

**CHARTER 77**  
**ITS STRUGGLE, PROBLEMS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**BY**  
**RICHARD PESIK**

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**Richard Pesik ©1998**

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### **Abstract**

The thesis describes the struggles, problems and accomplishments of Charter 77 since its founding in 1977 until its final days in 1992. The main premise is that Charter 77 was a coalition of different individuals with different political beliefs. The main focus is on Charter 77 signatories' interactions and the problems that arose from their multi-political orientations. The thesis outlines the reasons for Charter 77's anti-political policy and dialogue approach when dealing with the Czechoslovak Communist Government. Furthermore, it deals with Charter 77 during the Velvet Revolution and its involvement in the Civic Forum. In the end the thesis discusses the reasons why Charter 77 is not active in the post-Communist Czech Republic.

The research and conclusions are mostly based on interviews with Charter 77 signatories. The interviews were conducted by the author, Richard Pesik, during his visit of the Czech Republic in 1996. In addition, some information is based on questionnaires designed and distributed by the author to the Charter 77 signatories and printed materials collected during his visit.

The thesis confirms that there were some problems among Charter 77 signatories during the decision making process due to their political orientations. There were disagreements among some ex-Communist

signatories and the non-Communist signatories. The ex-Communists' presence in Charter 77 became a source for attacks against Charter 77 after the Communist downfall. The establishment of political pluralism was the main reason why Charter 77 could not survive in the present Czech Republic.

## Acknowledgment

In 1994 I had decided to dedicate my master thesis to the people who helped to bring freedom and democracy back into my motherland, the signatories of Charter 77. When I went back to Prague in the Summer 1996 I was able to meet some of the signatories and speakers of Charter 77 and conduct interviews with them. I sent a questionnaire to some of the signatories inquiring about their past and present lives. During my interviews I met Charter 77 signatories who were the former members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and were either expelled from the Party or had left the Party after the Prague Spring of 1968. In addition, I met signatories who had never become Party members yet professed their political belief even when they were persecuted for them. I was glad that I could meet all these great people who were able to share with me their memories, beliefs, ideas and dreams.

In The Czech Republic I would like to thank: to Mr. Václav Trojan and Mr. Jiří Vančura who introduced me to signatories of Charter 77 and helped me to arrange the interviews during my Prague visit in Summer 1996; employees of Ústav pro Soudobé Dějiny AV ČR, mainly Mrs. Blanka Císařovská for her help with the selection of additional materials and by collecting the interviews which were mailed to her office; and Mr. Jiří Gruntorád for letting me use his collection of documents about Charter 77.

In Canada and the United States I would like to thank to: Vlasta Skruzni for introducing me to her cousin Mr. Václav Trojan, who was my first contact with Charter 77 signatories, over the internet; Professor Daniel Stone of University of Winnipeg for his advisory work during my research and Professor Garin Burbank of University of Winnipeg who encouraged me during my studies at the University; Ms. Nadine Stiller and Mr. Richard Labun for their editorial help; and mainly my parents who taught me the importance of truth.

Východní Evropu obchází  
strašidlo, kterému na Západě  
říkají "disidentství".

Václav Havel. *Moc Bezmocných*.  
1978<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

On September 17, 1989 during the Prague student rally held to commemorate the death of a student, Jan Opletal, the anti-Communist movement in Czechoslovakia took a sudden upward turn. The bloody suppression of the demonstration by the police outraged the majority of Czechoslovak citizens and was a fundamental reason for the soaring criticism of the Czechoslovak Communist government by many people and opposition movements. It directly expedited the disintegration of the Communist power in Czechoslovakia. The changes in Eastern Europe, mainly in the Soviet Union where the Communist government introduced a policy of reconstruction, were additional factors that accelerated that disintegration. The continuous opposition demands and endless anti-government rallies forced the Czechoslovak government and Gustav Husák, the president and ÚV KSČ leader, to make necessary

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<sup>1</sup> "Throughout the Eastern Europe rambles a scarecrow that the West calls 'dissent'." Václav Havel. *Moc Bezmocných*. 1978. *Lidové Noviny*: Praha, 1990. p. 5.

concessions to prevent bloodshed. The first major opposition victory occurred when Václav Havel, a non-Communist playwright who was often a prisoner of the castle for his involvement in Charter 77 and other anti-Communist movements, was elected President of the Czechoslovak Republic following Husák's forced resignation in December 1989<sup>2</sup>.

Havel's election marked the end of the Communist era in post-Second World War Czechoslovakia and returned Czechoslovakia to the democratic family of Western nations. The Communists takeover in February 1948 interrupted this process. The new Communist Government introduced a political terror similar to that in the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership. The long Stalinist winter had begun in Czechoslovakia. Following their Communist Brothers in the Soviet Union, the Czechoslovak Communist Party introduced political trials aimed against the enemies of Communism. Neither Communists (R. Slánský, G. Husák, L. Novomestský, etc.) nor non-Communists (M. Horáková, J. Urban, gen. H. Pika, etc.) were exempted from these orchestrated trials. They executed many of them as the result of the trial. The trials did not end until 1954, a one year after Stalin's death. During the following years the Czechoslovak Government revised some of the orchestrated trials, but the main revisionist

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<sup>2</sup> Václav Havel was many times interrogated by the Czechoslovak police for his involvement with Charter 77. During the Charter 77 active period, Václav Havel spent many months in Czechoslovak prisons. The phrase 'a prisoner of the castle' refers to mediaeval European history. During the mediaeval times kings and the nobility were 'lawmakers' of their territories. Because the President's office is situated at Hradčany, an old king's castle above Prague, and the Communists were 'lawmakers' in Czechoslovakia during their govern meant the phrase refers to their 'unlimited' control.

period together with a democratization of Czechoslovakia, so-called Action Program, did not start until the Prague Spring.

During the Prague Spring various sections of the Czechoslovak society, mainly academic and entertainment groups, called for greater political freedom and freedom of expression. This process was brutally interrupted on August 21, 1968 by the Eastern Bloc military invasion. The liberation process ended with a mass exodus of Czechoslovak citizens to the West and by political purges of Czechoslovak Communists and the rest of the Czechoslovak population. During the following year 1969, the Government introduced a political approach of 'normalization', which lasted until the last days of Communist power in Czechoslovakia. During the process of 'normalization' various opposition forces surfaced in Czechoslovakia.

The long struggle to enforce democratic principles in Czechoslovakia would not be possible without both, the anti-Government movements within Czechoslovakia and the democratic forces in the Western World, that helped financially and morally to complete this struggle. Various Western leaders and organizations together, with Czechoslovak emigres and their political organization in the West, were the major supporters of the anti-Government struggle in Czechoslovakia following the August 21, 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Soviet Union and five members of the Warsaw Pact.



One of the most important opposition forces in former Czechoslovakia<sup>3</sup> that help to depose the Communists was Charter 77. Established in January 1977, Charter 77 was a minority group of people who had various political and religious beliefs, different occupations and intellectual levels. Charter 77's protest proclamations, published in Czechoslovakia and other countries, informed Czechoslovak citizens and people around the World about the lawbreaking by the Communist Government in Czechoslovakia. Signatories and spokespersons of the Charter 77 were a bad omen to the Prague based Government. Unfortunately, Charter 77, owing to its objectives and moral views was unable to predict a possible break-up of Czechoslovakia once the Communist Government was replaced by a multiparty system in 1989. The break-up of Czechoslovakia was not an issue for Charter 77 until 1991.

Previous writers on Charter 77 history focused mainly on its proclamations rather than on the individual relationships among the signatories either during the pre-revolution, revolution or post-revolution era of Czechoslovak history<sup>4</sup>. While these statements are important, to fully understand the role of Charter 77 and its signatories, it is important to focus on interactions among individual Charter 77 signatories and their roles mainly within the Civic Forum, that were the building

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<sup>3</sup> Czechoslovakia ceased her existence in December 1992 when she was divided into two independent states: The Czech Republic and The Slovak Republic.

<sup>4</sup> For example: Karel and Ivan Kynclovi (*Po jaru přišla zima: Aneb zamyšlení nad vlastní knížkou o Chartě 77, etc.*), Vilém Prečan (*Novoroční Filipika 1995: Disent a Charta 77 v pojetí Milana Otáhla, Křesťané a Charta 77: Výběr dokumentů a textů, Charta 77: 1977-1989. Od morální k Demokratické revoluci, etc.*) and Gordon H. Skilling (*Civic Freedom in Central Europe: Voices from Czechoslovakia, etc.*) to name a few.

blocks for establishing the democratic government in Czechoslovakia. Civic Forum was one of the main associations during the Velvet Revolution. From Civic Forum and Charter 77 came some of the leading political figures who helped to shape the democratic process in the post-revolution Czechoslovak era. Some of them are still leading political and public figures in The Czech Republic<sup>5</sup>.

