whole of Russian literature from his definition of Europe, confusing Tolstoy with a T-42 tank. Yet there is a real sense in which Britain, even more than Russia, sits at an angle to Europe. Phrases that sound so natural in German — 'Wir sagen ja zu Europa', 'Europa ist auf dem Wege zu sich selbst' — sound faintly ludicrous in English, as if someone were to remark: 'We say yes to the North Pole', or 'London is on the way to itself'. The waves of European rhetoric which have swept the continent in recent years have largely passed us by. We have observed how French, German, Polish, Russian or Hungarian politicians and intellectuals have all declared their loyalty to 'Europe' — but all meaning something rather different by it, and most of them meaning, in the first place, France, Germany, Poland, Russia or Hungary. When even representatives of the Soviet military start telling us that 'we Europeans must stick together', we feel a strong temptation to stick apart.

It seems to me obvious that 'European culture' — in the sense of what European artists and intellectuals do — is still overwhelmingly a matter of *national* cultures. National, not in the frontiers of the nation-state, but in the frontiers of linguistic, historical, and still also ethnic communities. This is almost a tautology. For historically, our sense of nationhood has been inextricably bound up with the sense of cultural community: German has the word *Kulturnation* — and the thing still exists on both sides of the Berlin Wall, just as it does on both sides of the Hungarian state frontiers. To be sure, the sources of each writer's creative work are peculiar, individual and mysterious. There is no set of political conditions or state arrangements which is of itself conducive to the production of good writing; though there is for good reading. But for the vast majority of writers, their first reference group, the earth they cultivate and the air they breathe, their subject and their audience, remains their own people, their nation.

It seems to me equally obvious that this culture of national cultures is in a profound crisis, a crisis which it has brought upon itself. After two world wars begun by Europeans, after the genocides of Stalinism and Nazism, after the holocaust — above all, after the holocaust — after everything that educated Europeans have done to educated Europeans, we are compelled to question our most fundamental ideas about what it is to be a civilised man or woman. Our studies in the so-called humanities have not only humanised, they have also dehumanised. Our culture — or cult — of nationhood has led to the extermination of nations. In our time, it is quite as meaningful to talk of European barbarism as it is to talk of European civilisation.

That is why I am appalled by the easy arrogance with which many people in Western Europe — and particularly, in my experience in West Germany — now habitually contrast 'European' values and behaviour with the allegedly naïve, inferior and even (I have heard it said) 'primitive' values, behaviour and culture of the United States. Here we are again in what Kundera has called the kingdom of forgetting, because it is not imposed from above (by the President of Forgetting, Gustav Husák), but grows as it were naturally and voluntarily from below.

Out of this experience of European barbarism there has emerged the demand — indeed the necessity — for an explicit, public, common definition of the basic

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values and standards of civilised behaviour. In Britain we have come to a similar point in our own national life and culture, although through much less traumatic experience. For three centuries the fabric of civilised life in Britain has been preserved by habits, traditions and manners rather than by ideas, principles or rules. We had no written constitution or bill of rights. We just had this peculiar habit of somehow rubbing along together: *die Philosophie des Durchmuddelns* as one German writer charmingly described it. Now the fabric is torn, the habits broken. We need ideas and explicit principles again: we need a bill of rights.

How much more does all of Europe need such a charter. I would like to read the Helsinki Final Act, and what has followed it, as such a charter: a charter which Europe has given itself, for itself, but also against itself — not against American values, nor even primarily against Soviet values, but against the perverted values of European nationalism and European barbarism. But inevitably such an agreement between states with different political systems stops precisely where it is most important to go on. It names those basic human rights and freedoms, but it does not go on to spell out what they mean, specifically, concretely, for each individual man or woman in each country. Where it leaves off, our task begins.

Moreover, by its very nature no international charter can solve the problems of language. Historically, many of the most important words have meant very different things in different tongues: the word 'Europe', for example, and the word 'culture'. And for many of the most important things we have no words. What emerges most vividly from Claude Lanzmann's extraordinary film about the holocaust, *Shoah*, is the fact that the German executor-executioners — the *Schreibtischtäter* — whom he interviews, simply do not have the words to describe what they did. It is not just that they want to forget, to dissimulate, nor merely that they recall the bureaucratic euphemisms in which the 'final solution' was originally wrapped: it is that they are, so to speak, physically incapable of finding the true words and attaching them to the deeds, as a paralysed man cannot tie his tie or lift a pen. If there is a specifically 'European' task for writers, perhaps it is to find those true words and attach them with indissoluble glue to the deeds... To be not only, as Amos Oz has put it, a smoke-detector, but also an air-conditioner — not merely sounding the alarm at the smoke of false meanings but also pumping the fresh air of true meanings into our separate national and linguistic rooms.

A meeting like this may perhaps help us to find some of those shared meanings. But I must confess to scepticism about the powers and sovereignty rights of the 'republic of letters'. György Konrad's vision of a literary *Ritterorden* is an attractive one, particularly for those who may presume to belong to it. But to me there is also something suspect in the notion of a vanguard of intellectuals, bringing enlightenment down from the mountain, to raise the consciousness of the masses. A Fifth International of Intellectuals — what a nightmare! I think our place is not on the moutain top, but down in those valleys where many people cannot even see the mountains.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about Poland. It's a great pity that we have no Polish writers or intellectuals participating in this meeting. This is a particular lack because it seems to me that Polish culture in recent years may be exemplary for the European culture we have been talking about in at least two respects. Firstly, in the last decade we have seen a major attempt by Polish intellectuals to overcome some of the great divides about which I spoke earlier — the divides born of European culture, but threatening to devour it: between Left and Right, for example, or between Christians and Jews. In Solidarity, conservatives, liberals and socialists, Christians and Jews, united on a common platform of those basic European values which it is our common task to define and to defend. It used to be said that Prussia 'went up' (ging auf) into Germany. We might say that in this coming-together, Polish culture 'went up' into European culture. Secondly, and more familiarly, Poland is, of course, the best example of the successful defence, over centuries, of *national* culture against *state* power. So if Poles will not speak here, then I would like to think that at least the epigraph for our meeting might be in Polish...

Ogromne wojska, bitne generały,
Policje — tajne, widne i dwu-płciowe —
Przeciwko komuz tak sie pojednały —
Przeciwko kilku myślom...co nie nowe!...
Cyprian Norwid

(Colossal armies, valiant generals,/Police - secret, open, and of sexes two -/ Against whom have they joined together?-/ Against a few ideas... nothing new!') ■

Counterpoint

In Budapest, the Europeans have been talking about European culture. And for one unforgettable week they talked in counterpoint: officially in one place, unofficially in another. There was a Festival, but a Fringe as well...

With luck, there will be agreement about the exchange of cultural centres, about more travelling theatres and exhibitions, even about translations from small languages. The Russian classics are almost as familiar to us in the West as our own. But most Hungarian writing, and the tremendous literature of nineteenth-century Poland, remain unknown to us. If the Forum gave us Slowacki, Mickiewicz, Norwid, Petöfi, Ady and Attila Jozsef, our children would understand their world in a way that we cannot.

So the dead would cross frontiers and cast new spells. The living, however, have no such hope. The Forum cannot play Leonora in 'Fidelio' and lead into free daylight the prisoners of cultural dictatorship in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Poland. Czechoslovakia, for example, will continue to censor and blacklist thousands of its best writers, scholars, artists and actors.

This was what the writers gathered in the flat on the Gellert Hill were talking about. But they did not moan about their condition. They did not lavish praise on the West; indeed, one Hungarian spoke of the West as a 'masturbating culture' which had lost the energy to plan the future or take initiatives. Instead, they talked self-critically about the illusions of writers, about the occupational diseases of literature under dictatorship...

All these passionate disputes among writers have — it seems to me — a message for the delegates at the Budapest Cultural Forum. Not a long one, either. It could be put into a telegram. It would read something like this:

'You do not own us. You did not create us. Actually, we created you — a mistake we are working on. You cannot make us write well, and you cannot stop us writing either. Kindly clear up the mess you have made in Europe, as it is difficult to devise characters when history is petrified. Meanwhile, please supply the following: paper, typewriters, passports, the foreign books we need for our work, and publishers in our own countries. Yours, without much affection, the writers of Europe.' ■

Neal Ascherson, *The Observer*, 27 October 1985

Restrictions that violate Helsinki

Two statements for the official meeting, written by unofficial groups in Czechoslovakia and Hungary

Twenty leading members of the Hungarian democratic opposition signed a statement on 'Cultural Freedom for Hungary', which was presented to the European Cultural Forum.

We print a slightly abbreviated version of their text, as well as a statement sent by seven well-known Czech and Slovak writers and four Charter 77 spokesmen and women. The writers included the 1984 Nobel Prize laureate, poet Jaroslav Seifert.

CULTURAL FREEDOM FOR HUNGARY

While the European Cultural Forum is now under way surveying the record of the signatories to the 1975 Helsinki Accords in the area of cultural relations and what each has done for the free flow of culture across national boundaries, we feel an obligation to call the attention of the Forum and of Hungarian public opinion to the fact that in Hungary the expression and dissemination of culture are so restricted as to jeopardise the integrity of culture, the interests of our cultural development and our national consciousness. These restrictions are in violation of the obligations undertaken by the Hungarian People's Republic in international conventions and of the Hungarian Constitution itself.

Freedom of the press

The government makes the claim that there is no censorship in Hungary. This is simply false. While there is no censorship office and there are no civil servants employed as censors, books are banned, bowdlerised and confiscated; writers and artists are blacklisted, editors and publishers' readers are fired under pressure from the authorities, the police harass people connected with illegal, samizdat publishing (house searches, fines), and all of these methods are effective means of censorship. The total state monopoly and Communist Party control over the printing industry, publishing, the film industry, radio and television are also ways of exercising censorship.

There is no freedom of the press in Hungary. The mass media are perverted by a secret and legally undefined censorship.

We, the undersigned, call for the following:

1) Let the House of Parliament enact legislation on the mass media, incorporating the right to disseminate by peaceful means all and any views which do not extol violence and war and which do not support racial or national discrimination. The government must tolerate public criticism up to and including calls for changing the government and the social order.

2) Such a law must clearly define the circumstances when curtailment of the media is permissible (e.g. in case of war) and to what extent. All other resorts to censorship, open or covert, must be outlawed and violators persecuted by the full force of the law.

3) The state monopoly of the mass media must be terminated. Individuals and groups must be allowed to undertake the publishing of dailies, weeklies and journals regardless of the government's opinion of the intended political content of such publications. Privately owned film and video studios and the free circulation of their work must be sanctioned.

4) The state monopoly of book publishing must be terminated. Free play must be allowed in the market to see if private book publishing is a viable enterprise.

5) Privately owned printing facilities must be sanctioned. The police supervision of mimeograph and photocopying machines must be terminated.

6) The practice of bowdlerising literary and scientific works on political grounds must end. The harassment, slighting, and blacklisting of non-conformist writers and artists, the practice of advising them to emigrate, and the banning of their works must cease.

7) The censorship carried out by customs officers whereby newspapers, books and manuscripts which do not contain state secrets are confiscated from Hungarian and foreign citizens must cease.

8) The practice by libraries of putting books on the index on the basis of central party directives must end. The full resources of the archives must be put at the disposal of all researchers.

9) Let dailies and journals from the West, not published by the Communist Parties of those nations, be on public sale. The ban on the import and dissemination of literary works, newspapers and journals published abroad by Hungarians, including the democratic émigrés, must be lifted. Measures must be taken to ensure the unimpeded import of Hungarian-language publications from Yugoslavia.

Freedom for scholarship and the schools

The one-time autonomous Hungarian universities are no longer independent organisationally, in setting curricula, or in choosing their teaching staffs. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences acts as the centralised bureaucratic director of scientific life.

