Notes and Comments

VOICES OF FREEDOM IN EASTERN EUROPE

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In this special section three Latter-day Saints who have been personally involved in witnessing the various recent developments within Communism in Eastern Europe tell of their experiences and feelings. First, there is a personal interview with a noted Communist by Melvin Mabey, Professor of Political Science at Brigham Young University; then, Kent Robson, who now teaches philosophy at Utah State University, reports on his recent year at the University of Warsaw on a Stanford graduate exchange fellowship; finally, Ralph Thomson, a professor of Government at Boston University, now Resident Director of its Overseas Graduate Program in Heidelberg, tells of his visits to Czechoslovakia before and after the Russian invasion of 1968.

AN HOUR WITH MILOVAN DJILAS — HEROIC YUGOSLAV INTELLECTUAL

Melvin P. Mabey

By the time he was twenty-five, Milovan Djilas had already served three years in prison for communist activities. His keen mind, energetic spirit, and Partisan valor endeared him to Josip Broz Tito, and before he reached the age of forty, he had acceded to the vice-presidency of Yugoslavia. When his country broke with Russia and the Communist bloc in 1948, Djilas, Tito's heir apparent, led the anti-Stalinist fray. Simultaneously, however, he was becoming disillusioned with the Communist system as he witnessed Party leaders driving the same fine cars, living in luxurious villas, and pursuing many of the identical ostentatious patterns of the "decadent bourgeoisie" the Communists were replacing. The curtailment of freedoms and the enforcement of strict party discipline became increasingly oppressive to him as he compared them with the liberties viewed during his travels in the West.

When Djilas, with true Montenegrin courage, spoke out against these restrictions and appealed for democratization of the Communist Party in Yugoslavia, even his close friend Tito would not tolerate such violation of discipline. In 1954, Djilas was relieved of his government positions and Communist Party functions. His continued insistence upon democratization of the Yugoslav Communist organization and even the suggestion that another socialist party be established in his country met with immediate rebuff by his former comrades in the Communist hierarchy. He was given a suspended prison sentence and put on probation for three years. In December 1956, following the Hungarian uprising, he was jailed for criticizing Yugoslav foreign policy. Nevertheless, he continued to speak out against tyranny and oppression in books such as *The New Class* and *Conversations with Stalin*.[1] Nine of the following ten years were spent in prison.

Since January 1967, Milovan Djilas has lived in quiet seclusion in a modest Belgrade apartment. His days are devoted to reestablishing a family relationship with his wife and their fifteen-year-old son, and concentrating on nonpolitical writing. One of the conditions of his release from prison was that he refrain from public activity for five years.

A short time after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia last August, I contacted Mr. Djilas and asked if he could visit with a university professor from America. Although his association with westerners had been extremely limited, he cordially invited me to come to his flat.

Inside the entrance to the apartment house, a long row of mailboxes lined the left wall. Whether intentionally or accidentally, the name of the former Vice-President of Yugoslavia could not be seen. Without waiting for further verification of the correctness of the address, and according to instructions given me by phone, I started my ascent to the third floor. I knew that under given circumstances, citizens of a Communist country might experience great difficulties following visits with foreigners, and a sense of uneasiness flashed through me as I was caught on the stone stairs in the gaze of a middle-aged resident of the building.

I was greeted at the door by Milovan Djilas himself. He stood erect, handsomely attired in a brown sport shirt and slacks. Imprisonment had greyed his hair, but his eyes sparkled and his grip was firm as he extended his hand and warmly welcomed me inside. We entered his study just off the entrance hall—commodious, but unpretentious. A large desk dominated the book-lined room.

We sat facing each other in oversized, comfortable armchairs. A small table separated us, as he asked if he could serve me Turkish or American coffee. After I declined, he suggested that at least I might like some mineral

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[1]*The New Class* explains the development of a country under communism into a slave state with a ruling class which holds the masses "in abject material and intellectual poverty." *The New York Times* described it as "a crushing indictment of Communist rule. . . . One of the most compelling and perhaps the most important sociological document of our time." *Conversations with Stalin*, published in 1962, relates ideas and reactions expressed by Stalin to Djilas in the post-war era. The Yugoslav government, obviously yielding to Soviet pressure, charged Djilas with having revealed state secrets.

water. He left, and I surveyed the room where thoughts had been transformed into meaningful expressions, where dismay and disillusionment inscribed on paper had committed their author to physical isolation from the world. Momentarily my mind compared these pleasant surroundings with the stark reality of the prison confines and the cell shared with a murderer and a thief. There Djilas' writing had turned from polemics to the novel, and the scarcity of paper had often forced him to record his thoughts on the available toilet tissue. "Strict but correct," was how he had described his last internment, but during those four and a half years he had found peace with himself and freedom from resentment.