In order to comprehend the interactions of Charter 77 signatories, I shaped the interviews and questionnaires to develop an understanding of the relationship among Charter 77 signatories. After meetings with the signatories, the people who were active during the prime of Charter 77 and reading their answers to the questionnaires, I was able to summarize the main force behind their collective work and offer answers to the following question: Why could they cooperate until the disintegration of the Communist Czechoslovakia and why sometimes had their friendship dissolved after Democracy was introduced? The important factors for me were: (1) were the relationship and consensus during Charter 77 functions easily accomplished? and (2) were there any disagreements among individual signatories during Charter 77 active years? Did the former Communist Party members within Charter 77 cooperate without any pressure on the non-Communist signatories? Another question emerged during our conversations: Is there a need for a similar organization as Charter 77 in the present Czech Republic ?

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<sup>5</sup> Jiří Didenstbier, Václav Havel, Peter Pithart, Jan Ruml, Václav Benda, etc.

The following study of Charter 77 is divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with Charter 77 prior to the Velvet Revolution (Sametová Revoluce), its history and the relationships among various signatories. The second chapter discusses Charter 77 during the year 1989 and the signatories' involvement during the Velvet Revolution. The main focus will be on their involvement in Civic Forum. The third chapter describes Charter 77 in the last years of its active existence.<sup>6</sup> It suggests the main reasons why Charter 77 did not survive to the present. In addition, the disintegration of Charter 77 raises a question whether there is need for a similar association in the present Czech Republic. The fourth chapter discusses the two leading personalities of Charter 77.

The conclusion confirms how healthy the relationship among the signatories was and it summarises the problems that may be existing in an association like Charter 77. The work is based mainly on oral and written materials collected during my visit of The Czech Republic in 1996. Since I could sample only a small number of Charter 77 signatories among all who could be interviewed or reached by my questionnaires, the conclusion does not reflect the beliefs of all of the signatories.

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<sup>6</sup> Because Charter 77 was not a formal organization it could never be actually dissolved. In 1992 after long debates Charter 77 ended its active life.

## Chapter I

### Charter 77

1977 - 1988

#### The beginning of Charter 77

The Czechoslovak Government's political program of "normalization" introduced in 1969 led to repressions against certain members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia<sup>7</sup> and against all forms of anti-Government movements during the years that followed. Organized anti-Government movements were unable to form until the late 1970's. The beginning of an independent anti-Government initiative was sparked by the Czechoslovak Government's ratification of two important Helsinki international treaties. These were the International Treaty of Human and Civic Rights and The International Treaty of Economical, Social and Cultural Rights. The treaties were ratified on November 11, 1975 by the Czechoslovak Government and incorporated into the Czechoslovak constitution

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<sup>7</sup> Thousands of members of The Czechoslovak Communist Party were expelled from the Party in 1969 for their political orientation during the Prague Spring. At the same time many members of the Communist Party left the Czechoslovak Communist Party as a result of their protest and disillusion with the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia on August 21, 1968 and "normalization" process in Czechoslovakia.

on March 23, 1976.<sup>8</sup> They were an important stimulus. A small number of ex-Communists and intellectuals formed a dissident movement, that originated from a growing dissatisfaction with the political and economic situation in totalitarian Czechoslovakia. Both groups, the former Communists and academia, saw the Czechoslovak Communist Party's obligation to comply with the treaties. The treaties gave a signal to increase pressure on the Czechoslovak Government institutions to guarantee basic political, civic and human rights of its citizens. The concern was that the treaties would not be functional and Human and Civic Rights would constantly be ignored in practice.

In 1976, some of the main actors from Prague Spring of 1968 and the period from 1968-1969 resumed talks to establish a group that would oversee the Czechoslovak Government's compliance with the treaties and uphold the Human and Civic Rights of ordinary Czechoslovak citizens. Similar groups were established in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries as well. The key figures in Czechoslovakia were Zdeněk Mlynář, Jiří Hejránek, Jiří Hájek and Petr Uhl, together with a few representatives of Czechoslovak academia and underground<sup>9</sup>, mainly professor Jan Patočka and writers Václav Havel, and

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<sup>8</sup> Zdeněk Jičínský, *Charta 77 a právní stát*. Doplněk: Brno, 1995, p.14.

<sup>9</sup> The underground was a group of people: writers, song-writers, singers, artists etc. who disagree with the policies of the Czechoslovak Communist Government. They were mostly apolitical, but believed in the Freedom of Speech, Movement and Democracy.

Pavel Kohout.<sup>10</sup> They decided to call this group Charter 77.<sup>11</sup> Due to the political pluralism of their views,<sup>12</sup> they concluded that Charter 77 would not have any kind of membership or specific political orientation.<sup>13</sup> The association of individual citizens with Charter 77 was based upon the signing of various documents published by the Charter 77. Political divergences among various signatories of Charter 77 was the primary reason for the political pluralism of Charter 77, which Václav Benda characterized as,

Charter [77] did not restrain its individuals (signatories) or groups in political inclinations: we all meticulously exerted and respected basic [and] ... fundamental political culture, that connected us: which we advocated and [we] never tried to by any manner shift to

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<sup>10</sup> Václav Havel. Jak se rodila Charta 77. In Vilém Prečan ed..*Charta 77: 1977-1989. Od morální k Demokratické revoluci*. Čs. Středisko nezávislé literatury, Scheinfeld-Schwarzenberga a Arche: Bratislava, 1990. pp. 17-19.

<sup>11</sup> Actually it was Pavel Kohout who invented the name Charter 77. Jiří Ruml. "A bude se jmenovat Charta 77: Rekonstrukce jednoho činu". The photocopy of original document donated by Jiří Ruml during my visit of The Czech Republic.

<sup>12</sup> The founding signatories of the first Charter 77 document belonged to a wide spectrum of political life in Czechoslovakia, ex-Communists, Socialists, Democrats, anti-Communists, intellectuals, underground, Catholics, Protestants and people with no specific political or religious beliefs. There seems to be a pattern in Czechoslovak history of forming coalitions from people or political parties that have not necessarily the same political beliefs. The examples are the United Front, Pětka and coalition of various political parties prior the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in 1948. They usually formed the coalitions (1) to prevent any political force to become dominant on the Czechoslovak scene and to establishing a majority government, (2) to accomplished some political task which one political party would be unable to achieve or (3) a united front against external domination. The similar political process continues in the present Czech Republic. Similar political process can be found during anti-colonial movements in Africa and Asia during the period 1945-1965 or even in Québec during her struggle for independence. Usually these movement disintegrates along its various political lines once the goal is accomplished. Charter 77 was not an exception.

<sup>13</sup> Václav Havel. *op.cit.* p.19.

the Left or to the Right.<sup>14</sup>

Its non-political politics (political neutrality), as Václav Havel summarized Charter 77 activities, played both important positive and negative roles, from its beginning until the end of Charter 77's active existence. The turning point for Charter 77 was Perestroika, the political ideology of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union.

The years 1977-1985 were a period of defining Charter 77's objectives and their advancement. Based on Jan Patočka's philosophical ideas of social justice and Havel's non-political policy, Charter 77 had to solve many problems in adjusting itself to satisfy the needs of all signatories and the larger Czechoslovak society. The pluralistic attitudes of Charter 77 signatories was one of the major reasons why Charter 77 had to base its interaction with Czechoslovak Government institutions on dialogue. Composed of former Communists, religious believers, atheists, underground dissidents and other political representatives, Charter 77 in its first years had to solve the problem of consensus among its signatories. The problem with different ideological beliefs by individual signatories was partially avoided by a non-political policy. This helped Charter 77 to modulate its ideas, avoiding the problem internal political problems and turning Charter 77

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Václav Benda on August 26, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik. "Charta nikomu nebránila, individuálně ani skupinově se politicky profilovat ale všichni jsme úskostlivo dbali a rezpektovali to základní společné ... elementární politickou kulturu která nás spojovala, kterou jsme hájili a kterou jsme se nikdy neodvážili jakým koliv způsobem nalevo nebo napravo .... překročit."

towards one of the prevailing ideologies: Socialism or anti-Communism.

On January 1, 1977 Charter 77 published its first document criticizing the Czechoslovak Government's actions toward Human and Civic Rights in Czechoslovakia. It outlined Charter 77 reasoning and goals:

Charter 77 is a free, informal and open community of people of different beliefs, different faiths and different professions, united by the will to strive individually and collectively for the respect of civic and human rights in our country and the whole world.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore Charter 77 stated that it was a non-political association of individuals and called for a dialogue with the Communist Government rather than outlining a political program or establishing an opposition political party:

Charter 77 is not a base for opposition political activity.... It does not want to demarcate its own program of political or social reforms or changes, but to conduct a constructive dialogue with the political and governmental authorities within its sphere of activities.<sup>16</sup>

Charter 77 believed that constructive dialogue with the Czechoslovak

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<sup>15</sup> "Prohlášení Charty 77: 1. ledna 1977". In Vilém Prečan. *Charta 77: 1977-1989. Od morální k Demokratické revoluci*. Čs. Středisko nezávislé literatury. Scheinfeld-Schwarzenberg a Arche: Bratislava, 1990. p.12. "Charta 77 je volné, neformální a otevřené společenství lidí různých přesvědčení, různé viry a různých profesí, které spojuje vůle jednotlivě i společně se zasazovat o respektování občanských a lidských práv v naší zemi i ve světě."