We call for:

1) The restoration and safeguarding of the autonomy of the universities, of other institutes of higher learning, and of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences itself.

Recycled bibles

Rumanian toilet paper with occasional fragments of still legible biblical verses has reached Washington, where it is being carefully conserved as evidence that the Rumanian government is recycling bibles as part of President Ceausescu's policy of repressing religious activism ...

Western diplomats believe that the traces of biblical verse found on toilet paper comes from a shipment of 20,000 bibles, sent to Rumania a few years ago by America's World Reformed Alliance. Rumanian authorities agreed to the shipment as part of its efforts to silence criticism of human rights violations. They were intended for the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, but it is thought that few were ever handed over. The bibles appear instead to have been confiscated along with many other religious publications.

While the appearance of the toilet paper with its occasional scriptural phrases appears to confirm that the bibles never reached their destination, it also suggests that the recycling process used in Rumania is far from perfect. It seems doubtful that Rumanian authorities would deliberately set out to use such paper as a way of demonstrating their commitment to religious education.

Hella Pick, The Guardian, 7 September 1985

The intellectual directors and personnel of scientific institutions and university faculties should be allowed to develop within the broad framework of the growth of society and scholarship without interference by the authorities, and without ideological restrictions.

2) Political and ideological considerations must not be allowed to play a part in the granting of academic degrees. Only a person's knowledge and achievement should be taken into account.

3) The state must not interfere with the decisions of universities and institutions concerning invitations extended to foreign scholars and Hungarian experts' activities abroad, insofar as these do not endanger the state's key economic and military interests.

4) Freedom of conscience must be allowed among teachers and plurality of world views must be respected in the schools. The government should consider allowing more denominational and private schools to operate.

Unrestricted cultural contacts

The different authorities and monopolistic organisations (Institute for Cultural Relations, National Managerial Bureau, Concert Office, etc) are often only obstacles to international cultural exchanges. Direct personal contact between Hungarians and other nations which are also significant from the aspect of cultural relations can be and often are hindered by arbitrary police measures.

We call for:

1) The termination of the state monopoly of cultural relations; private individuals should have the right to establish managerial offices.

2) Let the law state that all Hungarian citizens are entitled to passports with which they can travel abroad without the need to apply for further exit permits. Only a court injunction should be able to rescind this right. The right to travel ought not be obstructed on the pretext of foreign exchange regulations.

In defence of national and ethnic minorities

While recognising certain achievements attained in the protection and cultural development of national minorities living in Hungary, we must point out the fact that legislation concerning their rights which would define the objectives of support and set the principles governing their cultural and political significance is yet to be drafted.

The largest ethnic minority, the gypsies, are still denied the right to organise themselves on a national scale. Instead of social integration, the authorities are pushing for assimilation, which would mean the negation of their identity.

The authorities endeavour to block the local dissemination of information on, and criticism of, the ways in which the culture, and indeed very existence, of the Hungarian minorities living in Czechoslovakia, Rumania and the Soviet Union are being threatened. Attempts to let Hungarians assist these members of the Hungarian Diaspora are consistently blocked by the state.

Cultural contacts with the Hungarian minority of Yugoslavia are being curtailed on political grounds...

Freedom of religion

Religion constitutes a unique and important area of national culture, but new trends and initiatives are suppressed by the authorities. The cultural and social activities of smaller denominations are impeded. There are still cases of discrimination on religious grounds, especially in rural areas.

More culture, less state interference

The main source of grievances concerning cultural freedom is the monopoly state control of cultural life, which contradicts the nature of modern culture and the traditions of European culture. Jealously guarding its political monopoly, the state has an arsenal of deterrents available to be used against those who fail to respect the supremacy of the state cultural organisation.

The range of these measures extends from laws through regulations not supervised by Parliament to various local-government and police measures. In the name of protecting the state, freedom of thought, which seeks expression in literature, the arts and scientific works, is curtailed. The measures allow broad and arbitrary interpretations to suit the interests of the state. Prison sentences threaten those whose thinking concerning the freedoms of thought, speech, opinion, religion and assembly fails to coincide with the official point of view.

In recent years, pop musicians and a theatre director have been incarcerated for politically undesirable lyrics and an alleged offence against public morals on stage, respectively. This indicates that the state is ready to use even this way of silencing contrary views. However, it most frequently uses measures less harmful to its public image — fines, job dismissals,

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Hungary's samizdat

Hungary has a new independent journal. The existing journals HIRMONDÓ and BESZÉLO, *published by the independent publishing house AB, have recently been joined by the occasional magazine* BESZÉLO FROM ELSEWHERE *(*Máshonnan Beszélö*). It is a journal of world literature, which, while not excluding Hungarian material, will mainly focus on translations. The editors, János Kenedi and János Kis, will include fiction, essays, journalism and the social sciences, mostly from Eastern and Central Europe. Each issue is to be devoted to a certain country or topic, as well as containing general items.*

The first issue, of about 60 pages, includes an essay by J. J. Lipski on nationalism, Slawomir Mrozek's Reports *(from* Index *1/1985), Václav Havel's* Mistake *(from* Index *1/84), works by Milan Kundera and Shalamov, and an official but confidential report by one of Gorbachov's advisers on the state of the Soviet economy.*

The second issue will be devoted to Poland (S. Mrozek, T. Konwicki, C. Milosz, M. Brandys, W. Woroszylski etc.). the third to the Soviet Union, the fourth to the national economies of the different countries of the Soviet bloc, and the fifth to the treatment of history.

The first issue was welcomed with great enthusiasm, since in Hungary, as in the rest of the Soviet bloc, the government keeps a tight lid on information about social, political and cultural life in their neighbouring countries. BESZÉLO FROM ELSEWHERE *wants to fill the gap.*

Shortly before the Budapest symposium, Andrew Short interviewed two leading samizdat publishers, László Rajk and Gábor Demszky.

László Rajk

ANDREW SHORT: **How would you characterise cultural policy in Hungary?**

LÁSZLÓ RAJK: It is always a kind of a shop-window. For instance, they publish Bulgakov officially so everybody can talk about Hungarian liberalism, but you cannot stage Beckett in Budapest, only in the provinces. It's absurd. There is no official blacklist — there's a kind of hidden censorship which works. This year there's no chance to perform Mrozek or Gombrowicz; and most of Wajda's films are out of the question.

What about books?

There is a long list of those who can't be published — including, of course,

Koestler and Orwell, but also Gandhi and, naturally, Kundera. Not even Kundera's latest novels, which are not overtly political. Kundera's *The Joke*, as a matter of fact, was published in 1968, distributed to the bookshops but then quickly withdrawn, after the invasion of Czechoslovakia on 21 August.

What about independent publishing?

Since the closure of the 'Samizdat Boutique' our situation has changed. We no longer have an easily accessible public place where books and journals can be bought. We have had to develop another distribution system, which absorbs more or less the same amount of publications as were sold before.

What is the range of publications?

The number of publishing houses has increased. There are still the two journals, *Beszélö*, which is quarterly, and the monthly *Hirmondó*. But besides the AB and ABC publishing houses, there is now FREE TIME and a kind of avant-garde group called SNOB INTERNATIONAL. A certain painter publishes a semi-legal journal called ARTFUL LETTERS, and there is another art publication named ARTERIA. Of the political publishers, the most important are AB, ABC, FREE TIME and M.O. ('Hungarian October').

How do they differ?

They have no specific editorial policy, apart from possibly M.O. As the name suggests, it tries to publish as much as possible about 1956 — pure literature, politics and diaries. In the last two years AB has published George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and two volumes of poetry by György Petri. FREE TIME published Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, which had earlier appeared in an edition by AB. Then there was a kind of continuation of *1984*, called *1985* by György Dalos, parts of Gombrowicz's *Diaries*, V. Woroszylski's *Hungarian Diary*, and many others.

How many people can you reach?

Usually 1,000 to 2,000 copies are printed. But you have to multiply this by at least five, because people keep on passing each publication from hand to hand. Radio Free Europe, which is widely listened to, usually reads nearly all the books in their entirety.

What is the attitude of the authorities to your activities?

The way the authorities treat us is not to be compared with, for instance, Poland, Rumania or Czechoslovakia. But one should never forget the overall picture. In relation to the good economic situation in Hungary, the harassment is strong. With few exceptions it is not spectacular, just a kind of persistent harassment like losing jobs, not getting passports, and so on. I think I am the only one from the opposition who has a job with a state firm. But I am in the lowest possible salary category, which is not enough to live on.

But it seems that in the last two years the law is slowly being adjusted. Several new bills have been passed which are clearly aimed at the opposition. They changed, for instance, the law concerning publications: It is now sufficient for the police to find at your home a single copy of a text, typewritten, Xeroxed or the like, and you can be accused of preparing an illegal publication. This doesn't carry a prison sentence but you can be fined from one to two thousand forints and the decision lies solely in the hands of the police. You have the right to appeal, but again only to those people who have decided that you are guilty. This law is already being widely implemented.

Another bill is aimed at hitting our distribution system. Formerly the police needed a warrant to search a car. They could stop you and ask to see your driving licence or on some technical matter, but could not search the vehicle. Now, they have the power not only to search the car and your bags at will, but also to take you to the police station and make a personal search. That is what they did in autumn 1984 with Gábor Demszky, who appealed against it. The result? Five months later, they simply changed the law and passed this new bill.

Gábor Demszky

ANDREW SHORT: **What's your situation as an independent publisher?**

GÁBOR DEMSZKY: Quite strange at the moment, unlike the one we were used to. I think it's concerned with the Cultural Forum, which the Hungarian government is hosting in October 1985. We are left in relative peace at the moment, with minimal harassment. Since September 1984 none of us has been arrested, there have been no house-searches, and apart from the surveillance of György Krassó (*Index* 5/84), which was lifted in October 1985, there has been no serious offence against 'samizdat'.

But I'm afraid all this is only to maintain the image of a 'liberal' country which our government wants to project before and during the Forum. It would be inconvenient to have political trials, searches or book-burning at this time, it could create a scandal the authorities don't want. But nobody knows which way the situation will turn later once the regime has safely coped with the elections (which took place in June 1985) and the Forum. The regime must be aware of the impact of the independent publishing, not least from the pre-election meetings where, during the discussions, people voiced arguments they could have learned about only from our unofficial press.

What have you published lately apart from the regular journals, *Hirmondó* and *Beszélö?*

In my publishing house, AB, we've produced the first Hungarian translation of Orwell's *Animal Farm*, poems by György Petri, a novel by György Dalos, *1985*, with marvellous illustrations by László Rajk, as well as Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*. My friends in the publishing house called M.O. ('Hungarian October') printed Orwell's *1984*.

What kind of readership do you have?

Mainly two groups. One group is the young generation: students, intellectuals, recent graduates and the like. But this is not a stable relationship, it changes all the time — because it's fashionable to read 'samizdat' at that time of life and to take part in these activities. On the other hand, some of our readers cannot be called young, those who participated in the events of 1956, or even older generations.

It's the 1920s generation who are our most regular buyers. If they cannot get hold of independent books or journals, they try to get in touch with us personally, to buy books and to be informed. This group is not satisfied with official propaganda and information. They were the main ones to buy Orwell and Koestler — not the youngsters, who are more eager to read political 'samizdat', the journals, and documents about 1956.

What do you think the future will bring?

The opposition is not very strong. We have to acknowledge that there is generally a national consensus about Kadarism. Our duty is to tell the truth about our history, about the real situation here. We have to remind people that there is a part of the population which is not benefitting from the economic reforms, but, on the contrary, is increasingly poorer: gypsies, large families in the countryside, the old. We have to write and publish the truth about current social inequalities, about how reforms have not touched the political taboos, about 1956, and also about the historical experiences of other nations in Eastern Europe. We have to persist, and I believe that our work *will* have an effect on people's minds. We don't know when the results will be visible, but they will be sooner or later. ■

continued from page 18
and black-listing.