In a moment, Mr. Djilas returned and shortly afterward his wife quietly entered and placed a glass of sparkling mineral water on the table before me. My thanks were silently acknowledged.

As I explained the reason for my visit, Mr. Djilas picked up a pad of paper from his desk and made notes. He wrote as he asked, "Will you be publishing it? Where? When? How long will it be? Is the journal anti-communist? Now, what would you like to know?" With his interview ended, mine began.

We discussed freedom—individual and collective. Years before, Djilas had been deprived of his freedom because of his concern over the path which the Communist Party was taking. In an interview with a *New York Times* correspondent in 1954, he had said, "I am giving this interview to encourage free discussion as an act of loyalty. I am taking a risk, but one cannot go on without some risk. . . . It will mean a lot for our country to have a citizen say what he thinks. . . . [The Communist Party] must permit freedom of discussion. Now I see this is impossible. Another political formation should be constructed. This could only be democratic and Socialist."

Today, fifteen years later, he still speaks of the need for free discussion. Djilas viewed Czechoslovakia under its liberalization program as being the one communist country in which this was possible. In fact, he had anticipated that it would probably become the first communist country with a really free society. This hope for the future had momentarily been quashed by the Soviet invasion, and he did not consider that this would be the last use of Russian might. He expected increased pressure upon Rumania and the possibility that Russian troops would be used there as well. In like manner, he expressed concern for his own land, but asserted the Yugoslavs would fight unitedly to counter any attack from the Soviet Union. Said Djilas, "The Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia was not the result of an internal communist struggle, but the oppression of one people and state by another. Communism was of secondary importance compared with imperialism." He then added, "The tragedy of Czechoslovakia is, however, that all international juridical authority has been lost." And as an aside, "The United Nations did nothing!"

Continuing his thoughts on the changing world of communism, he said, "There will be differences and contradictions for a long period in most communist countries. Russia will probably always have some. It is a reactionary

country, although it also must undergo changes." He voiced the conviction that communism was moving toward freedom, but, pausing, added, "It may not be realized without a war." Djilas then optimistically asserted that the greatest hope for peace in this world of conflict between ideologies and imperialistic interests was the compromise revisionist and reformist movements.[2] "They will help delay or avoid a war," he proclaimed.

Freedom is still uppermost in Mr. Djilas' mind. His concern prompted me to ask, "Will your speaking with me jeopardize your future?" Without answering directly, he responded. "No one seeks to spend his life in prison, but I must say what I think even if it means prison for me." He was not taunting the hangman's noose by irrational and flaunting remarks. His record in defense of principle has been well established.

Our discussion had centered on "freedom," which Webster defines as "a very general term, . . . [implying] at one extreme total absence of restraint and at the other, an unawareness of being hampered in any way." Djilas stated that it is "the concrete form of human and social existence." Its purpose, as he defined it, seemed to reflect an awareness of an eternal verity. "Freedom is meant to enlarge the existence of the nature of man."

Djilas, an avowed atheist, turned to religion. He charged that the Marxist view of the origin of religion was superficial and inexact, i.e., that it resulted from social conditions and prejudices. He saw religion as a by-product of man's need to have something to die for. Because of this, it would live as long as human beings existed. Religion and human destiny are immutably connected. Man is a creative being, unlike the animals that inhabit the earth.

For a moment we spoke of Mormonism. His early preoccupation with Marxist philosophy and his later concern with the development of democratic socialism had left him little time for examining religious precepts. He had not heard of the Mormon Church, but knew of the mountains in which its members had found refuge.

The last war had brought Milovan Djilas to Belgrade. Yet his heart remained in his native Montenegro in Yugoslavia's mountainous south. "That is the place to live—in the mountains," he said. "One can breathe freely and think clearly." From these mountains, Djilas had fought as a Partisan to rid his country of Nazi control. He hoped it would not be necessary to repeat the struggle against possible Soviet aggression.

As I retraced my steps down the three flights, my thoughts turned to the words of Tennyson as he described the early fight of the Montenegrins against the Turks:

> They kept their faith, their freedom, and their height,
> Chaste, frugal, savage, armed by day and night.