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p.12. "Charta 77 není základnou k opoziční politické činnosti.... Nechce tedy vytýčovat vlastní program politických či společenských reforem či změn, ale vést v oblasti svého působení konstruktivní dialog s politickou a statní mocí."



Government should guarantee the legitimization of Charter 77 within the Czechoslovak Constitution.

To solve the problem of Charter 77 leadership and to develop consensus on issues facing Charter 77 dealt, the first signatories agreed to constitute a collective leadership committee (Team of Charter 77 Spokesmen) of three spokespersons selected from Charter 77 signatories<sup>17</sup>. The pluralism of Charter 77 would be preserved by selecting the spokespersons based on the three main political forces within Charter 77: (1) the former Communists, (2) the underground and non-Communists and (3) intellectuals.<sup>18</sup> This informal agreement was sustained for most of Charter 77's active years. The spokespersons were appointed for one year and at the end of their term it was their responsibility to find a replacement for themselves from the group they had represented. If some of them were unable to find the replacement, they could either continue the next term or select a spokesperson from another group.

### **Ex-Communists and subgroups**

Charter 77's January proclamation was signed at the beginning by 243

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<sup>17</sup> Later the Team of Charter 77 Spokespersons was combined from the former and present spokespersons.

<sup>18</sup> The first spokespersons were Václav Havel (playwright) representing underground and non-communist section; Jiří Hájek (former historic. diplomat and politic) representing ex-Communists; and Jan Patočka (philosopher) representing intellectuals and the moral ideas of Charter 77. During the following years the three spokespersons were selected to represent ex-Communists, underground-intellectuals and Catholics - Protestants.

signatories. By June 1977 there were about 700 signatories. Many of the signatories were people "... who were stigmatized after 1969 for their civic activities [during Prague Spring], and they added their signatures during the initial two or three surges [of signing]."<sup>19</sup> The majority of the first signatories were ex-Communists who, in Charter 77, had found an association in which they could continue to promote some of their ideas from Prague Spring.<sup>20</sup> The ex-Communists within Charter 77 could be divided into three main groups: (1) Eurocommunists, organized around Miloš Hájek, (2) Trotskyites, a small group of revolutionary socialists, organized around Petr Uhl and (3) reform-Communists, organized around Jiří Ruml, a group of Communists who divorced themselves from certain ideas of Communism. Jaroslav Šabata, an ex-Communist, in his interview pointed out that from the first 243 signatories, 140 were ex-Communists.<sup>21</sup>

The political influence of ex-Communists on the rest of Charter 77 signatories depended on the political ideology of the subgroup they had belonged to. The most influential were Eurocommunists. They were a Socialist oriented group

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<sup>19</sup> Milan Otáhal. *Opozice, moc, společnost: 1969/1989*. Ústav pro Soudobé Dějiny AV ČR. Maxdorf: Praha, 1994. p.38. "... kteří byli po roce 1969 postiženi, protože se společensky angažovali, a svůj podpis připojili již v prvních dvou či třech vlnách."

<sup>20</sup> For a full understanding of Charter 77 see the *Charter 77 founding document* and Jan Patočka's *O povinnosti bránit se proti bezpraví* published on January, 1997 and Jan Patočka's *Co můžeme očekávat od Charty 77* published on February 8, 1997.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Jaroslav Šabata on August 21, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik. Václav Benda in his interview stated that the Communists had about 50% of signatories at the beginning of Charter 77.

that never fully divorced itself from the idea of reform Socialism. The Eurocommunists<sup>22</sup> were the most politically active group within Charter 77. They "... had the best organized group within Charter. They were sometimes called Tuesdayats because of their regular meetings on that day [Tuesday]."<sup>23</sup> Dana Němcová characterizes Eurocommunists as "... a group with political thoughts ..." that had its own Euroclub to which they had invited many of Charter 77 signatories.<sup>24</sup> Their organizational abilities were, according to Rudolf Battěk, due to their large numbers and "... a connection with their past" or so called "genetic code".<sup>25</sup> During Charter 77's active existence Eurocommunists, beside their political activity, were able for most of the time to select a spokesperson to represent their group every year.

The ability to name a spokesperson was very significant because the Team of Spokespersons became a nucleus of Charter 77. Because only about 60 - 100 signatories belonged to the most active group within Charter 77<sup>26</sup>, the strong majority of ex-Communists could greatly influence Charter 77 statements. The

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<sup>22</sup> They called themselves Eurocommunists because they based their ideology, similarly to Italian Eurocommunists, on their divorce from the Leninist principles.

<sup>23</sup> Milan Otáhal. *Opozice. op.cit.* p. 38. "... byli uvnitř Charty nejlépe organizovaní. Někdy byli nazýváni úterníci, neboť se pravidelně v tento den scházeli."

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Dana Němcová on August 21, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik. "...skupina která myslela politicky...."

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Rudolf Battěk on August 22, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik. "...bylo jich dost a spojení s minulostí". "genetický kód".

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Jiří Ruml on July 31, 1996 in Prague and interview with Miloš Hájek on August 14, 1996 in Drchlava u Dubé, done by Richard Pesik.

Eurocommunists could, in the pluralistic negotiations of Charter 77, act as a pressure group during important decision-making.<sup>27</sup> Jarmila Běliková in suggested that there were some suspicions that the Eurocommunists had tried to swing Charter 77 to the Left.<sup>28</sup> This suspicion was based mostly on their Communist past, their better organizational abilities and their continuous active involvement with each other and within Charter 77. Petruška Šustrová states that "they, more than anybody else, were inclined to acquiring leadership posts."<sup>29</sup> The danger to turn Charter 77 to the Right or to the Left was only avoided by its non-political intention and a lack of political activity during its first decade of existence. Furthermore, their strong Leftist orientations had a negative influence on Charter 77's younger generation who had in contrast Right Wing oriented thoughts.

The Trotskyites<sup>30</sup> influence was not as visible. Their numbers were too small to play any major role during a decision making process. In addition, their radical ideas were not supported by either former-Communists' group.

The third group of former-Communists, the reform-Communists, rejected any role

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<sup>27</sup> The spokespersons could be nominated from either of the ex-Communist subgroup.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Jarmila Běliková on August 15, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Petruška Šustrová on August 19, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik. "oni více než kdokoli jiný inklinovali k vedoucím pozicím".

<sup>30</sup> The former Communist who divorced themselves from Leninists ideology and believed in anarchism.

for the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in the implementing of changes to the political system. Furthermore, they rejected any kind of cooperation with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to implement those changes. They fully divorced themselves from their Communist past and supported Charter 77 non-Communists Right Wing orientation. The suspicious relationship among the three ex-Communist fractions was mainly between the Eurocommunists and the reform-Communists. because both groups disagreed on various issues the Charter 77 had to deal with.<sup>31</sup>

The non-partisan nature of Charter 77 and its orientation toward Human and Civic Rights helped to avoid major conflict among signatories within the first ten years. It led to their ability to accept and to understand the ideas of others and to be able to make concessions to others. The use of negotiation without a major power struggle among signatories was vital in reaching consensus on issues that Charter 77 presented to the Czechoslovak Government institutions. The consensus among the Team of Charter 77 Spokespersons enabled it to persist. The ability of acceptance is best illustrated by Petruška Šustrová who argued:

Charter [77] could not make any political statement since Václav Benda, militant anticommunist and strong Catholic, would not be able to find any common ground in political projects or political ideas with Petr Uhl who was at that time and even now strong

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with Jiří Ruml. *op.cit.* (Charter 77 non- militant approach, policy of dialogue, support of Solidarity in Poland, etc.)

Trotskyite. Furthermore, none of them would be able to find the same outlook with Ladislav Lis, who was a former communist official.<sup>32</sup>

Another reason for the Eurocommunists' cooperation with other signatories was that the Charter 77's agenda did not directly reject the 'ideas of Socialism with a Human Face' as put forward by Prague Spring. Most of Charter 77 documents called for a social justice based on the Helsinki Human and Civil Rights Act. Charter 77's rejection of militant actions and direct anti-Communist policy was, again, an indirect acceptance of some of the Eurocommunists ideas.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* "Charta nebyla sto dělat politické prohlášení protože Václav Benda, militantní anti-komunista a věřící katolík by těžko mohl v politických projektech nebo politických představách najít společnou řeč s Petrem Uhlem, který v té době a vlastně do dnes je přesvědčený Trockysta. A ani jeden z nich by nemohl najít společný pohled s Ladislavem Lisem, který byl bývalý komunistický funkcionář".

