ABSTRACTS

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD: CZECH(OSLOVAK) EXILE IN AUSTRALIA, 1948-1989

Jaroslav Miller

Existing research on Czech and Slovak exile has primarily focused on the main centres of Czech and Slovak exile in the USA and Western Europe. However, an analysis of life in exile in a geographically and geopolitically more peripheral region can provide illuminating insights into the problem as well. The study presented here deals with the exile of Czechs and Slovaks in Australia, and it comes to the conclusion that these groups of exiles exhibited a high degree of autonomy from the “Council of Free Czechoslovakia” (Rada svobodného Československa). At the same time, the article analyses the specific conditions affecting immigrants and exiles in Australia and determining their organizational activities. One factor was the country’s significant distance from Europe along with its gigantic size, while another was the fact that there were no older cultural or political organisations of Czech and Slovak compatriots in Australia. Likewise important were the circumstances that the Australian society was politically oriented towards the Left and that the Australian government initially obligated political refugees to sign two-year work contracts. On the other hand, the life of Czech and Slovak communities in Australia also exhibited various common features and problems of anti-communist exile – most of all, the attempts to copy the political and cultural paradigms of “Masaryk Czechoslovakia.” The large majority of these immigrants were politically passive, and there was a generational and cultural difference between the refugees of 1948 and those of 1968. Finally, tensions between Czechs and Slovaks that were suppressed in totalitarian Czechoslovakia became visible in Australia as well.

A WESTERN INVENTION?
The Discovery of Czech Dissidence in the 1970s

Peter Bugge

This article investigates when and how the word “dissident” (along with “dissent” and derived adjectives) entered the vocabulary of Czech regime-critical writers. In 1978, Václav Havel expressed his deep scepticism towards the term, which he held to be a Western journalistic invention, but examination of the Czech émigré journals Svědectví (Testimony) and Listy (Pages) reveals a more complex picture. The term
was first used in 1974 with reference to Soviet activists, and although it did at times appear in translations from Western media, its users were mostly émigré Czechs or other Eastern Europeans collectively trying to make sense of new, “non-political” modes of regime-critical activity throughout the Eastern Bloc. Domestic Czech contributors first used the term in 1976, and by the end of the decade it had become firmly established in the regime-critical vocabulary at home and in exile. Reform Communists long preferred the term and idea of “opposition,” which – as openly expressed in the Charter 77 declaration – progressively lost its attractiveness as a viable strategy for challenging the Husák regime, however. Despite Havel’s reservations, “dissidence” thus won out as the most adequate moniker for his and other activists’ non-political, civic engagement.

**BEDŘICH LOEWENSTEIN, THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL EUROPEAN**

*Miloš Havelka*

In his contribution, Miloš Havelka delineates the key features of the historical thinking of Bedřich Loewenstein (1929-2017). He characterizes the Prague historian, who taught at Freie Universität Berlin from 1979, as an exceptional thinker and humanist in the best sense of the word. Although Loewenstein’s engagement with the deep breaks of European civilization was motivated by the experiences of a Central European intellectual who had suffered the consequences of these disruptions in the most distressing fashion himself, it would extend far beyond this personal dimension. His work was dedicated to European modernity and the forces that questioned and attacked it, and in doing so, he began following different paths than the majority of Czech historians early on. Loewenstein chose unpopular topics (for example in the 1960s with a study on Bismarck) and avenues outside of traditional political and national history. Already in his early career, he was working interdisciplinarily and always seeking an anthropological approach to history. His aim was to explore the emotional disposition of individuals and understand their actions in their concrete cultural and historical contexts. This shaped his view of phenomena like nationalism or fascism – and in more general terms, of rule and violence – whose roots and structures he worked to comprehend. Loewenstein was sceptical of great theories, and Havelka portrays him as an opponent of essentialist notions and advocate of a fundamental openness of history. Finally, Havelka emphasizes Loewenstein’s Europeanness – his hope for trust, reason and tolerance as principles by way of which humans could reach agreement and states could integrate.