It is disturbing that since the signing of the Helsinki Accords several regulations have been introduced which freely allow the administrators and the police arbitrary interpretations without allowing recourse to the courts. Such regulations have broadened the authority of the police; introduced the concept of violation of press regulations; led to stricter police supervision of mimeographing etc equipment; tightened the system of police surveillance; and tightened the measures against 'dangerous social parasites'.

These may be used arbitrarily against anyone who breaks the state's monopoly of culture and the dissemination of information...

When the European Cultural Forum makes proposals for the development of inter-state cultural contacts, the above deserves to be kept in mind. Under such circumstances these contacts may easily fall prey to political manipulation.

Therefore, we call for the restoration of cultural freedom, the extension of social initiatives and social supervision to the area of culture and to inter-state cultural contacts.

Solidarity

We respectfully request the participants of the European Cultural Forum and the representatives of the international press to consider our grievances and suggestions. What we expect from the 'liberal' Hungarian government is a long-established fact in Western democracies.

Do not have faith in the eventual success of discreet silence and 'quiet diplomacy'. We need unequivocal expressions of solidarity and such solidarity with the cause of Hungarian democracy and culture can in no way be seen as interference in the internal affairs of Hungary.

We ourselves are in solidarity with all people whose cultures are oppressed, who are partially or totally deprived of their rights. We are in solidarity with those citizens of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Poland, Rumania, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia who are persecuted and imprisoned for having defended human and cultural freedom.

The cause of Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Czech, Slovak, Croat and Rumanian Catholics is our cause, too. The grievances of Bulgarian Turks, Estonians, Latvians, Tatars and Jews in the USSR are our grievances.

We know that Géza Szöcs and Károly Király of Transylvania, Miklós Duray in Bratislava, Václav Havel of Czechoslovakia, Stefan Heym of East Germany, who has spoken out against censorship, Jacek Kuroń and Adam Michnik of Poland, and Yuri Orlov, Anatol Shcharansky and many others in the Soviet Gulag are fighting for us too. ■

Budapest, 15 October 1985

Péter Bokros, Dr Gábor Demszky, Zoltán Endreffy, György Gadó, Béla Gondos, Miklós Haraszti, András Kardos, János Kenedi, János Kis, Dr György Krassó, Tamás Molnár, András Nagy, Jenó Nagy, Dr Tibor Pákh, Sándor Radnóti, László Rajk, Ottilia Solt, Pál Szalai, Miklós Gáspar Tamás, Mihály Vajda.

Czechoslovak writers and Charter 77 address the Budapest Cultural Forum

(Charter 77 Document No 24/1985)

Since the 1968 invasion, Czechoslovakia has experienced a period of destruction of all the outstanding achievements of its national culture, reminiscent in many respects of the dark years of the 1950s, if not worse. This systematic official policy, which is probably without equal in present-day Europe, is the more remarkable in that it is taking place at a time when the Soviet-bloc countries have officially renounced Stalinism, at a time of detente, and of the so-called Helsinki process.

Many Czech and Slovak writers — both those living at home and abroad — as well as many foreign observers, continue to draw the world's attention to this phenomenon, which has become a European curiosity; they analyse it, and the Charter 77 human rights movement in Czechoslovakia has on a number of occasions concerned itself with various aspects of it.

The Budapest Cultural Forum — an assembly convened by agreement of the participants of the Helsinki Conference and dealing with cultural matters — now presents us with yet another opportunity to point out what is going on in Czechoslovak art and culture.

The politicians who came to power in Czechoslovakia as a result of the military intervention of the Warsaw Pact states in 1968 turned their attention, shortly after their accession, to the systematic suppression of culture. For reasons which are scarcely explicable, and which cannot even be explained by reference to the wishes of the regime which carried out the intervention, they began mercilessly to suppress any and every form of cultural expression which differed in the slightest from their own ideological demands and which infringed on their highly simplistic, primitive image of the world. The consequences of this policy represent a frontal attack threatening the very spiritual, cultural, and thus also national identity of Czechoslovak society.

Many people have already referred to this as 'the rule of forgetfulness'; history is falsified, whole areas of history and important past events are made taboo or distorted, the role of countless outstanding personalities denied, and in many cases these men and women have become non-persons whose names cannot even be mentioned. There are statistics showing how many thousands of scientists, scholars, artists, journalists, and others who under different circumstances would be playing a creative part in the nation's affairs, have been banned and prevented from working in their respective fields, how many are being persecuted for their earlier work, and how many have been persecuted in prison.

The authorities have had thousands of books withdrawn from libraries and bookshops, many textbooks and dictionaries have had to be rewritten or in some cases destroyed, dozens of films have ended up on the shelf. And all this, as often as not, for quite trivial reasons.

Everything that can still find public expression is enmeshed in an absurd net of bureaucratic red tape; anything in our culture that is of any worth and has succeeded in obtaining official consent has had to be fought for. Numerous cultural institutions, including scientific institutes and universities as well as artists' associations, have gradually been paralysed in their activity.

However, the creative potential of society and its hunger for authentic cultural values cannot be completely suppressed by administrative means or by police actions. And so, in Czechoslovakia today, important works are still appearing in a variety of fields, and they enjoy great public interest. But they can frequently only be created — and in some genres exclusively so — outside the officially approved sphere, so that they are all but inaccessible to the public at large. Important texts — scientific as well as artistic — are distributed in typescripts, copied over and over again at considerable risk to the typists and distributors, or are published in exile abroad. Many concerts, exhibitions, poetry readings, theatre performances can only take place in private, or at best semi-publicly, and are always in danger of police intervention. The majority of the works that do appear officially are the result of many a struggle with the authorities and usually suffer from censorship and self-censorship.

(*Top*) János Kenedi with his dog Buster. (*Above*) Miklós Haraszti.

The natural ferment of cultural life — as one of the chief means by which a society expresses itself, as well as the natural contact between those who create the culture and the public — has thus been seriously disrupted and has had to be replaced by various inadequate substitutes. Teaching in schools is completely governed by official ideology, so that school-children and students are given a distorted picture of reality which deforms the cultural awareness of the young.

But it is not only by these obvious, generally known and more or less tangible methods that Czechoslovak culture is being hampered and destroyed — there are other more subtle and, therefore, even more dangerous means to this end. The general bureaucratic bondage of our society, the suppression of natural plurality, and the creation of a kind of state of 'non-history' (history replaced by an official plan of events), the growing universal feeling of helplessness, hopelessness, frustration and of the absurdity of any and every creative, social or civic endeavour, as well as the terrible demoralisation occasioned by this policy and accompanied by the ever-growing conviction that life is hopelessly grave and empty — all this cannot but have a devastating effect on the nation's culture, which is invariably an expression of the spirit of society and a mirror of its time. It will be next to impossible one day to ascertain how many talented men and women were prevented from contributing their share, not because their *oeuvre* was banned but because it was never given a chance to be created, this stifling atmosphere in the country nipping the talent in the bud before it ever had an opportunity to mature. Nor will we ever know what even those scientists and artists who *are* allowed to work might have produced if they had had a little more freedom, if this same stifling atmosphere had not undermined *their* creativity.

Not every scholar or artist has a temperament enabling him or her to stand up against this oppressive environment, to risk their careers and livelihood by entering into a permanent, open, urgent confrontation with the state and police apparatus. And why *should* a poet, painter, composer, historian, sociologist, philosopher or novelist have to be a campaigner or a hero? Is there not something monstrous about conditions in a country in which creative freedom, independence, and some sort of contact with their public, however unsatisfactory and meagre, can only be enjoyed by those who are prepared to risk imprisonment? Is not such a state of affairs first and foremost an indictment of the conditions that give rise to it?

We trust that the Budapest Cultural Forum has at its disposal, or can obtain, the necessary documentation regarding the conditions which we can only refer to in brief and in general terms. This state of affairs cannot be excused by any political argument. The authorities in a country in the very heart of Europe are consistently waging war against the spiritual integrity and identity of two nations with a thousand-year-old cultural tradition. And this war is being waged by a government which has put its signature to the Final Act of Helsinki, to the various international conventions on human rights and other such documents. We would like to take the opportunity presented by the holding of the Budapest Cultural Forum to remind the Czechoslovak government of the undertakings it has taken upon itself by signing these agreements. In our view, the world's culture is indivisible and its free development should be of concern to all people of good will.

Prague, 25 September, 1985

Václav Černý, Václav Havel, Petr Kabeš, Karel Pecka, Jaroslav Seifert, Dominik Tatarka, Ludvík Vaculík.

Charter 77 Spokesmen: Jiří Dienstbier, Eva Kanturková, Petruška Šustrová; Jan Lopatka, Member of the Collective of Charter 77.

Copies: Czechoslovak government, Budapest Cultural Forum. ■

A Besieged Culture: Czechoslovakia Ten Years after Helsinki

Writers, artists, journalists and scholars living in Czechoslovakia describe their situation today

For the official meeting in Budapest of the European Cultural Forum, the Charter 77 Foundation and the International Helsinki Federation produced a special 300 page book. Entitled A Besieged Culture — Czechoslovakia Ten Years after Helsinki, *and edited by A. Heneka, Frantisek Janouch, Vilem Precan and Jan Vladislav, the book falls into six parts: 'They said about Czechoslovakia', 'Questionnaire', 'Reflections', 'Chronicle of everyday repression', 'Documents', 'Biographical notes' and 'Personal Index'. As an editorial note says at the beginning, 'It attempts to present information, testimonies and reflections on the present cultural situation in Czechoslovakia, and to illuminate first of all those aspects of it which will presumably be concealed by the official Czechoslovak delegation in Budapest'.*

What follows is a slightly shortened version of Jan Vladislav's introduction and of the answers to the questionnaire. The book itself can be had at $10 a copy from the Charter 77 Foundation, Box 50041, S-104 05, Stockholm, Sweden.

Introduction

Jan Vladislav

This book is not intended to persuade you of the validity of 'its' truth; rather, it seeks — by means of a number of documents and personal testimonies, chronicling certain events — to draw your attention to a particular, indisputable *reality*. A reality to which we frequently remain blind and deaf, which we often refuse to take into account, comprehend, and act upon. Yet all this will not eliminate it, nor prevent it from affecting the future of our world.

The reality this book wishes to draw attention to is the threat to one of the basic elements of our European identity. While it may be true that the problem of European identity may not be a top priority for those living in the western part of our continent, this is not to say that it does not exist or that it lacks urgency. That it does exist is, after all, demonstrated by the very agenda of this conference; as for its urgency, this has been the subject of studies by a large number of prominent historians, politicians, economists and, above all, philosophers, including Czech Professor Jan Patočka, all of whom have written or are writing about the impending *end of Europe*.

One of the important acts in this historical play about the end of Europe has been taking place for several decades now in Czechoslovakia. Seen from outside, what has been happening in that country may not seem so terribly dramatic. To the uninitiated onlooker nothing out of the ordinary perhaps seems to be going on — after all, similar things are happening wherever a regime that governs without genuine national consensus strives to keep itself in power, come what may. This, however, is a false impression: what we have been witnessing for so many years now in Czechoslovakia is not merely a succession of ruthless, indeed frequently lawless, measures by means of which the illegitimate regime is defending its position or preventively safeguarding its existence. It is not just the systematic exclusion, silencing and sometimes literal destruction of inconvenient individuals or ideas. Nor simply the usual story of the powerful and the powerless, as we know from other authoritative and totalitarian regimes (and as the Czechs and Slovaks learned to know to their cost in the 1950s). That which has been taking place in Czechoslovakia over the past few decades, and in the last 10 years in spite of the signing of the Helsinki Accords, is an undeclared, persistent and systematic total war against the very roots of Czech and Slovak spiritual life, against their true thoughts, feelings and aspirations, against everything that has, over the last thousand years, moulded the nation's identity and that finds its outward expression in its culture.