<sup>33</sup> In his two documents Jan Patočka writes "In regarding of Charter 77 non-socialistic approach, it was shown in the original complaint that Charter 77 is not in disagreement, but it is actually in an agreement with the final statement of European Communists parties Conference in Berlin in the Summer 1976. (*Answer to The General Attorney of CSSR statement of February 1. 1997*) : "... from Charter 77 is possible to expect that it will deliver a new concept of philosophy, which is not in a disagreement with a socialist ideology : which until now had an exclusive monopoly, so it could propose its correctness even in a clearly unsatisfactory provision: its orientation towards basic human rights.... Charter will continue to remind what our life owns in regarding to the rights which lawfully belong to our citizens...." (*What can we expect from Charter 77*) ; " Co se týče tvrzení o nesocialistčnosti Charty 77: bylo již v bezprostředním protestu poukázáno, že Charta 77 není v rozporu, nýbrž naopak ve shodě se závěrečným prohlášením konference evropských komunistických stran v Berlíně v létě 1976." (*K prohlášení Generální prokuratury ČSSR ze dne 1. února 1977*) ; "...od Charty je možné očekávat, že v náš život vstoupí nová ideová orientace, která sice nijak nestojí v protikladu k orientaci socialistické, která dosud měla monopol tak exklusivní, že mohla reklamovat svou přednost dokonce i ve formě očividně nedostatečné: orientace na základní lidská práva..... Charta neustane připomínat co náš život dluží oněm právům, která zákonitě našim občanům patří...." (*Co můžeme očekávat od Charty 77*). Vilém Prečan. *Křesťané a Charta 77: Výběr dokumentů a textů*. INDEX. OPUS BOMUM: München, 1980. p. 38 and p. 43.

The Eurocommunists' circumspection not to act or to get involved in any political dispute with the Czechoslovak government is visible from the fact that during the period of 1982 - 1984 the ex-Communists were represented by the same spokesperson, Anna Marvanová, a retired ex-Communist. Her continuity as the spokesperson can be explained by an assumption that the majority of Eurocommunists wanted to have a low profile during this period in which Charter 77 published a few documents supporting the Solidarity movement in Poland. The Solidarity movement was strongly criticized by the Communist Governments of Eastern Europe.<sup>34</sup> It seems to be obvious that the Eurocommunists who could not act in direct disagreement with the Czechoslovak Communist Government could not or did not want to show support for Solidarity, because it was, as the independent anti-Polish Government movement, criticized by the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Although the Eurocommunists had been expelled from the Communist Party, they never divorced themselves from the basic Communist ideas and continued to believe in the possibilities of reforming the Government without separating themselves from the orthodox Communist ideology.

This idea is illustrated by some Eurocommunists' activities following the death of Leonid Brezhnev in 1982 and the introduction of Perestroika by Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union during the second half of the 1980's. Soviet Glasnost was for many Eurocommunists a clear indication that their former ideas of Socialism with the Human Face were not improper ideologies. For many

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with Petruška Šustrová. *op.cit.*

Eurocommunists. Perestroika supported the legality and continuity of the ideas of Prague Spring. Their attitudes within and outside Charter 77 began to change:

In 1984, I noted one thing. They [Eurocommunists] had been meeting every [Wednesday] - those ... Eurocommunists have been meeting at Ruda Slánský at Červeném Vrchu they were so called wednesdayats<sup>35</sup>.... Sometimes, somebody from the signatories went there - mainly from the Communists - to discuss economy, politics, and arts.<sup>36</sup>

During his search for a replacement for his post of spokesperson, Jiří Ruml went to one of their meetings. He did not find anybody there to replace him,

because we could not find any agreeable objectives among us. And already he had perceived one thing - with the succession of Gorbachev, with the coming of Perestroika, the Communists<sup>37</sup> who had signed Charter [77], somehow became less visible as if they had obtained information like not to compromise yourselves so we [the Soviets] can count on you.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> I could not verify if the Tuesdayats and wednesdayats different groups or if their meetings were moved to either day.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Jiří Ruml. *op.cit.* "V roce 1984 jsem zaznamenal jednu věc. Oni se scházeli každou - takovi ti bývalí eurokomunisti - se scházeli u Rudy Slánského na Červeném Vrchu a byli to ti středečníci.... Čas od času tam někdo s těch mluvčích - převážně těch komunistů chodil - diskutovat ekonomii, politiku a umění."

<sup>37</sup> Means the Eurocommunists.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* "... protože jsme se prostě názorově neshodly. A už tenkrát, jsem pozoroval jednu věc - s nástupem Gorbačova a perestojky se ti komunisti, kteří tu Chartu podepsali ne ztáhli ale přeci jen trošku jako by dostali echo příliš se nekomprimujte abychom mohli s vámi potom počítat."



The Eurocommunists continued their low profile activities within Charter 77 in the future years. On the other hand, their involvement outside Charter 77 began to escalate prior to the Velvet Revolution.

In 1985, Gorbachev's Perestroika, together with the changing political situation in the Eastern European Bloc countries since 1986, were the major reasons for an increasing political polarization among Charter 77 signatories. Some of the signatories started advocating a greater politicization of Charter 77 and open public protests against the Czechoslovak Government. This increasing pressure within Charter 77 evolved into growing political and personal disagreements among various groups and individual signatories.

The increasing public pressure for political changes in the Eastern Bloc since 1985 revealed growing differentiations among some signatories. Jan Štern, in his interview described, the Eurocommunists' changing stance by suggesting that in 1987 on the occasion of the Supreme Soviet convention some of Charter 77 Eurocommunists signatories sent a letter to Mikhail Gorbachev

... where they titled him Comrade. Honorable Comrade ... and that aggravated anti-Communists from Uhl, who was anti-Dubčekist at that time, to Benda who was similarly critical of the letter of prominent ex-Communists.... Furthermore, this act created a suspicion, that these Communists from 68 will have some kind of patronage. That they will be able, based on their compromise, to get again on the stage [of political events] and that they will walk out on us.... Many [signatories], including Havel ... were scared that some of the ex-Communists would, in a sudden movement,

ostracize themselves and defy their colleagues.<sup>39</sup>

Štern, also stressed that the principal organizer behind this letter was Jiří Hájek, whose wife composed the letter to Gorbachev. Signatories from either political front who disagreed with this letter, according to Štern, saw major objections in the wording of the letter. The author's comparison of Glasnost to the Spring breeze and the salute 'Honorable Comrade' were unacceptable. The letter was, according to Štern, a main breach of the solidarity in the pluralistic Charter 77 approach to any issue.<sup>40</sup>

The growing optimism that arose from Gorbachev's political changes developed into criticism of some signatories' actions at the beginning of 1988. Václav Benda, expressing his disillusion with the euphoria among some of the signatories wrote in INFOCH (Informace o Chartě):

I am very skeptical about Mr. Gorbachev's agenda, as well as, his bona fide abilities - even more skeptical about our present leaders. I am in disagreement with the beliefs of many of my friends and colleagues within Charter 77: mostly ex-Communists, but some optimists are even people who cannot be accused of socialist

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Jan Štern on August 22, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik." kde ho oslovili soudruhu, Váženy soudruhu a že prostě... to strašně nasralo antikomunisty od Uhla, který byl anti-Dubčekovec v té době, on a Benda byli stejně kritický na ten dopis známých ex-komunistů... a vzniklo podezření že tito komunisté z roku 68 budou mít protekci. Oni se dostanou na základě nějakého kompromisu opět zase na scénu a na nás se vykašlou.... Oni včetně Havla ... báli se že ty ex-komunisti se v daný chvíli thnou a v podstatě se na ty své kolegy vykašlou."

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

beliefs.<sup>41</sup>

The increasing positive orientation toward Gorbachev's policies by some Charter 77 signatories resulted in establishing a new political group. Seeing the possibilities of a new Prague Spring, which could bring back their political posts, some of them became founding fathers of the political organization OBRODA<sup>42</sup> (Revival), organized separately from Charter 77 at the beginning of 1989. The main actor in its creation was one of Charter 77 spokespersons Miloš Hájek, who in an interview with INFOCH stressed:

I would like to point out the consensus and obedience to the founding document of Charter [77]. I even took out the document and put it on my table as a lawyer who has a Code of Law on his shelf. Obviously, I am a person who is socially oriented, and as I met my fellow spokespersons, I found out that I was the person with the most political experience, therefore, I will behold all activities from a greater political angle than my colleagues. But this does not mean that I have any interest in the politicization of Charter [77], or even to increase its political role which [Charter 77]

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<sup>41</sup> Václav Benda. "Perspektivy politického vývoje v Československu a možná role Charty". *INFOCH*. (Informace o Charte) Vol. XI, No.4. Československo: 24. 2. 1988. p.13. "Osobně jsem krajně skeptický jak co do záměru, tak co do skutečných možností pana Gorbačova - o to skeptičtější pak co do našich současných vládců. Rozcháším se v tomto bodě s mnoha svými přáteli a kolegy z Charty 77: většinou jde o ex-komunisty, ale optimisty jsou i lidé, na něž nepadá ani stín podezření ze socialistické orientace."