Milovan Djilas is a true Montenegrin, as, undeterred by the limitations of his homeland, he continues his pursuit of free expression.

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[2]Although Djilas is not satisfied with the political development of his native land, he views its accomplishments as a compromise which has partaken of both worlds — communist and capitalist. Yugoslav communism has been attacked as being both revisionist and reformist.

COMMUNISTS, AND THEN COMMUNISTS

Kent E. Robson

We wouldn't be at all surprised to learn that two (or more) different Mormons in good standing have rather different attitudes and opinions. Aside from matters of Church doctrine, they may belong to opposing political parties. On social issues, they may differ enormously in their opinions on matters of race, poverty, crime, etc. Even on matters of doctrine, Church history, ecclesiastical practice, etc., they may differ significantly. One Mormon may believe that Mormonism endorses a negative view of man; that all scripture is literally true; that the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith virtually every move he was to make; and that every aspect of Church practice was instituted by revelation. The other Mormon may deny each and every one of these views and many more like them. We are not surprised to discover that there are such different sorts of Mormons, because most of us know Mormons personally who actually do differ that profoundly and still are in good standing (as measured, say, by the fact that they both hold temple recommends).

With Communists, however, it is quite a different story, unless I am mistaken. Most of us do not know any of them personally, with the consequence that there are no restraints on our imagination. We somehow believe that each and every Communist believes exactly the same things, holds identical principles, and believes in precisely identical means to unanimously accepted ends. Furthermore, communist nations are somehow taken to be all alike: equally brutal, equally repressive, and equally intransigent to any change. The slogan "You can trust the Communists to be Communists" is supposed to be more than an uninformative tautology. It is somehow meant to suggest that all Communists are pressed out of the same mold; that all are assembled on some mass production line to careful, precise, and undeviating specifications.

A little reflection should quickly dispel such easy and simple assumptions. After all, Communists are people, and people differ greatly. We should, therefore, not be surprised to realize, upon reflection, that there are Stalinist Communists, Titoist Communists, Maoist Communists, Dubcek Communists, Brezhnev Communists, and even Gomulka Communists. There are Communists who invaded Czechoslovakia and Communists who vociferously opposed that invasion (the French, Italian, and Chinese Communists, among others). There are Communists who have believed in human extermination as a legitimate political means, others who believe that political isolation is the ultimate weapon in eliminating dissident opinions, and others who renounce both the above means to given political ends as inhuman and even harmful to healthy communism.

Two years ago, in March of 1968, there were numerous student demonstrations in Poland. The proximate cause of these demonstrations seems to have been the cancellation of a play by the genial Polish dramatist and writer, Adam Mickiewicz, because the play contained some strongly anti-Russian lines. The deeper causes, however, are to be found in a deep disenchantment

with the government, and this disenchantment was used by certain political factions in Poland to embarrass the present government in a power struggle that was going on at the very highest levels of the Polish Communist Party.

My wife and I arrived in Poland at the end of July, 1968, and during the next year we were able to observe some repercussions of these demonstrations which were for us rather interesting and which disturbed the traditional view we had held, that all Communist governments are alike. There were the usual arrests of students, and during the course of the winter these students were tried in secret trials and given long sentences. This didn't surprise us at all, because we had been led to expect this sort of treatment. What did surprise us was the treatment accorded to some faculty members, who were publicly criticized for having implanted in the minds of the students certain anti-socialist ideas. These men were without any doubt in a serious situation, but I invite you to contrast what became of them, as nearly as we were able to tell, with what has become the usual scenario for treatment of such people in the Soviet Union. Such people in the Soviet Union seem usually to be

arrested, and then either banished to some far-off section of the Soviet Union where they are never heard of again, or they are committed to a mental institution. What happened in Poland was in sharp contrast to this sort of thing, however. Most of these people in Poland were informed that they could no longer teach students in their regular university positions. However, they were not stripped of their academic rank, and for the most part they were given jobs in the Polish Academy of Sciences to do research on a full time basis. Furthermore, it appears that their research will be published in regular books and scholarly journals by the usual Polish printing houses. What is, perhaps, even more startling is that some were given passports or exit permits to take positions in the West, where they could talk all they wanted — even to the detriment of the Polish government — if they so desired. I submit that this is in striking contrast to what appears to happen in some other communist states.