The regime which has been in power for well-nigh forty years discovered, in 1968, that a nation which manages to retain even part of its own identity — its own consciousness and conscience — cannot be brought under control totally or permanently. That is the reason why, ever since that time, the regime has spared no effort to erase their true identity from the minds of the Czechs and Slovaks, and to replace it with another, artificial, foreign, *international identity*, of a kind that can be more easily manipulated and, if necessary, exchanged for another, in the same way as street names are changed according to the immediate 'historical' situation: in Prague, this has happened up to five times in the last half century.

That is why the Czechoslovak regime has devoted so much attention to culture for many years, so much effort to suppress its every nonconformist manifestation, even though it would have done better to concentrate its resources and energy on far more urgent problems in the economic, social and ecological fields. It also explains why, in their resistance, the Czechs and Slovaks have put such seemingly exaggerated emphasis on culture, this being the only area in which they can express their views — whether directly or by allusion — on the burning issues of the day, as they cannot in other spheres of life. Culture has thus become one of the last areas of at least a modicum of freedom, where the nation can defend its threatened identity. This does not by any means concern only a narrow section of the population represented by those members of the intelligentsia who are critical of the regime — it concerns *all* of society, as was shown recently by the spontaneous resistance put up by the nation when an attempt was made to impose a radical reform of Czech grammar...

The book you now have in your hands provides conclusive evidence of two things: how (to quote Václav Havel) the regime in its 'death-like torpor' is trying to install 'order devoid of life' and 'the peace of the morgue or the cemetery'; and, on the other hand, how not only a large section of the intelligentsia but a significant part of society as a whole is persistently and effectively resisting these efforts, thus giving the lie to the image of a cultural cemetery.

August 1985

The Questionnaire

For over one and a half decades a particularly oppressive situation has reigned over the cultural scene in Czechoslovakia; in its duration and unchanging character it has no parallel in the country's modern history. Hundreds of artists, writers, film, stage and television actors and directors, hundreds of journalists, historians, philosophers and scholars in other disciplines have been dismissed from the institutions that had been created by the world of culture, art and science to provide links between the creators of spiritual values and the public. Their books are not printed and are not available in public libraries, their works are not performed in theatres, on the radio or television, as actors and directors they have no engagements, they are not allowed to exhibit their works in public, they find no employment in their own fields.

Many of them barely scrape a living, some have been imprisoned or otherwise persecuted, often their families as well; many have emigrated and the same ban has been placed on their works as on those of their colleagues who remained. Regimentation, injunctions and prohibitions, all kinds of manipulation by the state have made freedom of intellectual life impossible, preventing communication between creative people and the rest of the population and blocking the development of creative powers among new generations.

First question: **How does the situation briefly described here affect you personally, from the standpoint of someone whose work achieves fulfilment only at the moment when it comes into contact with the public?**

Second question: **How does this situation affect you as a member of the national cultural community? How do you come to terms with it?**

Third question: **What practical steps on the part of the state power and its official institutions could provide the beginning of a way out from the existing oppressive and critical situation? Is it within your power to influence the cultural policy of the state, or to contribute in other ways to overcoming the present situation?**

Fourth question: **A feature of the intellectual situation in Czechoslovakia is the endeavour by state institutions to prevent the free flow of intellectual impulses, ideas and information from the rest of the world. What do you miss most of all in this artificially-created isolation? Do you expect any concrete steps by the European Cultural Forum towards overcoming this isolation?**

Fifth question: **What positive steps by foreign cultural institutions and personalities could, in your view, contribute to overcoming the stagnation in Czechoslovak culture?**

Václav Benda

Let me first of all add two points to your introductory note. The 'exceptionally difficult time of crisis' you mention has not afflicted Czechoslovak culture merely in the past 15 years but for no less than 46. The two brief periods when conditions were relatively good are unfortunately only exceptional episodes in a long story of unremitting cultural genocide. For an entire productive life-span scientific and artistic truth has now been stifled and distorted in Czechoslovakia, artists and scientists imprisoned, executed, exiled, or at the very least forced to do menial labour instead of working in their profession, while the heritage of the past has been filtered through the mesh of rapidly changing ideologies.

The only lasting value, and at the same time the most effective argument, has been fear. Let me quote a case in point, much more controversial and less outrageous than many others, but for that very reason perhaps applicable elsewhere and not just in our part of Europe: while working on a certain anti-fascist study (I refrain from giving any details about it, since our political police considers the retyping of a text of Lenin's by one of us to be no less incriminating than the retyping of something by Solzhenitsyn), we badly needed to read the actual writings of the Nazi ideologues, in particular Hitler, Streicher and Rosenberg. We discovered, however, that these sources were not accessible in the official libraries, while those specialists who had possessed them had long ago destroyed them out of fear whose intensity (and relevance!) had not diminished with the passage of years.

We live in times when monuments are torn down, streets renamed, and convictions changed *en masse* — rarely is this in any way admirable, but it is deeply human. And, who knows, perhaps society does have the right (not very sensible and, as Herostrates' example shows, very difficult to implement) to set the seal of forgetfulness on certain facts. But if an artist or scientist is to praise or condemn something, as they are asked to do, they have first to know what it is they are lauding or denouncing, otherwise they are nothing but liars and lackeys, no matter how worthy the cause. Alas, one can rarely discern, in the 'cultural policy' practised in our country for well-nigh half a century, any other intention than that of deliberately turning creative people into liars and lackeys...

Now to the questions themselves. I have linked them together and will concentrate on a particular, and seemingly secondary, problem: any significant improvement in this area (as, for that matter, in any other) would signify a radical change in our situation. Historically, it is the rule rather than the exception that various artistic and scientific works should be banned and their authors persecuted — only in our case this rule has exceeded the customary measure. But I can find no historical parallel for one aspect of the situation: the police arbitrarily confiscate manuscripts that have scarcely been begun — personal diaries and correspondence, documents, archive materials and notes, etc. The confiscation of Karel Kosík's voluminous manuscript of his philosophical work is well known, thanks to the international outcry it caused. The Evangelical priest Jan Šimsa was sentenced to eight months' imprisonment because he refused to surrender to the police a personal letter sent to him by his friend and teacher, the late Professor Jan Patočka. The historian Jozef Jablonický has regularly had the manuscripts of his studies, notes, card indexes, and scientific literature which he needs for his work taken away by the police. (With nine house searches each, he and I probably hold the Czechoslovak record in this respect.) Last autumn, the security people confiscated the entire *oeuvre* of the Moravian poet, Iva Kotrlá. And just the other day a court ordered the confiscation of Jiří Dienstbier's writings, which had been seized during the time he was imprisoned, including all his notes from the time when he was a foreign correspondent in Vietnam and the USA in the 1960s. These are just a few examples, and I could add many more like them.

Egon Bondy (Zbyněk Fišer)

1 I consider this situation to be abnormal, but we know from experience that one can adapt to such a situation and continue working.

2 I see this as a very grave violation, which seriously threatens our national culture. Indeed, it poses a danger also to our national identity, and leaves me with feelings of shame and sorrow. I try to overcome this by working as hard as I can. It is for this reason that, some years ago, I started writing a history of philosophy, so that I might try, at least in

one department, to fill the gap which has existed for several decades. The samizdat edition was very well received by my readers.

3 I really have no idea, no idea at all.

4 We all feel the lack of books, in particular where scientific literature, and more especially still literature on the humanities is concerned. Our public libraries don't have the necessary resources to purchase books from abroad, and the situation is fast becoming irreparable. Let anyone who can send us books as gifts addressed to our institutes of the humanities, especially to the State Library in Prague, the Klementinum. As long as the books are there, we'll manage somehow to get to them. Our colleagues abroad cannot even begin to imagine how catastrophic the situation is, all the way from the literary sciences to Oriental studies — I doubt if they could function under similar circumstances. So perhaps someone will take pity on us.

At the same time, let me thank all those who keep sending scientific literature to individuals in this country. Let me assure them that we take good care of the books they send. It is as well to remind then that *non-political* scientific literature can be sent normally through the post, our censorship lets it through.

5 I don't know.

Jiří Gruša [*now living in the West*]

1 This unusually difficult etc situation is not something which has existed in Czechoslovakia only during the last 15 years; it has been our predicament for almost four decades. The only unique factor, perhaps, is that this predicament is shared also by our Czech socialist dreamers, who themselves established it in 1948. And because these dreamers traditionally flourished in Bohemia, our predicament is particularly grave in comparison with the neighbouring countries who suffer from the same kind of regime. Personally, it is no novelty to me, as it has more or less been the story of my life.

2 By being obstructive.

3 The practical sphere of the regime's power is not my concern. I cannot feel as they do, and even if I could I would not permit myself to do so. Besides, all the 'measures' taken by the regime have been more like blows delivered. How to influence it? In such a way that it loses the initiative.

4 The system spawned by the offspring of the bourgeoisie as a clever idea of how, once and for all, to give everyone a fair share of the cake (provided, of course, that the knife remains always in their hands alone), could only end up in a system of perpetual rationing of everything, especially information. Limiting and licensing information is the system's particular speciality — one could even say its very nature. It is simply laughable to think that the regime would be favourably disposed towards any conference debate on this matter. After all, for them it is a matter of life and death.

5 To do everything in one's power to make limiting and licensing more difficult. This dinosaur of compulsory 'total earthly happiness' (or what you call a 'system') may perhaps meet its defeat in Silicon Valley.

Václav Havel

1 For a playwright it is, naturally, a particularly difficult situation. A play, after all, is something that comes into its own only on a stage, it is written out of a specific situation and for it, for a definite, specific public and often even for a specific troupe (or at least that is how I used to write), in short, it must have a home ground from which it might perhaps set out on a further journey. Even Shakespeare wrote for his theatre and for his audiences. In short, it is hard for me to write when I know that I shall send my play somewhere far away and will not even really know who is putting it on, for whom and why. For seventeen years I have not been able to see any of the performances of my plays (with one unusual exception, a single amateur performance which led to a great many troubles) and that really does not make my writing any easier.

Somewhere at the deepest level there is also something else, something more serious, that makes my writing difficult. I am not sure just how to explain it. Perhaps this way: as long as there is in a society more than one subject of social and historical decision making, something goes on, a play of various forces unfolds with an element of the unforeseeable, of chance, of drama, of tension. There is, in short, an element of historicity. In our land all decision making and all influence have for many years been in the hands of a single subject, the central power, and that gives rise to a strange feeling of a-historicity. It is as if time stood still. Nothing is going on. There is nothing. Everything remains the same.

A playwright, who is and must be a particularly sensitive seismograph of his time (if he is not to be simply a producer of theatrical consumer goods), finds himself, in such a non-time, in a peculiar situation. He feels forced to write about non-happening; though he works so much with time, he must write of a non-time; though he is to be the 'mirror of his age', he must write of living in a non-age. People go on being born, growing up, falling in love, marrying, having children, dying. One can write about that, and people have written about it since time immemorial.

And yet it is not as simple as it seems: especially in a play, one can write even about that only against the background of some history, of some social process, no matter how concealed it remains. Occasionally, even in Czechoslovakia a good film, for instance, will be made (perhaps by Věra Chytilová who has a special talent to push through what no other could). Still, you always have the sense that the human story in it is suspended in mid-air, there is no historical background. It is a matter of the terrifying pressure of censorship and self-censorship, but it is also a matter of the overall climate: in the atmosphere created by a power so motionless, so petrified and yet dominating all life, every concrete human story seems to lose its force, its meaning, its face.