<sup>42</sup> OBRODA, full title Klub za socialistickou přestavbu Obroda ( Union for Socialistic Reconstruction - Revival - Obroda) began to form in 1988. Obroda's full activity can be dated to February 1989 when it published a declaration in which supported idea of socialism and welcome Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union. Obroda's main aim was to establish communication among Czechoslovak citizens about socialist ideology and the reconstruction of present Czechoslovak government within socialist ideas. The main initiators were for example Miloš Hájek, Luboš Kohout, Jiří Hájek, Čestmír Císař and other. The majority of them were former Communists.

undoubtedly has, even if it denies it.<sup>43</sup>

OBRODA, which indirectly influenced Charter 77, satisfied his political ambition and beliefs. Most of the signatories who were members of OBRODA were more careful in their roles within the Charter 77. Some of them did not fully support all Charter 77 acts. Their cautiousness grew mainly toward the end of 1988 and during the 1989 when Charter 77 politicization and militancy increased as result of the social and political changes in Eastern Europe that gave Charter 77 the opportunity to act more aggressively.

### Political "Ghettoization"

Czechoslovak Government pressure against Charter 77 began soon after the publication of its initial document and resulted in Charter 77 needing to protect itself from police informers. In 1977 and the years that followed, Czechoslovak Government institutions inaugurated a political terror of interrogation against Charter 77 signatories. The first repressions were directed towards Charter 77 spokespersons. "V. Havel was arrested, J. Patočka was subjected to exhausting interrogations until he died on March 13, 1977. J. Hájek's every step

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<sup>43</sup> "Rozhovor s Milošem Hájkem". *INFOCH*. (Informace O Chartě) Vol. XI, No. 1. Československo: 10. 1. 1988, p. 5. "Rád bych zdůraznil konsensus a vázanost se základním dokumentem Charty. Dokonce jsem si základní prohlášení nyní vyndal a budu je mít na stole, tak jako právník má na stole zákoník. Pochopitelně, já jsem člověk orientovaný socialisticky, a jak jsem poznal své kolegy mluvčí, jsem člověk s největší politickou zkušeností a tak se pochopitelně budu dívat na celou činnost z političtějšího úhlu než moji kolegové. Což však neznámá, že mám tendenci Chartu politizovat nebo nadměrně akcentovat její politickou roli, kterou pochopitelně má, at chce či nechce."

was followed and although he was bullied, he was able to survive and persist as its [Charter 77] only representative...."<sup>44</sup>

The government-controlled Czechoslovak Press published open antagonistic attacks on Charter 77's struggle. Using its obedient citizens, the Government was able to produce endless public condemnations of Charter 77 by workers, academics, actors, students and others. On January 12, 1979 Rudé Právo published an article titled "Ship-wreckers and Self-appointed"<sup>45</sup> condemning Charter 77 by claiming that its statement was published "...by a small group of people from the ranks of bankrupted Czechoslovak reactionary bourgeoisie and also from the ranks of bankrupted organizers of 1968 counter-revolution as an order by anti-Communists and Zionist centrals...."<sup>46</sup> Beside public attacks in the Czechoslovak Press and police repressions, the Communist Government organized many rallies promoting a mass petition of citizens' signatures that condemned Charter 77's first document and its representatives.

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<sup>44</sup> Milan Otáhal. *Opozice*. *op.cit.* p.40. "V. Havel byl zatčen, J. Patočka podroben vysilujícím výslechům a 13. března 1977 zemřel. J. Hájek byl sledován na každém kroku a šikanován, a však odolal a v nejtěžší době zůstal jejím představitelem.... "

<sup>45</sup> "Ztroskotanci a Samozvanci"

<sup>46</sup> "Ztroskotanci a Samozvanci". In Vilém Prečan. *Charta 77: 1977-1989. Od morální k Demokratické revoluci*. Čs. Středisko nezávislé literatury, Scheinfeld-Schwarzenberg a Arche: Bratislava, 1990. p.25.

To withstand this intense pressure Charter 77 had to take immediate action. The result was closing itself into a protective core consisting of few individuals who made immediate and important decisions about Charter 77's work and aims. This partially safeguarded non-signatories, who cooperated with Charter 77 by collecting information and distributing or copying various Charter 77 documents, from interrogations by the Communist Government authorities. It also secured Charter 77 from possible infiltration by agents of the Czechoslovak secret police.

Petr Pithart describes Charter 77 actions as driven by not only a need for protection internally but also from external sources. Therefore, Charter 77 started, according to Pithart, to build a wall around itself and create a community with a mentality of exclusivity, self-righteousness and elevation above others. Charter 77's behaviour resembled the behaviour of a ghetto because of these actions.<sup>47</sup> This created an atmosphere of dissidence among dissidents.<sup>48</sup> John Bok points out that Charter 77 "... was an exclusive ghetto, and acted as a ghetto ... which had a stigma of ghetto, basically, forced upon itself."<sup>49</sup> The signatories were people

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Jaroslav Šabata. *op.cit.*

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Petr Pithart on August 16, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with John Bok on August 7, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik. "byla zvláštní ghetto a jako ghetto se chovala ... (ona) si to snad nechala vnútit to stíma getta."

... disturbed from their original settings ... their colleagues, friends ... who stopped interacting with them because they became scared [of them].... The majority of them [signatories] had no other friends than Chartists themselves ... connected to each other by their decisions to present their disagreement and civic courage....<sup>50</sup>

Chartists saw the possibility to survive and to preserve their ideology within the oppressive regime by segregating themselves from the rest of society by creating an exclusive group of people. Their protectiveness created a paradox in that Charter 77 was open to the whole society on the one side, but exclusive on the other side due to its fear of possible infiltration by police. In addition, the Czechoslovak police were able to discourage most of the Czechoslovak population from contact with Charter 77.

Petr Uhl recognizes the problems of the ghetto syndrome:

The negative ghetto features affected the consciousness and behaviour of Charter 77. Emphasizing Charter [77] morals and a fraudulent explanation of Charter 77 existence as a product of immediate decision to live in truth, which are vulgarizations of philosopher Jan Patočka's ideological testament, created a sensation of moral exclusiveness of Chartists and a charismatic atmosphere.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Petruška Šustrová. *op.cit.*

<sup>51</sup> Petr Uhl. "Alternativní společenství jako revoluční avantgarda". In Vilém Prečan. *Charta 77: 1977-1989. Od morální k Demokratické revoluci*. Čs. Středisko nezávislé literatury, Scheinfeld-Schwarzenberg a Arche: Bratislava, 1990. p.83. "Negativní 'ghettové' rysy postihli i vědomí a chování Charty 77. Zdůrazňování chartovní morálky a nesprávné vysvětlování existence Charty 77 jako výsledek náhlého rozhodnutí 'žít v pravdě', které jsou vulgarizací ideového odkazu filozofa Jana Patočky, vytvářejí pocit morální výlučnosti chartistů, charismatickou atmosféru."

This kind of behaviour forced on Charter 77 signatories by the Czechoslovak Government institutions and by the signatories own decisions was unhealthy for Charter 77 development. This become evident during the later years of Charter 77 existence.

The problem of ghettoization was clearly observable within the Charter 77 community. The ghetto syndrome fostered small groups of signatories within the Charter 77. They were connected by their political beliefs and interests. This inner nucleus of Charter 77 behaved as an independent community within Charter 77, developing intellectually and socially. They departed from the original nature of the association. Their exclusive behaviour was widely different from general Charter 77 community life. They engaged in celebrations of birthdays, name days and organizing illegal and unofficial plays, concerts and exhibitions. Their inner communal life did not end there. The growing isolation and interactions developed into inner-marriages among some signatories and in organizing St. Nicholas (Mikuláš) celebration for Charter 77 signatories children exclusively.<sup>52</sup> Some signatories feared that Charter 77 could turn into a pseudo-cult.