There are in Poland about two million members in the Communist Party—out of a total population of about thirty-two million people—but it was interesting to discover that only a small percentage of these Party members are ideologically motivated. A number of the members are opportunists, who have joined the Party to enjoy the benefits accruing to them from Party membership. What was even more interesting was to discover the motives students have for joining the Party. The Polish students are very well informed about the West, and have full access to all of the significant western periodicals and books in each of their academic disciplines. Up until about two years ago, city dwellers in Poland could even buy *Time* or *Newsweek* right from their newsstands under a cultural agreement with the United States. Unfortunately, under the pressure of reducing our foreign aid expenditures, especially to communist countries, this very valuable program was cancelled by the United States about two years ago, in spite of the fact that the expense involved was very minimal. There is also a surprising number of good books, of both a popular and academic nature, translated into Polish. The upshot of all of this is that students, as I have said, are well informed about the West. But, they have great difficulty in getting reliable political information about their own government or about political occurrences in the Soviet Union which might directly or indirectly affect them. They know that the newspapers and news magazines give a consistently slanted and unreliable view of political events. Therefore, a number of students join the Party in order to gain access to the only source of reliable political information available, namely the Party. There is another reason, or ulterior motive, that some of these students have in joining the Party. They hope eventually, by working through the Party, to be able to effect some changes in the policies and political structure of their government. Some of the very best "revisionists," in the best sense of that word, have been Poles.

There are other surprising aspects to life in Poland. An unexpectedly large number of Poles are given passports to travel out of Poland to the West and even to the United States. Often the biggest impediment to travel to the United States is thrown up by our own government through its refusal to grant prospective travelers the necessary visas. The reason for this is our government's suspicion that the travelers may be wishing to emigrate from Poland, and we have strict immigration quotas and restrictions.

Again, unlike the situation existing in the Soviet Union and in East Germany, there are no travel restrictions imposed on visitors to Poland. My wife and I could travel wherever we wanted within Poland, as often as we wanted, and with no prescribed routes.

With regard to religion, we were rather surprised to discover in Poland that Roman Catholic priests and nuns in quite large numbers can be seen on the streets of many towns and cities. There are even religious stores in the cities with the unlikely name of *Veritas* (Truth). (Of course, the State, not the Church, is supposed to have a corner on truth.) There is even a store in Warsaw where one can buy Bibles in all translations, including a very good and scholarly translation into Polish. Approximately 95% of all Poles

are baptized, and something over 30% of them attended church each Sunday. Even our own Church members in Poland (yes, we do have some) meet in relative freedom, without the police visitations so common in East Germany. Our members, about thirty of them, are concentrated in the areas of Poland which formerly belonged to Germany and Prussia. Most of them speak both German and Polish. The president of the only Branch we have there and his wife were recently given permission to travel out to Switzerland, where they were sealed in the temple. The Branch has a small branch house which was built in 1929 — the first branch house built in East Prussia. (This branch house was pictured in the March, 1969, issue of the *Era*.) The members live in relatively poor economic conditions, but they are very faithful and carry out the program of the Church as well as they can under the circumstances.

The impression should not be conveyed that life is "a bowl of cherries" in Poland. What I have been trying to stress is that there are differences between life in Poland and life in other communist countries. I have mentioned primarily positive features of life there. I could have just as easily (or even more easily) have mentioned negative features. I would estimate that in terms of the over-all opportunities and alternatives available to the Polish people, using this as a criterion of freedom, the Poles are considerably less free than we are in the United States. Even in this respect, however, there are some surprising exceptions. I suspect that a higher percentage of children from worker and farm families are able to get a higher education at universities than in the United States. I am certain this is true when the comparison is made with Western Europe. For these students and in this one respect, we would, therefore, have to say that they are freer by having more educational opportunities than some of their Western counterparts.

"SPRING" AND "WINTER" IN PRAGUE: SOME THOUGHTS ON THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Ralph J. Thomson

Czechoslovakia is much colder and darker now than it was last year. Not that the meteorological phenomena have been all that different: Prague has consistently registered temperatures as warm as or warmer than those of 1968; nor has the sun been shining any less frequently in the Bohemian, Moravian, and Slovak lands. And yet there is an unmistakable, almost physically tangible change in social climate produced by the cold anger and frozen hopes of fourteen million once-enthusiastic participants in the socialist face-lifting of January–August, 1968. Now that the bitter first anniversary of Russian-led invasion has come and gone, political and economic barometers continue to plunge, the inescapable by-product of a people aware of its transformation from meaningful, active citizenship during the "Prague Spring" into renewed