To be sure, if I were to be completely honest, what makes my writing most difficult of all is something quite other, concrete to the point of banality: the fear that the police will come and take away an incomplete or recently completed manuscript. That perennial scattering of copies in various apartments, hiding pages somewhere behind the furniture whenever the bell rings, that is, what I personally experience as dumbest of all. It is enough to make one a neurotic and cripple him as an author, so much more so because it has been going on for so long.

2 I have become accustomed to the fact that most of what I read is in typescript. Occasionally I see an interesting performance or exhibition, but this is something that tends to happen only on the fringes of authorised culture, something half covert, about which one never knows whether it will still be there the next day. More or less the same is true of good books: insofar as some appear occasionally, it is for the most part only because some more courageous editor fought for it and won in the endless struggle with the supervisory bureaucracy. How should I take this common situation? It irritates me, naturally. And it grieves me deeply.

3 I myself can have no influence on the cultural policy of the state. At best, I can contribute to the growth of a culture that is independent (that is, either boycotted or persecuted by the state) by writing something good, by helping with the self-

help distribution of good things. The stronger and richer this independent culture becomes, the greater the hope that it will exercise a certain pressure on the cultural policy of the authorities or that in some light, indirect way it will influence it, perhaps force it to make concessions. For myself at least, I see no other possibility.

4 What would be most important for myself personally would be to be able to travel, to breathe the cultural atmosphere of other lands, to look and to see how people live elsewhere, what interests them, what is happening where. To be sure, again for seventeen years, I have not been able to travel because, even if they let me out, they would not let me back. Now and again books and magazines from the outside world do reach us, foreign films are shown here (albeit only some, and always with a long delay), occasionally even a theatrical troupe comes visiting. I personally, as I have said, most miss the opportunity to take in foreign culture there where it arises, in its homeland. I expect that the European Cultural Forum will pass resolutions no less beautiful than those passed in Helsinki or Madrid. Unfortunately resolutions can neither feed a man nor set him free.

5 The more that significant foreign cultural personalities come and visit here, the more contact there is with cultural institutions, the better. However, if they limit their contacts to their local official hosts and counterparts, they will only help stabilise the status quo and create artificial merit for the officials in charge of culture. It is important that ordinary people have a part in it. It is not we, banned writers or scholars, who are at stake. If the visitors make contact with us or call attention to our position, it will certainly be important, for us as well as in general, but it is not what is most important. After all, we as concrete persons, are not at stake, symptomatic though our fate may be for this age as a whole. The point is culture as such — that people at large should derive something from it.

Ladislav Hejdánek

1 Even though I am a socialist by conviction, as a result of my Christian orientation I could not work in the fields in which I received my professional training (philosophy and sociology; the latter discipline was actually eliminated after 1948 as 'bourgeois'). It was not until the nineteen-sixties that I was able to publish reviews and articles, almost exclusively, of course, in literary journals.

Threat to manuscript

I have been preoccupied with this question since 28 April, when the police conducted a seven-hour search of my home and confiscated over 1,000 pages of my philosophical manuscript. The justification given for the search was the suspicion that my flat concealed written evidence of the crime of 'subversion'. Therefore, I must assume that I face the threat of a one- to five-year prison sentence, as envisaged by Paragraph 98 of the Penal Code. I do not underestimate this threat by any means, but I am more concerned about the fate of my manuscript.

Karel Kosík, 'A Letter to Jean-Paul Sartre', summer 1975 (reprinted in *A Besieged Culture*)

In 1968 I was accepted, along with one other non-Marxist colleague by the Philosophical Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science, as an expression of a new policy approach. Already in 1970, however, there was a wave of mass dismissals affecting the majority of scientific and technical staff of the Institute. Thus, during my entire life I have been able to work in my proper field for less than three years. Before 1968 I was employed in the documentation section of a medical research institute, and since 1968 I have been working as a night doorman, stoker, and most recently, as a stock-room clerk. During most of my life I have been able to devote myself to philosophy only in my leisure hours away from my job.

2 Throughout the period in question, I witnessed two striking features with respect to the situation of philosophy. First of all, during the entire period (except for a brief interval in 1968) all non-Marxist types of philosophy were excluded from schools and other institutions of learning, as well as from public cultural life (moreover, as to Marxism, it was only a narrow interpretation of it, defined and controlled by non-philosophers). This had especially important consequences for Christians, who were — and are — more numerous than Marxists: since 1968, there has been no function or employment for a Christian-oriented philosopher, not even in general pedagogic areas. (The same is, of course, true for all Christian-oriented persons in creative fields.) Christian cultural activity is being expelled from all aspects of social life and is limited to a strictly controlled, closed, ghetto-like existence within the churches. (Theological faculties were ejected from the university framework; more recently, the 1980 law regulating higher education stipulates that theological faculties are no longer considered part of the higher education system.)

The second noteworthy feature has been the enormous, catastrophic decline in philosophic thought as such. In the period immediately following 1948, this was due to the dearth of sufficiently educated, competent Marxist scholars and teachers. After a few years this situation improved, particularly as a result of marked improvement in the Philosophical Institute in the nineteen-sixties. In 1970, however, the best Marxist thinkers were expelled from schools and research institutes. As early as 1956, young Marxists started to develop a capacity for independent thinking. Nowadays, almost three decades later, places where official philosophy is practised are vegetating — either in reality, or at least in appearance. To the extent that philosophy in our country is at all alive and working, it is happening outside official centres, and in spite of them.

3 Under present conditions, one cannot expect any practical steps for the improvement of the situation to be taken by the state apparatus (or Party organs). The Czech situation — unlike the Slovak — is characterised by the totally unrepresentative nature of the Czech leadership, and the lack of any 'feed-back' channel of communication whereby citizens might exert pressure on their political representatives. Any progress in our country is dependent upon progress in the entire bloc, and is a reflection of the overall situation; the tail cannot wag the dog. Any tendencies to independent political development, if they exist at all, are immediately suppressed. Appropriate moves on the part of other nations in the cultural field or other areas of diplomacy can at times result in certain concessions; on the other hand inadequately planned policies are likely to cause more harm than good.

4 The policy of hindering the free flow of spiritual and cultural ideas from abroad is, of course, in sharp conflict with the need for the greatest possible flow of scientific and technical information. For this reason, in the long run the policy is doomed to failure. Sooner or later, this faulty approach must be abandoned if the Soviet bloc is to avoid stagnation and obsolescence in all areas, including science and technology. However, human life is not long enough to permit us to wait passively for this to happen. Moreover, for those of us living here, such

stagnation is hardly a desirable solution. With the help of the rest of the world, especially the democratic forces of Europe, we need to break down all the various artificial barriers within which we are isolated. I don't believe that at present such help should primarily take an institutional form, even though some institutional — or rather organisational — aid is certainly needed. At the present time personal contacts and personal initiatives are the most feasible and most effective types of help, for such activities are least vulnerable to harassment and disruption. We thus welcome all kinds of personal and individual projects. In the area of philosophy, for example, this could take the form of visits by individual philosophers and lectures in private homes, possibly gifts of scholarly literature, and so on.

Eva Kanturková

1 I do not like to talk about the way I'm being persecuted. It is, after all, a choice one makes — either to go along with something or not — and I'm also ashamed to have to admit that such uncultural conditions exist in the country I love and which is my home. True, it is not *my* shame, but on the other hand I don't see any merit in being persecuted.

You ask about the artist's contact with his or her public; in my case, I have never really known anything of the sort. I was just taking off as a writer when I was hit by the authorities' wrath. Within one year they pulped the entire printing of two of my books, those already published they withdrew from the libraries, a completed film they locked up in a safe and forbade its showing, and they stopped work on two screenplays. Since then I have only been able to publish either under someone else's name, or in foreign and émigré publishing houses, which our authorities consider illegal and, whenever they decide to take a tougher 'line', a criminal offence. I was put in prison for a book published abroad.

All this naturally means that my contact with the public has become very slight indeed. Most people can only learn about my books and other writings from foreign radio broadcasts. These broadcasts are, of course, jammed, yet every now and again someone will turn up and ask whether I knew that one of my essays or perhaps a novel in instalments had been read on the radio. As often as not, I don't know about it myself. If I am lucky, the listener will send me a tape of the broadcast. So it is sporadic, but on the other hand intensive contact. Anyone who takes the trouble to listen in to a jammed broadcast feels that he or she is something of a friend of mine when they hear my work.

But it is in the nature of art that it dislikes being 'written for the drawer', and so it seeks and creates its own readership. You cannot work creatively without the inspiration that comes from contact with others. The unnatural conditions in our country give some people the idea that they are dependent on the tyrannical regime, that without its blessing and benevolence they cannot produce any art. That is an erroneous and misleading notion. Anyone who links his or her possibilities with the benevolence of the state and its institutions places him or herself in the most dangerous position imaginable: servitude leads to the inevitable loss of talent. The power to *publish* a book has proved far less important than the ability to write freely. Their finished works then force the authors to seek other, 'self-service' methods of publication.

At the beginning of the 1970s, banned Czech authors formed their own public, circulating ten or 15 copies among themselves. Today, so many people have joined in this activity that the author no longer knows how many times his manuscript has been copied. This non-public public has its own magazines and critical journals, views are exchanged on important questions of the day and this correspondence later appears in print. All this activity has its own inner momentum, and it says something about its importance that the authors are quite happy to write without expectation of any fees, for who would pay them? Only the typists, who are in much shorter supply than the works to be typed, get paid for their labour.

This, then, is how Czech writers manage to keep their independence. Always running the risk of one day being arrested and imprisoned, which applies to the typist as well and needless to say is not a pleasant prospect to contemplate. At the same time it is not without value that we not only write our books but have to share their fate. I say this with some diffidence, but having been in prison has given me a great deal to write about. And so our books share our destiny.

2 Those in power, of course, consider themselves to be the one and only cultural community in the country, although in truth they are far removed from both nation and culture. However, between them and us — who have been cast out and proscribed, and whom the media describe as 'counter-revolutionary and subversive elements' — there is a wide field of artists who are allowed to work and yet do not identify with the powers-that-be and their ideology. Thus the national cultural community is on the one hand shrouded by the artificially created image of official culture and, on the other, is being created with great difficulty and despite all the obstacles underneath these official layers. Those who have been expelled from public view don't hold up their banishment as some kind of golden seal of quality but respect everything good and interesting that comes from inside the official area; on the other hand, a growing number of those who are allowed to work and publish are gradually ridding themselves of their fears for their livelihood and in various ways crossing the chasm which the authorities have dug between them and the banned artists.

3 I don't consider the present situation to be critical but think that we passed the critical stage some time ago. So-called official culture has, over the years of our rulers' unlimited power, certainly got itself into a critical state — but that is their funeral. In what I would call 'live' culture, whether as practised by those who are tolerated by the regime or those who are not, one can detect a growing inner movement independent of the state ideology. That is not to say that the state and related institutions are not doing their best to stifle everything that is found wanting in terms of ideology; but it takes two to do the stifling. And I can only repeat that it would be quite erroneous to think that free artistic creation is necessarily dependent on free conditions. To think in these terms is to adopt the mentality of those in power, who would like to persuade us that the citizen cannot do anything on his own, without official consent. Now, whoever wants to create freely, does so. I am afraid that those who prefer to wait for freer political conditions before they devote themselves to their art will never produce anything worthwhile — in freedom or unfreedom.

4 As for the European Cultural Forum, past experience has taught me not to hope for any really concrete results. The signing and ratification of agreements is all very well, but it does not necessarily mean that our authorities will adhere to them. Still, it is better to negotiate than to shout insults across the border. And that is why I think the forum is a good thing.