The inward-looking nature of Charter 77 acted like a cancer on its further development. Some of the signatories became withdrawn from the reality of the

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Petr Pithart. *op.cit.*



outside world and the needs of the whole society and individual citizens. Milan Otáhal characterizes this cynical situation:

Intellectuals [meaning signatories] were in some way isolated from the rest of society. The majority of citizens were not interested in problems that dealt with the Freedom of Association and Freedom of Speech, but they were more interested in possibilities of how to use money obtained from underground economy. Dissent, as I call the group around Havel, lived in isolation without any deeper understanding of the real situation in which people lived day to day. Charter 77 is the reflection of this trend. It is a typical reaction to the situation by the intellectuals in which they mainly lived themselves.<sup>53</sup>

Although strongly criticized for his opinion by Vilém Prečan, who believed that individual signatories who worked mostly among common citizens were not divorced from the rest of the society<sup>54</sup>, Milan Otáhal's commentary confirmed the abnormality of the Charter 77 situation. Not only was access to Charter 77 minimal, due to the police repressions and common citizens' need to survive within the Totalitarian system, where questions of truth could result in the imprisonment and loss of social standards. There was also the apathy of many

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<sup>53</sup> Milan Otáhal as cited in Vilém Prečan, *Novoroční Filipika 1995: Dissent a Charta 77 v pojetí Milana Otáhla*. Quodlibed, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny: Praha, 1995, p.8. "Intelektuálové byli do jisté míry izolováni od ostatní společnosti. Velkou část obyvatelstva totiž nezajímali tolik problémy svobody shromažďování nebo slova, ale zajímalo je třeba jak to, jak realizovat peníze získané v rámci černé ekonomiky. Dissent, jak nazývám skupinu kolem Havla, žil izolovan bez hlubších znalostí konkrétní situace, v níž lidé každodenně žili. Výrazem tohoto postoje je i Charta 77. Je to typický projev intelektuálů na situaci, v níž se nacházeli především oni sami."

<sup>54</sup> Vilém Prečan, *Novoroční Filipika 1995: Dissent a Charta 77 v pojetí Milana Otáhla*. Quodlibed, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny: Praha, 1995, pp. 8-10.

who believed that the system could not be corrected led to the growing gap between the common citizens and Charter 77. Furthermore, closing itself into the ghetto and refusing to allow any kind of strong political expressions by the inner core of signatories and spokespersons that criticized the Czechoslovak institutions resulted in another problem for Charter 77: a growing disagreement between the Team of Charter 77 spokespersons and the group of Charter 77 signatories from the younger generations.

## Parallel Communities

The growing isolation from the general population was first criticized after Patočka's death<sup>55</sup> when some signatories began to realize Charter 77 must not become an exclusive society of a few initiates. As a response to this criticism Václav Benda published an essay 'Parallel Communities' (Paralelní Polis ) in May 1978. In his essay, Benda argues that Charter 77 's role as a moral informer must be enhanced by developing parallel communities. The various communities parallel to official government institutions should play roles as moral educators to the citizens within the Czechoslovak political system. Benda outlined three major fields in which the parallel communities should take place: education, economics and international politics. The parallel communities

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<sup>55</sup> Jan Patočka died on March 13, 1977. The main reason of his death was endless interrogations by the police.

should help Charter 77 to escape from its isolation from ordinary citizens<sup>56</sup> by involving individual citizens, who were not Charter 77 signatories, in an educational process led by Charter 77 signatories. During the following years, Charter 77 established so called Home Universities, open for everybody, during which signatories and non-signatories helped educate both those who were attending and those who could not attend Czechoslovak Universities. Furthermore, Charter 77 organized plays and exhibitions of artists prohibited by Czechoslovak Communist authorities. Most of these activities were held in Charter 77 signatories' homes.

The problems with Charter 77 policies and organization were more visible during the second half of the 1980's. Charter 77 Ghetto syndrome and the Team of Charter 77 Spokespersons exclusive decision-making grew into an abyss between the older and the younger generation of Charter 77 signatories. The older generation focused on Patočka's ideology<sup>57</sup>. This was unsatisfactory for the younger generation. Seeing the changes in the Eastern Bloc countries, mainly in the Soviet Union after Gorbachev's introduction of Perestroika, the younger generation called for democratization and politicization in Charter 77. The Team responded by introducing a greater democratic process of Charter 77

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<sup>56</sup> Václav Benda, "Paralelní Polis". In Vilém Prečan, *Charta 77: 1977-1989. Od morální k Demokratické revoluci*. Čs. Středisko nezávislé literatury, Scheinfeld-Schwarzenberg a Arche: Bratislava, 1990. pp. 43-51.

<sup>57</sup> They wanted to continue the Charter 77 non-political policies and dialogue with the Government. They continued to believe of the possible reformation of Government policies, without any militant pressure towards the Government.

decision making, the Charter 77 Forums, and partial politicization of some Charter 77 activities through demonstrations that opened Charter 77 to ordinary citizens.

Martin Palouš characterized Charter 77 progression during the 1980's as follows:

... the new methodology, which was introduced in Charter [77] in 1978, did not solve the dilemma of a new political face with parallel communities and did not terminate questions surrounding the further development of anti-political policy, but frequently deepened the polemical tone of generational discussions and created the form of ideological content. Charter Forum became a distinctive platform with the surge of new people and ideas that were less effective. .... it mainly played a mobilization role.<sup>58</sup>

The problems with the continuity of dialogue were created by the militancy of the new generation and the urge to express their ideas by mobilizing the masses to expose their dissatisfactions with the Communist political system. Using the demonstrations as a tool by the younger generation "...did not give any room for

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<sup>58</sup> Martin Palouš. "Poznámky ke generačním sporům v Chartě 77 v druhé polovině osmdesátých let". In *Dvě desetiletí před listopadem 89: Sborník. Ústav pro Soudobé Dějiny AV ČR: MAXDORF, 1993. p.43.* "...nová praxe, která počala být v Chartě v roce 1987 zaváděná, nejen že nevyřešily dilema nové političtější tváře 'paralelní polis' a nezrušily mnohé otázky okolo budoucího vývoje 'apolitické politiky', ale mnohdy ještě prohloubily polemické tóny generační diskuse a dodaly jí ideologického obsahu. Fórum Charty se stalo platformou dosti svéráznou a pokud jde o přísun nových lidí i idejí, institucí málo efektivní....a sehrálo roli nanejvýše mobilizační."

the dialogue, the refining of ideas or defining communal understanding "<sup>59</sup> The final output of this dispute was that

The consolidation of Charter [77] regarding the new understanding, of which Havel's anti-political policy inspired documents called for, simply did not happen. Instead, more and more was proclaimed as politics, not parallel but political. Benda's positive political program of parallel communities, which had never been an actual program, was slowly accomplished. Furthermore, it continued a process of differentiation within Charter and within the grey zone<sup>60</sup> as well....<sup>61</sup>

Charter 77's politicization and the generational process during the late 80's was a direct result of the changing political situation in Eastern Europe. The slow decomposition of the Communist regimes called for firm and innovative actions. Charter 77 responded, although never rejecting the dialogue approach, by modifying its non-political policy approaches when dealing with the Czechoslovak Government's negligent record regarding basic Human and Political Rights. This created some problems for signatories who disapproved of the militant expressions; however, Charter 77 continued to move in the direction of modified militancy.

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<sup>59</sup> Martin Palouš, *op.cit.* p.43. "...už vůbec neskýtaly místo pro dialog, třibení nových idejí a hledání vzájemného porozumění."

<sup>60</sup> The part of the Czechoslovak public that was not politically active.

<sup>61</sup> Martin Palouš, *op. cit.* pp.43-44. "Ke sjednocení nad nově pochopeným cílem Charty, po kterém havlovskou antipolitickou politikou inspirované dokumenty volaly, jednoduše nedošlo. Místo ní se stále více a více hlásila o slovo politika, zatím sice pořád paralelní, ale v každém případě již politická. Bendův pozitivní politický program 'paralelní polis', byť se vlastně programem nikdy nestal, se krok za krokem naplňoval. Pokračoval proces diferenciacie uvnitř Charty i v prostoru 'šedé zóny'...."

The younger generation continued to call for greater development of parallel communities as outlined by Václav Benda in 1978, involving different issues from politics to education that led to the establishment of new associations outside Charter 77 with signatories and greater public involvement. Charter 77 closely cooperated with these institutions by actively supporting their documents and actions. Many signatories attended protests organized by the offspring associations and signed their proclamations.

## Generation X

Charter 77's non-political approach was satisfactory for Charter 77 signatories at the beginning of its existence. The changes of internal and international policies of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries in the 1980 s' played an important role in the development of a growing dissatisfaction with Charter 77 actions, mainly among the younger generation of Charter 77 signatories. Feeling left out from the major decisions and from the Team of Charter 77 Spokespersons, the younger generation rebelled and began to call for public political actions led by Charter 77. In 1987, forty younger signatories of Charter 77 signed a letter to Charter 77 in which they criticized its non-political policies. Their letter was a direct response to Charter 77 documents ('The letter to signatories on 10 th. anniversary of Charter 77'),<sup>62</sup> dated January 6, 1987 which states:

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<sup>62</sup> Dopis Signatářům k 10. výročí Charty 77.

It can be pointed out that Charter 77 is getting old. Spokespersons were until now people of middle or older age, which is in some way understandable. It was in the interest of Charter 77 that it was represented by mature people with some public experience and views.... Charter [77] should think about this generation problem: younger people could bring new ideas, they would be able to open [Charter 77] to the mentality of today younger generation and refresh it by their unwariness and spirit. Charter 77 must gain their interest by its work and instigation<sup>63</sup>

The call for changes and greater involvement in Charter 77 decision-making and activities indicated that Charter 77 was open to some changes.

The 'Letter of Forty' was a direct response to this call. It reflected the dissatisfaction of a younger generation with Charter 77 practices during the past ten years. The main initiators of the letter were Stanislav Deváty, František Stárek and Tomáš Hradílek. Rudolf Bereza and Tomáš Hradílek deprecated the significance of Charter 77 documents as only writings without any direct impact on public involvement. They believed that Charter 77 must develop new initiatives, such as demonstrations, to be more visible to ordinary citizens. Jan Štern continues in his assessment of their rebellion by suggesting that they were correct in presenting the idea that Charter 77 could do more and "... that the

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<sup>63</sup> "Dopis Signatářům k 10. výročí Charty 77". In Vilém Prečan. *Charta 77: 1977-1989. Od morální k Demokratické revoluci*. Čs. Středisko nezávislé literatury, Scheinfeld-Schwarzenberg a Arche: Bratislava, 1990, p. 315. "Lze říci, že Charta 77 stárne. Funkci mluvčích vykonávali dosud převážně lidé středního věku nebo starší, což je opět svým způsobem pochopitelné: bylo v zájmu Charty, aby za ní vystupovali lidé zralí, s určitými občanskými zkušenostmi, s určitým rozhledem.... Charta by proto měla pomyslet i na svůj generační problém: mladší lidé by do ní mohli vnést nové podněty, mohli by ji lépe otevřít citění dnešní mladé generace, mohli by ji osvěžit svou neopotrebovaností a elánem. Jejich zájem si ovšem Charta musí získat svou prací a podnětností."

letters to the leadership were not enough."<sup>64</sup> In addition, the 'Letter of Forty' questioned Charter 77 decision-making. It called for an alternative approach to debates among the Team of Charter 77 Spokespersons. The signatories of the 'Letter of Forty' believed that Charter 77 should create a broader democratic process in which documents were debated by selected spokespersons. They suggested that a larger Forum of signatories should take a more proactive role. This would spur the democratic process of decision-making within Charter 77. The impracticality of this suggestion was that any large meeting of Charter 77 signatories would be disbanded by the police. On the other side, as John Bok suggests, the increasing practicality of democratization of Charter 77 decision making process was important to better inform individual signatories. As he points out, many common signatories learned about Charter 77 actions from the police or abroad.<sup>65</sup>

The frustration of the younger generation was partially generated by the ghetto syndrome of Charter 77. The problems with accessibility to the Team, was in their opinion due, to the elitism of Charter 77 spokespersons nucleus which seemed to be inaccessible to the majority of signatories whom lived in parts of Czechoslovakia other than Prague. Martin Palouš identifies this problem as follows:

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with Jan Štern. *op.cit.* "dopisy vedení nebyly dost".

<sup>65</sup> Interview with John Bok. *op.cit.*



On one side of the generation problem were the 'founding fathers' of parallel community, well known and experienced dissidents.... The bastion of this group of signatories was, for well known reasons, Prague. Here Charter 77 began and was able to survive ... in Prague almost all decisions were made regarding 'parallel communities'.<sup>66</sup>

He continues that in Prague, Charter 77 signatories were able to make contacts with foreign diplomats and journalists. Furthermore, due to their interactions they were more visible than others. They formulated most of Charter 77's future decisions and documents. The majority of Charter 77 spokespersons were selected from Prague signatories.

On the other side, Martin Palouš continues,

were signatories from the second surge, whose major problems were - if we disregard their repressions by the Government institutions, that were many times harder against those 'unknown soldiers' than prominent dissidents - insufficient communication, ..., problems to obtain financial and information support and to become an active part of decision making process.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Martin Palouš. "Poznámky ke generačním sporům v Chartě 77 v druhé polovině osmdesátých let". In *Dvě desetiletí před listopadem 89: Sborník. Ústav pro Soudobé Dějiny AV ČR: MAXDORF. 1993. p.40. "Na jedné straně generačního problému stáli 'otcové-zakladatelé' paralelní polis, zavedení zkušení disidenti.... Z pochopitelných důvodů baštou této skupiny signatářů byla Praha. Zde Charta vznikla a zde byla schopna přežít.... V Praze se rozhodovalo prakticky o všech věcech 'paralelní polis'."*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* p. 40. "... zde byli signatáři druhé vlny, jejich hlavním problémem - pomineleme-li represivní akce režimu, které byly často tvrdčí vůči těmto 'neznámým vojínům' než vůči disidentským prominentům - byla neostatečná komunikace, ..., ba nemožnost proniknout ke zdrojům (informačním či finančním) a zapojit se uvnitř Charty do procesu rozhodování."

He concludes that the majority of those who belonged to the second generation of Charter 77 were the newer representatives of the underground. Their importance was in their abilities to distribute and to reproduce Charter 77 documents. Politically, their main focus was on the democratization of Charter 77 and "if the first group was stubborn enough to repeat over and over again Patočka's ideas, then the second group focused more vigorously on Benda's arguments."<sup>68</sup> They saw the future of Charter 77 as greater politicization of its actions, which in their belief, should have a greater impact on political maturation of the so called grey zone of the Czechoslovak population: people who were not politically active and who did not belong to any political trend.

The public's access to Charter 77 was problematic, due to police repressions. All larger Charter 77's gatherings would be disbanded by the police. If the elitism of a few was a problem for Charter 77, it was not due to choice but rather to the oppressive situation in which Charter 77 remained. It was technically impossible to open Charter 77 meetings to a large group of people; therefore the process of decision making seemed to be undemocratic. Petruška Šustrová stresses that Charter 77 "was not a democratic institution which would democratically make decisions, that was technically impossible."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p.40. "Jestliže první skupina byla náchylná opakovat stále dokola argumenty patočkovské provenience, ve druhé skupině stále častěji a silněji zaznívaly argumenty Bendovy."

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Petruška Šustrová, *op.cit.* "Nešlo o demokratickou instituci která by demokraticky rozhodovala. To prostě technicky nešlo."

Prague, as the capital city of Czechoslovakia, was the centre of any kind of political or cultural activities. In Prague it was easier for the signatories to meet in small circles and to make contact with foreign journalists or politicians. It was obvious that the foreign journalists or politicians contacted those dissidents who were, in their opinions, more politically active or visible. Due to the Western media attention on Charter 77 spokespersons, it was the practice of the West to contact only them when obtaining information regarding Charter 77 activities.

Regarding the accessibility of Charter 77's Team, Václav Trojan recalled, that people who wanted to get access to the Charter 77 Core could find it even though the police did everything to discourage them.<sup>70</sup> Similarly other signatories shared his opinions. They believed that the isolation of others was mainly due to the signatories' problems of travel to and from Prague. The police actions prevented travel for signatories outside of Prague and, even when in Prague, not all of them were able to get to their final destination. Furthermore, some signatories believed that the problem was in certain signatories' unwillingness to get involved in the decision making process.

The response to the 'Letter of Forty' was more positive than negative. Havel recognized the needs of the younger generation and Charter 77 involvement in public activities. Charter 77 became more politically proactive than in past years. Although still proclaiming its non-political policies, the confrontation

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with Václav Trojan on August 15, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik.

between the younger generation and the older, well established dissidents revolutionized Charter 77 further activities. Charter 77 became more visible and began to organize activities open to the general public.

The first public activity with police supervision occurred during the commemoration of Tomáš Masaryk's<sup>71</sup> death in 1987. About 60 signatories were present in Láň. During the Fall of 1987 Charter 77 organized the first Forum of Charter 77 which was held in Landronka, one of Prague's beer-houses. About 60 to 70 signatories were present at this Forum. They decided to hold a public demonstration on December 10, 1987 at Staroměstské náměstí (The Old Town Square) to commemorate the Day of Human Rights. On December 2, 1987 Charter 77 informed the mass media and the Government about its intention to hold a demonstration. About 2,000 to 3,000 signatories and ordinary citizens attended the demonstration shouting "Charter, Charter" <sup>72</sup> Interestingly, the participants were not brutally attacked by police.