5 I shall never forget the moral strength I gained from the solidarity of my Swedish colleagues and of people from various walks of life in Germany, Australia, Canada, even Japan, when I and my friends were locked up in 1981. Solidarity is the strongest and most effective means to help people to

straighten up and forge links with one another. It is no coincidence that the Polish dockers called their organisation Solidarity.

Solidarity can take many forms, and perhaps I will be forgiven if I take a practical, feminine position. I want nothing for myself, being at an age when one's life has been well established and will produce whatever fruits it is meant to produce. But I cannot help thinking of all those younger writers and artists, people with talent and intelligence, who give up their social status in order to be able to paint, write or study — and not only in what is known as 'dissident' circles. They deserve to get grants, invitations abroad, foreign literature and contacts. Also our émigré publishing houses, which are so tremendously important for the continuity of our national culture, constantly have to struggle with a lack of resources; for them the work of the Charter 77 Foundation in Stockholm is of particular importance. Czech is the language of a small nation and it is an expensive business translating our literature into other languages — here, grants and other kinds of support for East European non-commercial art would help a great deal.

To sum up, I'd say that no one else can help us if we do not help ourselves.

Božena Komárková

1 Simultaneously with Z. Nejedlý's school reform, I was expelled from my job as a preparatory school teacher. My chances of publication disappeared with the banning of Laichter's journal, *Naše doba*, and thereafter were limited to making carbon copies for my younger friends. Only Charter 77 changed this situation, but by that time my age was almost the same as the number in its name. My friends decided to have the modest harvest of my life published as samizdat.

4 The only concrete suggestion I have noted after the fruitless conferences in Belgrade and Madrid is that the validity of the first two 'baskets' of the Helsinki agreement is null and void, by a long recognised principle of international law, as long as the third 'basket' is not observed. The inviolability of the post-war frontiers should be made contingent on the observance of the third 'basket'.

Iva Kotrlá

1 I have encountered injunctions and prohibitions by the state with regard to literary work since 1984, when all manuscripts, including copies, were seized by the police during a house search. Further, subsequent injunctions from the State Security of the CSSR taught me that writing for samizdat endangers, in Czechoslovakia, not only the author, but also the husband or wife, dependent children and members of the family over 80; all of them have been, since the autumn of 1984, summoned for interrogation, or interrogated by State Security. So through writings distributed in samizdat the author makes the acquaintance of just one kind of public, police officers. I have no other experience of any other public, I know none: other, more experienced writers have also come to know the public in the law courts...

5 I would regard it a positive step on the part of foreign cultural institutions if they took more interest in the fact that in an old European and cultural country (which the Czech area undoubtedly is) not one single literary journal for young artists and writers is allowed to appear.

Forbidden Writers

This list of 230 writers (journalists) who cannot publish in Czechoslovakia was attached to the letter Charter 77 addressed to the Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers, dated 3 March 1982.

Ludvík Aškenazy, Milan Balabán, Zdeněk Barborka, Rudolf Battěk, Hana Bělohradská, Václav Bělohradský, Jan Beneš, Marie Benetková, Václav Benda, Zbyněk Beníšek, Ivan Binar, Ivan Blatný, Vladimir Blažek, Jitka Bodláková, Egon Bondy, Jiří Brabec, Vratislav Brabenec, Eugen Brikcius, Antonin Brousek, Aleš Březina, Stanislav Budín, Vladimíra Čerepková, Václav Černý, Miroslav Červenka, Lumír Čivrný, Jiří Daníček, Jiří Dienstbier, Ivan Diviš, Luboš Dobrovský, Bohumil Doležal, Jaroslav Dresler, Miroslav Drozda, Irena Dubská, Ivan Dubský, Ladislav Dvorský, Vratislav Effenberger, Karel Bichler, Roman Erben, Ladislav Fikar, Ota Filip, Daniela Fisherová, Viktor Fischl, Petr Formánek, Bedřich Fučík, Jiřina Fuchsová, Jiří Gold, Eduard Goldstücker, Bohumila Grogerová, Ladislav Grossman, Jiří Gruša, Igor Hájek, Jiři Hájek, Aleš Haman, Miroslav Hanuš, Jiří Hanzelka, Jiřina Hauková, Václav Havel, Zbyněk Havlíček, Zbyněk Hejda, Ladislav Hejdánek, Vilém Hejl, Jitka Henryková, Josef Heyduk, Josef Hiršal, Jiří Hochman, Karel Hora, Dana Horáková, Bohumil Hrabal, Josef Hrubý, Jaroslav Hutka, Ivana Hýblerová, Jindřich Chalupecký, Petr Chudožilov, Milan Jankovič, Pavel Janský, Pavel Javor, Josef Jedlička, Ivan Jelínek, Ivan Jirous, Věra Jirousová, Emil Julius, Petr Kabeš, Zdeněk Kalista, Eva Kantúrková, Svatopluk Karásek, Vladimír Karfík, Dušan Karpatský, František Kautman, Mojmír Klánský, Ivan Klíma, Alexandr Kliment, Helena Klímová, Milan Knížek, Josef Koenigsmark, Erazím Kohak, Pavel Kohout, J.M. Kolar, Jiří Kolář, Božena Komárková, Petr Kopta, Miroslav Korycan, Karel Kosík, Karel Kostroun, Iva Kotrlá, Libor Koval, Jiří Kovtun, Zdeněk Kozmín, Petr Král, Antonín Kratochvíl, Karel Kraus, Eda Kriseová, Karel Kryl, Oldřich Krysťofek, Marie R. Křížková, Jiří Kuběna, Ivan Kubíček, Milan Kučera, Erich Kulka, Ludvík Kundera, Milan Kundera, Karel Kyncl, Pavel Landovský, Gabriel Laub, Jiří Lederer, Josef Lederer, A.J. Liehm, Věra Linhartová, František Listopad, Bedřich Lowenstein, Josef Lopatka, Zdeněk Lorenc, Arnošt Lustig, Sergej Machonin, Milan Machovec, Inka Machulková, Emanuel Mandler, Jan Mareš, František Mertl, Karel Michal, Oldřich Mikulášek, Stanislav Moc, Antonín Mokrejs, Milan Nápravník, Vladimír Nárožník, Zdeněk Neubauer, Jiří Němec, Ladislav Novák, Bohumil Nuska, Anastáz Opasek, Jaroslav Opavský, Radim Palouš, František Pánek, Jan Patočka, František Pavlíček, Karel Pecka, Jiří Pechar, Tomáš Pekný, Zdeněk Pinc, Vladimír Piatorius, Petr Pithart, Jiří Plaček, Dalibor Plichta, Zdeněk Pochop, Rio Preisner, Iva Procházková, Miroslav Ptáček, Lenka Procházková, Karel Ptáčník, Jaroslav Putík, Miloš Rejchrt, Jaroslava Reslerová, Jiří Ruml, Sylvia Richterová, Zdeněk Rotrekl, Pavel Řezníček, Zdeněk Řezníček, Vilém Sacher, Zdenka Salivarová, Jaroslav Seifert, Jaroslav Selucký, Karol Sidon, Jan Skácel, Karel Soukup, Andrej Stanković, Věra Stiborová, Jiří Stránský, Daniel Stroz, Milan Suchomel, Oleg Sus, Nina Svobodová, Karel Šebek, Karel Šiktanc, Milan Šimečka, Jan Šimsa, Vladimir Škutina, Josef Škvorecký, Pavel Šrut, Pavel Švanda, Nikolaj Terlecký, Zdena Tominová, Miroslav Topinka, Josef Topol, Jan Trefulka, Karel Trinkewitz, Vlastimil Třešňák, Milan Uhde, Ota Ulč, Zdeněk Urbánek, Miloš Vacík, Ludvík Vaculík, Marie Valachová, Edvard Valenta, Zdeněk Vašíček, Jaroslav Vejvoda, Jan Vladislav, Stanislav Vodička, Jan Vodňanský, Josef Vohryzek, Vladimír Vokolek, Vladimír Vondra, Jaroslava Vondráčková, Jiří Weil, Josef Vondruška, František Vrba, Ivan Wernisch, Pavel Zajíček, Miroslav Zikmund, Karel Zlín, Josef Zumr, Josef Zvěřína.

Proscribed Slovak writers and journalists do not figure in the above list. We add that compiled by a Slovak woman-writer, *Hana Ponická*, who was expelled from the Slovak Writers Union. It appeared in Le Monde, 14 May 1977, and so cannot correspond to up-to-date facts, to which we do not have access.

František Andrášcík, Jarmila Blažková, Jozef Bzoch, Fedor Čadra, Soňa Čechová, Ladislava Dobôs, Michal Gafri, Milan Hamada, Pavol Hruz, Miroslav Hysko, Jozef Jablonický, Zora Jesenská, Agnesa Kalinová, Roman Kaliský, Jan Kalina, Ivan Kadlečík, Peter Karvaš, Miroslav Kusý, Albert Marencin, Jan Mlynárik, Stefan Moravčik, Hana Ponická, Jan Rozner, Zlata Solivajsová, Ctibor Stitnický, Juraj Spitzer, Dominik Tatarka, Ladislav Ťažký, Julius Vanovič, Tomaš Winkler. ■

And if they also noticed the situation in the regions, not just in Prague. For instance, in Moravia, a land where millions of people with their own distinctive characteristics are living, not one literary journal is allowed to appear, and the Moravian Gallery still lacks exhibition premises for its collection, the second largest in the country, etc. And if foreign cultural institutions would publish for Europe information about how things were in the Czech lands in the past...

Marie Rut Křížková

1 In 1968 I graduated from the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University in Prague. I was an atheist, not a party member. It looked as if I had before me a promising future as a literary historian.

However, I spoke out publicly against the entry of Soviet troops and in the further phases I refused to join the ranks of the 'mistaken'. So in 1970 opportunities to publish were closed to me. But I did continue to work more or less in my own field. I lost employment matching my qualifications after my conversion, when my employer was informed by members of State Security that I was a churchgoer. Then I was unemployed for over six months, although I am on my own with my children (at that time they were aged 17, 14 and 3 years). Now for ten years I have been working, as most of us are, in the most menial and low-paid jobs; for some years I was employed as a forestry worker and, after contracting spinal trouble, as a forest warden; now I am a night sorter with the post office..

4 I would say that the motive force of our ideological propaganda is falsehood (or rather, intentional half-truth) and hate, which relies on indifference and fear. Our task is still, therefore, to step outside the vicious circle, to confront the lies and hate, or at least not to condone them.

In this, foreign radio stations in particular could play an important part; I have in mind primarily the Voice of America and London, which can be heard all over our country and do not carry the risk to which every reader of samizdat or foreign literature is exposed. The work of these radio stations is invaluable, and thanks for it. Unfortunately, in their news and commentaries on the situation in Czechoslovakia and the other socialist countries they tend to dwell too much on the excesses of the regime and the persecution, so that many listeners are simply confirmed in the belief that they do well not to get involved in anything.

That in its way is cooperation with the regime, at least in the outcome. Perhaps a way could be found to give encouragement, to awaken the deadened conscience and lead to a joyful openness and life for one's fellows.

5 I recall the words of a wise priest. He spoke of the fact that many people think and act as if suffering was a test which the sufferer should pass. But that is not so. The suffering of another becomes a challenge for me. It is I, abiding in safety, who am tested and one day I shall have to answer for what I have done or not done for my suffering brother or sister.

So I hope that, when the fate of the persecuted becomes a matter of the 'heart' for each of us, we shall find a way — everybody on their own and for themselves and finally together with others — to take up this challenge.

It might be worth considering adopting methods that have proved themselves in the work of Amnesty International, for instance personal or group letters to responsible institutions, and also to individual writers, artists, etc.

And another request: remind people that the chance to publish is inseparable from the right to express one's opinion. An artist who is a religious believer has for several decades had no such opportunity and will remain without any opportunity so long as the freedom of religious belief is not respected.

Miroslav Kusý

1 When today I look back at the forcible interruption of my scientific career following 1968, I can see that it has become irreversible: no matter what the future brings, I can never go back and resume where I left off all those years ago. Even if political conditions in our country were to change and make it possible for me to start again, I couldn't possibly make up for the 15 lost years.

That means that I experience this situation as someone who has been effectively and irreversibly written off by the authorities, someone who has been deprived of work in his profession, in the vocation he chose for himself and in which he had successfully worked for a considerable period of time. This remains true even though I have managed to 'get over it' and find an alternative which gives my life new meaning. It was a violent break, such as affected a great many other people.

2 This state of affairs was once upon a time accurately described by Louis Aragon as 'Biafra of the spirit'. A nation's entire moral stand, its way of thinking was dealt a mortal blow affecting the most progressive people in our national culture — a devaluation of the nation's basic moral and cultural values. What the powers-that-be call 'consolidation and normalisation' of our national life in fact brought about its utter stultification. Nothing could be more characteristic of this than the way top people are chosen nowadays: total obedience to the leadership has become the prime qualification, as well as loyalty to the Party and its leaders (whoever they may be at any particular time) and its policies of the moment. Only those who are suitable (or at least pretend to be and proclaim the right slogans) can hope to get jobs and become part of the present social structure. Anyone who does not do so becomes an outsider, a person 'without a future'. This inevitably means that the vast majority resort to hypocrisy, a 'double face', dual morality, the schizophrenic upbringing of their children; it leads to apathy and cynicism, the disintegration of the nation's moral fibre. Those without morals and principles have a field day, being able to get rich, make profitable careers in the political, economic or cultural sphere, at the same time hindering all social, economic and cultural progress because stagnant waters are the ideal element.

In the midst of a national moral crisis of these proportions (which is now beginning to worry even the top leadership, which has found it necessary to publish its document on the prevalence of theft, etc) I came to the conclusion that I no longer had the right to keep silent, regardless of the possible consequences. For this reason I started to cultivate contacts with people who shared my views, for this reason I became an author of samizdat, signed Charter 77 and took part in various independent civic activities. I am doing all this in order to draw the attention of my fellow-countrymen and of our leaders to the crisis in which the nation finds itself, to appeal to their conscience, wake them from their lethargy and refute the comfortable excuse that 'there's nothing we can do about it, anyway'.

3 I believe that any reasonable voice that is raised today to criticise contemporary cultural policy and comment on the general crisis of our nation cannot but have some influence in the end. Not straightaway, perhaps, but the very fact that such a voice lends courage to others, encouraging them to express their own opinions, is of great importance. This, of course, is not lost on our authorities and their police apparatus: having no illusions about the true feelings of the vast majority of our nation, they rely solely on their being afraid to give

voice to them. And even if we do not succeed in mounting a national day of protest such as they have had in Chile, we must at the very least give a personal example to induce people to stand up for their basic convictions where fundamental questions of human decency, solidarity, and their human and civil rights are concerned. In this way the authorities will be given a tangible demonstration that it is not just the 'extremism' of a few isolated dissidents, but rather that these individuals express the views of the nation, and that the nation not only sympathises with them but also stands behind them.

We cannot, unfortunately, depend on the people who have brought us to this crisis to extricate us from it. The present leadership has carried its 'consolidation and normalisation' to its logical conclusion, with all its catastrophic consequences. And they have enjoyed all the privileges and material advantages they could obtain from it. It is a similar leadership to that which ruled Poland before Jaruzelski. No Kádár-type reforms are possible with these people in charge — nor any other progressive reforms whatever. It is a leadership burdened with its destructive mission of 'consolidation'. The only way out of this impasse is a radical restructuring of the leadership.

4, 5 The moribund character of our cultural and social life does not concern only internal conditions. It manifests itself externally too. Our authorities are trying to limit international relations to one type: contacts between officials and governments, which are completely under their control and which the nation perceives merely in a strictly censored version. Anything else is considered illegal. Western democracies on the whole accept this, because they do not want 'difficulties', since our authorities loudly complain of 'interference in our internal affairs' whenever any attempt is made to widen these contacts, and they accuse the West of hostile acts and subversion. Nevertheless, non-governmental institutions and organisations in the West ought to keep insisting on freedom to contact our people, to meet representatives of our culture; they should insist on their right to have unofficial contacts in Czechoslovakia. They must bear in mind that officially sanctioned institutions and organisations here are *invariably* tied to the Party and government, *always* forced to adopt official views and standpoints, with no possibility of holding and proclaiming independent views. That is why non-governmental bodies in the West should pay more attention to individuals and personalities over here, to people who are experts in any particular sphere.

Unfortunately, the fact is that while we were part of the establishment, our partners in Western institutions and organisations used to send us their publications, invite us to conferences and study trips, ask us to write in their journals, etc. Once we were fired from our universities and scientific institutes, sociological and other societies, we ceased to exist as far as international congresses and symposiums were concerned, as well as foreign journals and periodicals, committees and councils, and so on. They discovered that attempts to keep up contacts with us brought unpleasantness on the part of Czechoslovak official institutions, so they gradually gave up. They should realise that, even if we may not be able to accept their invitations, the very fact that we have been prevented from doing so would speak for itself. For this reason alone they should insist on normal legal contacts with us.

Naturally, we must in the first instance try and help ourselves — it is up to us to do our best to keep our cultural life alive and we cannot expect anyone to do this for us. But it is only by means of a joint effort that we shall be able to overcome the barrier built on the concept of 'two worlds' and 'two cultures'.

František Pavlíček

If I answer your questions briefly, that is due to my belief that brevity will best serve the purpose of this questionnaire. Moreover, it is a sign that I agree with what you have said in the introduction.

1 Like the fellow who, when young, helps to light a fire, gets burned by it in later years, and on the threshold of old age tries to cure himself at home. People who have been badly burned are said sometimes to die of suffocation, as the rest of their skin cannot provide sufficient oxygen.

2 If I were a foreigner, I would not believe it possible. For us, the natives of Czechoslovakia, it is shaming. At least for those of us who have not become accustomed to it. It is possible to retort: 'True, some artists are unable to publish in public for thousands of people, but some of them still have at least several dozen spectators and readers in the unofficial culture. So, while this is a considerable handicap, it does mean that these artists have not been entirely liquidated.'

3 All it needs is to implement declared principles and programmes, fulfil obligations and keep promises.

4 As much truthful information as possible, not only about the world at large but also about our own country. I should feel greatly encouraged if I could hope that *any* steps taken will, in practice, bring about some improvement here, and not a worsening of the situation.

5 Culture is as much an indivisible part of the life of a society as politics and economics. It is, therefore, impossible to envisage any improvement in this area without corresponding changes in other spheres. Foreign institutions can perhaps help by ridding themselves of illusions, by getting to understand the true nature of certain systems and realising how, in the future, they can have a bearing on their own life.

Lenka Procházková

1 I belong to the generation which lived through the fateful year of 1968 on the threshold of adulthood — I was seventeen. Today I am twice that age, so I have lived a full half of my life in an unfree country. Before the political thaw, which really started in the mid-nineteen sixties, I was still a child, not taking much notice of political events and the accompanying cultural situation. I mention all this because it seems to me remarkable that just a single intensely experienced year can influence one's opinions and destiny for the rest of one's life.

I was lucky enough to be able to study, albeit with great difficulties (I was obliged in my fourth year to transfer from the Faculty of Journalism, where the administration changed, to the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University) and I graduated in 1975. But I could find no employment in my profession, so since 1977 I have been employed as a cleaner in a theatre. It is a very low paid job, but it has at least the advantage that when I finish work I can leave at once and devote the hours saved to writing.

Apart from a few stories which I published, before I signed Charter 77, under a pseudonym in the Saturday supplements of newspapers, I have never been published publicly. My books appear only in samizdat and in émigré publishing houses, whilst some pieces have also appeared in German. It follows from this that, apart from groups of friends and a handful of chance readers, no-one in my country knows me as an author. However, I foresaw this situation from the moment when I agreed to my first book being copied for 'Petlice' ['Padlock Editions']. I was also warned by friends of the consequences of this decision. I have had several unpleasant interrogations

and a few weeks ago my passport was also confiscated. Now I cannot even travel to socialist countries. As for the response to my books: the official Czech critics are, of course, not interested in my work, because it is not openly published, but the small band of samizdat journalists and critics follow it, so I cannot say that I have not received any comments. However, I miss very much the response of a wide readership and I must admit that I also miss the feeling of having seen a book of mine in the window of a Prague bookshop. But I think that the older writers who once experienced that and have for many years been unable to publish in their country take it much harder, some have even stopped writing.

The lack of interest among foreign publishers in Czech and Slovak literature is also partly to blame. Few of the banned writers are able to live on their fees or grants from abroad. In order to support our families, most of us have to take second, unattractive jobs (cleaners, watchmen, storekeepers, stokers etc.). These jobs rob us of time, energy and peace of mind, but on the other hand they give us daily communication with people who do not belong to the select circle, and that ensures a balance in our understanding of the situation in the country.

We have one enormous advantage over officially recognised authors in that we write as we consider necessary and we feel no censorship. For this great freedom we have, however, to pay every day. Some have given up over the years and departed permanently abroad.

2 I believe the fate of Czech literature at home is not as dismal as it appears to many friends abroad. I certainly do not feel as if I was on a leaking ship which, while it has not yet sunk, can be expected to sink any minute. Our ship is not leaking, only its sails are torn. We are rowing, and since there are few of us our progress is slow. But we have not lost our compass, in the hold there are still a number of casks of drinking water and the crew's discipline is voluntary, democratic. In plain words, I think that in dark times a national literature can be saved by just a few outstanding books. And I also think that a few books of this calibre have already been written. Naturally, this year's Nobel prize for Jaroslav Seifert is a great encouragement and comfort.

5 What foreign cultural institutions can do for us is to notice our works, translate and publish them. It is not just a matter of the financial benefit to the authors but of maintaining their self-confidence, or of feeling that they are not speaking into a void; there is also the fact that the authorities here do, after all, deal differently with a writer whose books are printed in several world languages than with one whose work is copied out purely for samizdat.

Milan Šimečka

Out of the questions posed in the survey I have pieced together a question of my own. It asks about the extent of the catastrophe visited upon Czechoslovak culture in its daily life, in its weekday dress in newspapers, journals, television and radio, in movie theatres and 'House of Culture', in its role of the arbiter of daily human communication. And, paradoxical though it may sound, I want to say at the outset that it was not *the* culture for which we particularly fear — literature, drama, philosophy — that has suffered most in the last fifteen years. Such culture has been driven into a sharply watched privacy, into a ghetto, as we tend to say, but there it has survived in ingenious, wondrous forms, and we might even say that it has blossomed. With the effective help of our cultural exile and of the Western cultural public it even came to be known. The real catastrophe affected most of all the culture of our everyday life, the culture with which we make daily contact, starting with the morning paper and ending with the evening TV programme.

After so many years we are no longer sure whether we really used to read five or six weeklies which were informative, intelligent and interesting even though they were not free. Today for fifteen years we have not had a single lively cultural weekly or newspaper that prints anything apart from press releases. We have only the literary supplements of that party weekly, for the most part not fit to read. Perhaps I am not wrong in saying that nothing like this can be found in our cultural history since the beginning of our rebirth at the start of the last century.

Some notorious expressions of our cultural life seem almost anecdotes. Every public cultural production must be provided with some artificial ideological pendant so that the subservience of culture to the state cannot be lost from mind. Even horse races, for instance, are always dedicated to some anniversary in the struggles of the working class. The fifteen years have given rise to habits that common sense can no longer control.

We do not speak in public; speeches are always read. We seem to be losing the ability to communicate. Only in private circles do we still speak normally. Public expressions are dominated by an artificial language not far removed from Orwell's newspeak. In TV and radio interviews, the interviewee obediently repeats the entire question and supplies the cliché demanded. Children in school speak the same way. The paralysis of living culture has brought about a blockage of independent thought from the first school years.

Minor exceptions apart, there is no cultural criticism or even routine cultural information. We go to theatres and movies on the basis of a recommendation from friends. The Czechoslovak citizen could learn nothing from domestic sources about the success of Forman's film, *Amadeus*, even though much of it was made in Czechoslovakia and a number of our artists took part in it.

Dominik Tatarka

1 The organised, i.e. systematic terror against Slovak literature and the Slovak Communist intelligentsia began already in the fifties, just a few years after the 'Victorious February of 1948'. The Party organised a conference of Slovak Writers at which they unanimously condemned four 'bourgeois nationalist' enemies — and it is no coincidence that these were two of our top literary critics and two of our best prose writers. I was one of the four, being at the time the author of some very popular and highly regarded books. My fellow-writers unanimously condemned me and sent me to do manual labour.

What was I guilty of?

In 1953 I wrote a political satire, *The Demon of Consent*, which, according to one of our academics and National Artists, has done honour to Slovak literature. The book appeared in 1957, having been approved by today's chief Party ideologue, Vasil Bilak.

My other crimes?

On 21 August 1968, that tragic day in Czechoslovak history, I made a public

Dangerous songs?

It is paradoxical that a year after the Helsinki Conference, and after several years of extensive consolidation of its power the current Czechoslovak regime feels threatened by people singing songs in private, songs to which even the regime itself is unable to attribute any hostile political content.

Jaroslav Seifert, 'A Letter to Heinrich Böll, 16 August 1976 (reprinted in *A Besieged Culture*)

(*L to R*) Amos Oz, György Konrad, Susan Sontag.

speech in a Bratislava square. I spoke about freedom, and to cheer up my fellow-countrymen I allowed myself a little prophecy, saying that on the spot where I was standing, empty after they had taken down the Stalin monument, there would one day stand a statue of liberty. I watched as people demonstrated, the entire city was shouting as I was: We're defending our freedom.

But what has been my greatest sin? That I have refused to recant. I have not kissed anyone's hand, humbly to thank them for our defeat and humiliation. And I refused to demean myself by writing a recantatory introduction to the volume of my collected works which was being prepared for publication.

The community of Slovak writers has been broken, both morally and materially, at various meetings and conferences, and finally at political screenings after the invasion. Today, there is no such thing as a community of Slovak writers. Everything has been taken away from us: our publishing house, magazine, fund, and summer retreat.

And me personally?

Ever since the invasion in 1968 I have been living in the prison of so-called administrative measures. To protect the state's interests, they took away my passport, gave me the smallest possible pension, denied me the opportunity of taking supplementary work in order to prevent me meeting people, my phone and my correspondence are monitored, my mail being delivered late or sometimes not at all. All my books have been removed from libraries and bookshops. I am not allowed to publish anything, not even under a pen name. They didn't even allow my name to be mentioned, not even derogatively. I ceased to exist. I was often called to the police station for tiresome, insulting interrogations about trifling matters, for instance: had I been to Prague and whom had I met there.

What do I miss the most? The opportunity to read, to see, to meet people I feel close to, with whom I have things to talk about. The Czech dissidents. I suffer because I cannot read all their works. It would be marvellous if this literature were published and could circulate freely. European cultural forums are a great help to us, but I don't believe they have the power to overcome our isolation. After 1968 our oppressors realised only too well that even the slightest relaxation would be dangerous, that it would lead to cultural and political upheavals on the part of our humiliated nations.

5 Czechoslovak culture is not stagnating, it is alive, ridding itself of provincialism, of sycophancy, it speaks to our people here at home and abroad, and it is even gaining a world reputation. Foreign institutions and individuals will do us a great service if they produce well-informed studies showing the peoples of Europe that we too are part of Europe, to quote Milan Kundera. What is needed is that our books should be translated in greater numbers and more speedily, our art exhibited. It would be ideal if Europe took account of us in the same way as it has taken account of the Poles.

Ludvík Vaculík

1 I find it humiliating that here in my country I cannot earn a living by what I do best. It bothers me that I have to leave my affairs for the most part up to others, usually friends, but often strangers abroad, and I think it has a corrupting effect on me.

Even though I write for local readers, I increasingly expect the response and the honorarium to come from the reader abroad. That awareness encourages me to expand my writing beyond the limits of my village, but the inability to travel and to come to know the world around us presses me back down to the Czech village common. For that reason, I often cannot tell when I am being witty and original and when simply interestingly dumb.

It is painful to feel responsibility, as a responsible man, for what goes on around me, but to have no influence on it at all, as a worthless man. I should like to warn all who vote for Communist parties in democratic countries that that is perhaps the greatest penalty which awaits them, should they win.

4 Personally, it is travel I miss most. More generally, our cultural life is also crippled by the fact that neither those who produce culture nor the cultural public are permitted to come to know new, experimental, problematic, original or elitist and generally exceptional work of foreign origin, West or East, that seek to defy convention, consumption or commerce.

From the European Cultural Forum I expect nothing at all. Whatever may be said or done there, it can have no favourable effect on something as stubborn and at the same time as fearful, narrow-minded and dependent as people who only know how to command, order and 'approve', but do not themselves create anything and permit no freedom to anything, be it a song or a graffita, a night in the woods or a housing cooperative, a brook or a tree.

5 No foreign cultural institutions or personalities can in any way contribute to overcoming the 'inert point of Czechoslovak culture' as long as the counterparts with whom they deal seek political advantage in any concession. Our culture would help itself fast enough if they would only leave it alone!

The questions in this survey appear to me legitimate. However, they also appear to me as vain as the answers. It is as if you were to ask what a cow can do for the flowers in a meadow. There is a simple answer: it could stop eating them. But can a cow do that! No way! For that reason there is no point in inviting it to some conference, seminar or symposium about meadow flowers. The cow will gladly come, just for show, but anything it might say or sign there is worth a cowpat. ■

Official voices from the European Cultural Forum

Because we believe strongly in the innate right of an individual to express him or herself freely, including in artistic and cultural endeavours, we think it is important to search for ways to remove obstacles to self-expression.

How can one advocate the importance of cultural interchange for peace and better understanding, and at the same time deny the right of an artist to accept an invitation to exchange ideas and experiences with colleagues from other countries, or prevent his or her works from being published or performed?

Walter J. Stoessel Jr. (USA)

Today, what is being decided is the destiny of human civilisation, whether mankind should move towards an increased military and political confrontation, and that means an increased threat of nuclear war, or whether the people of the world, in spite of the social, political and ideological differences that divide them, should learn to live together side by side and firmly follow the path of peaceful co-existence.

At present, the utmost duty of cultural personalities is that they should raise their voice to protect peace and life on Earth.

Not a single honest personality in the field of culture and arts can stand aloof from the main historical problems of our time. Literature, theatre, cinema, fine arts, music, the whole of contemporary culture, all of them are called upon to create the sense of acute moral and social responsibility for the destiny of mankind.

Much has been said here about creative freedom. We support fully genuine freedom based on material prerequisites and legal norms. Neither should we overlook the responsibility that cultural personalities and artists bear before the people.

The world ministerial conferences on culture, organised under the aegis of UNESCO, justifiably drew attention to the fact that false ideas can lead to distortion of the very essence of culture, to its use for disseminating the ideas of war and violence, chauvinism and racism, for advertising immoral attitudes, and for disseminating pornography, mutual distrust and hatred among peoples.

Unfortunately it cannot be said now that the recommendations that were worked out and adopted by authoritative world fora have been universally implemented.

We consider as highly important that the Cultural Forum should discuss the development of international cultural cooperation, since such cooperation underlies the beneficial process of mutual enrichment of national cultures. It is essential that cultural exchanges and cultural cooperation serve this positive objective. We stand for an extensive development of international cultural ties with all countries in strict compliance with the provision and principles of the Final Act.

We can proudly say that socialist culture exists and develops successfully. It absorbs the best achievements of world culture. It carries on the traditions of progressive democratic culture. Its theoretical basis lies in Marxist-Leninist teaching. And this provides it with a tremendous ideological force.

P. N. Demichev (USSR)

The Western idea of culture is essentially one based on the freedom, liberty and autonomy of the individual: the socialist idea of culture, on the other hand, gives pride of place to society as a collectivity rather than to the individual person. As the Soviet Minister of Culture, Mr Pyotr Demichev, said earlier this month: 'Artists concentrate their efforts on socialist work and on strengthening the principles of social justice.' I entirely reject that view of art. There is no such thing as socialist art or capitalist art, there is good art or bad art, that is all.

The freedom of the individual is the seminal idea that lies at the heart of the European idea of culture. As soon as you say the word itself you are in the realm, not of fantasy, but of practical reality, of freedom to read, to write, to compose, free from any kind of fear or censorship, the writer choosing freely what to write, guided not by State direction but by interior standards of goodness and truth, and the reader following the same path.

So what can the State do for the arts and culture? It is not the function of the Minister of Culture or the Minister for the Arts to direct them. His task is an important but humble one. It is to help to create and to preserve a framework within which the arts can flourish. He is a trustee of the possibilities of civilisation.

There are still far too many administrative and bureaucratic obstacles in the path of cultural cooperation between States. There are delays in granting visas for cultural exchanges: there is rigidity on the part of many administrations, visits are cancelled or postponed at the last minute with no rational explanation being offered. Other obstacles arise from an apparent lack of trust of regimes for the political reliability of intellectuals and cultural figures whose talents are necessary to those very States. Privileges of travel, and the opportunity to communicate with their peers, is often arbitrarily and haphazardly denied. Objective norms might be drawn up by this Forum to govern such matters. We should seek to abolish the restrictions on the import of books, particularly religious books and publications which should be able to pass freely between individuals in different states.

Culture may seem a frail boat in which to embark on the tempestuous waters of great power and international diplomacy. What has the still small voice of poetry, for example, to say in the world of telegrams and anger? Quite a lot. It, and the other arts, has universal appeal. Worldly powers, dynasties and empires rise and fall, the arts and learning abide.

Norman St John-Stevas (Britain)

Allow me on behalf of the Czechoslovak delegation at the Cultural Forum in Budapest to say that the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, as a state which participated in the Helsinki Conference and signed its Final Act, considers itself bound by the resolutions taken at that Conference, that it is implementing them and intends to continue to implement them in the future. Our country has, therefore, come to the present meeting too in a spirit of goodwill to promote its success through constructive work, and readiness to discuss problems of all kinds, provided, of course, that this be done on a serious level, without demagoguery, without political adventurism and without interfering in the internal affairs of other countries.

We should also reflect on the question of how the greatness of a given country is revealed in the field of culture. Is this connected with the quantity of works of art, television programmes or films that are produced there? Is it revealed in the number of books published or gramophone records produced or is it concealed in the very spirit of a particular culture, in the manner and the extent to which each national culture has influenced the thinking of people, in particular how and to what extent it has furthered the humanisation of the world, social progress, the development of the human personality, and the cultivation of mutual relations? We defend the second possibility and reject the impertinent dictatorship of low-taste culture, the cult of violence and the propaganda of intolerance in relations between peoples.

Miroslav Valek (Czechoslovakia)

Gaspar Miklos Tamas

Frantisek Janouch, outside the official meeting of the European Cultural Forum, holding a copy of *A Besieged Culture — Czechoslovakia Ten Years after Helsinki*