In addition to the politicization of Charter 77, during 1988 various parallel organizations to Charter 77 were established. The founding members of these organizations were mainly composed of Charter 77 signatories. The reason for their establishment was that they could function outside of Charter 77 in order to

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<sup>71</sup> Tomáš G. Masaryk was the first President of democratic Czechoslovakia which ended with the Communist takeover in 1948.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Jan Štern. *op.cit.*

deal with the political issues that Charter 77 was not competent to deal with. In April 1988 they established the Independent Peace Association - Initiative for the Demilitarization of Society.<sup>73</sup> Charter 77 signatories were represented, among others, by Jan Svoboda, Hana Marvanová, Jan Chudomeš, Ruth Šormová. Jan Štern states that they were mainly representatives of the younger generation, more militant and proactive than their elders. Their first major event, organized together with Charter 77 on August 21, 1988, was a commemoration in memory of the Eastern Bloc invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, which ended her liberation process. About 10,000 people attended the demonstration.<sup>74</sup> The surge of the protests and the growing number of those who attended were clear indications that the Czechoslovak population was ready to act.

Another major association which was founded as a direct response to the younger generation's criticism of Charter 77 non-political policy was Movement for Civic Freedom (HOS).<sup>75</sup> HOS was founded in October 1988. The main instigators were Václav Benda, Jan Štern, Rudolf Battěk, Jaroslav Šabata and Radim Palouš. HOS was, according to Jan Štern, a reaction to needs for greater political activity that could not be delivered by Charter 77. It has

... declared and defined political character [političnost]. Whereas

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<sup>73</sup> Nezávislé mírové sdružení - iniciativa za demilitarizaci společnosti.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Jan Štern. *op.cit.*

<sup>75</sup> Hnutí za občanskou svobodu.

Charter 77 represented a linking of individuals with different ideas and orientations. HOS attempts to group together citizens on the basis of certain fundamental principles: Democracy, pluralism, tolerance and personal and social freedom, thus clearly qualifying itself as a political grouping.<sup>76</sup>

Jan Štern says about HOS that it had "a political program of democratic opposition that for the first time publicly expressed a demand to abolish the ruling position of the [Communist] Party with the requirement of pluralistic democracy"<sup>77</sup> The HOS political program was stated in its first declaration called 'Democracy for All'.<sup>78</sup> HOS and the other organizations, founded from Charter 77 signatories, were intended to satisfy the needs of Charter 77's younger generation as well as of those who saw the need for political and public activities. The establishing of these new associations would prevent possible conflict among signatories and ease the pressure to politicize Charter 77, which would violate its pluralistic platform.

The negative aspect of Charter 77 political and democratic maturation was in the growing departure of some Eurocommunists from Charter 77 active life.

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<sup>76</sup> H. Gordon Skilling and Paul Wilson ed., *Civic Freedom in Central Europe: Voices from Czechoslovakia*. St. Martin's Press: New York, 1991. pp. 19-20.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Jan Štern. *op.cit.* "První politický program demokratické opozice, kde byla jaksí poprvé veřejně vyslovena žádost zrušit jakoukoliv vedoucí úlohu strany a požadavek pluralitní demokracie."

<sup>78</sup> Democracy for All. For more information see H. Gordon Skilling and Paul Wilson ed., *Civic Freedom in Central Europe: Voices from Czechoslovakia*. St. Martin's Press: New York, 1991. And Růžena Hlušíčková and Blanka Císařovská. *Hnutí za občanskou svobodu 1988-1989: Sborník dokumentů. Ústav pro Soudobé Dějiny AV ČR. MAXDORF: Praha, 1994.*

They did not retract their support of Charter 77 declarations, but limited their physical involvement, due to some Charter 77 signatories refusal of dialogue with the Government. The dialogue, never fully rejected by Charter 77, was adopted by other associations that did not reject Socialist ideas of a new Czechoslovak society.<sup>79</sup> The growing focus on political ideology by some signatories resulted in increasing direct challenges to government rather than only anti-political policies of constructive dialogue.

Even more changes unfolded in 1989. The show down among anti-Communist forces within the Eastern Bloc countries could not occur without having major impacts on Czechoslovakia<sup>80</sup>. Charter 77 had to escalate its activity to cope with the coming political changes in Czechoslovakia. As one of the major opposition forces, Charter 77 had to prepare itself for the possible disintegration of Communist power and the resurrection of Democracy in Czechoslovakia. The

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<sup>79</sup> One major association which inclination toward Socialism was Obroda, established at the beginning of 1989, but the preparation to organize Obroda had started already in at the end of 1988.

<sup>80</sup> The growing popularity of Solidarity in Poland during 1989 led to the negotiations between the Polish Government and Solidarity about the political future of Poland. The Czechoslovak citizens could not notice these negotiations. The political changes in Poland signaled a possibility for similar political changes in Czechoslovakia. The major impact on Czechoslovak citizens had the political changes in Eastern Germany. The East German citizens' dissatisfaction with the travel restrictions to the West led, during the late 1989, to the influx of East Germans to Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The East German citizens who wished to emigrate to West Germany occupied the West German embassy in Prague. To solve the problem, the Czechoslovak Government had no another choice than open its borders with West Germany for the East Germans only. Similarly, Hungary opened its borders with Austria. The East Germans' influx to the West Germany led to the negotiations between East and West Germanies and later to the collapse of the East German Government. The result was the destruction of Berlin Wall and the unification of both Germanies.

importance of new Charter 77 activities was insured by its ability to take advantage of these opportunities.



## Chapter II

### Succession

1989

#### Prelude

Political antagonism between the Communist governments and the citizens of Eastern Europe was abated by 1989. The increasing pressure from the masses and from within Government ranks had developed into a political crisis which had brought the downfall of Communist regimes in Poland, East Germany, Hungary and other East European countries. Regimes, that were once proclaimed by V.I. Lenin and Karl Marx as an enviable and certain replacement of the dying Capitalism, were slowly collapsing and dying, later to be replaced, paradoxically, by its adversary, Capitalism. The founders of Communism never envisioned that Communism, after many years of continuity, would be destroyed from within.

In Czechoslovakia, the defeat of Communism was slowly gaining speed, but compared to other Communist countries, the possibility of a fundamental change

in the basic practices of Communism seemed to remain very remote. The return of Czechoslovak Government's repressive approach towards anti-Government actions was a major reason for some independent public associations, such as Charter 77 and OBRODA, to reject mass demonstrations during 1989. This contrasts strongly with the year of 1988, during which the Czechoslovak Government relaxed its oppression of independent associations. Increasing pressure against anti-Government activities seemed to be a last weapon that could help to retain Communist supremacy in Czechoslovakia. During 1989, compared to 1988, the Communists Party lost its vision of supremacy. The possibility to satisfy Czechoslovak citizens by introducing political changes that would guarantee the Communist predominance was lost. In addition, the Czechoslovak Communists realized that they could not count on Soviet help in saving their position, as the Soviet Government did in 1968. The Communist regime believed that the continuous suppression of freedom would discourage ordinary citizens from expressing their anti-Government stands and would also put pressure on independent public associations to refrain from any kind of public demonstrations. The Government's studied actions were, in a sense, an attempt to avoid similar situations as in the Eastern Bloc, but the momentum towards Communism's downfall was irreversible.

During the last months of Communist rule in Czechoslovakia, Charter 77 and its signatories played a vital role in dissolving the power of the Communist reign. Damned in 1977 for its beliefs, Charter 77 was able to survive and to see the

end of the system which was, after the Russian October Revolution, claimed to be immortal. In 1977 the Czechoslovak magazine Život Strany published an article stating:

To the authors of so called charter and its initiators I as a worker and Communist would like to say only this: We have nothing to be ashamed of. Against your association with lies and reactionaries stands our truth, our euphoric socialist presence. Lead by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, together with our most loyal friend, the Soviet Union and its Communist Party, we will continue to build Socialism and we will protect it against all its enemies.<sup>81</sup>

The future had not endorsed his vision, nor the vision of others who believed in the Socialist system as presented by the Soviet Union and its satellite countries. At the end, the critics, who accused Charter 77 of lies, were vanquished by Charter 77's truth.

Anti-Government activities prior to 1989 tested the development of a new approach in dealing with the Government organizations and determined how to direct and organize further anti-Government actions. The growing number of new anti-Government associations, founded both by the signatories of Charter 77 or independently, needed to define a common language amongst each other

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<sup>81</sup> Miroslav Fiala. "Bojovněji v ideologické práci". *Život strany*. Vol. 1977, No. 3, January 31, 1977, p.5. "Na adresu autorů tzv. charty a jejich iniciátorů bych chtěl jako dělník a komunista říci tolik: nemáme se zač stydět. Proti vašemu spojení se lží a reakcí stojí naše pravda, naše šťastná socialistická součinnost. Vedeni Komunistickou stranou Československa, spolu s naším nejvěrnějším přítelem Sovětským Svazem a jeho komunistickou stranou budeme dále budovat socialismus a uchráníme jej před všemi nepřáteli".

and to coordinate anti-Government actions together. These two aspects of cooperation among individual anti-Government associations was important in protecting them from retaliation by Government organizations.

The growing anti-Government unrest in Poland, East Germany, Hungary and other Eastern Bloc countries during the years 1988-1989 played another important role for anti-Government activities in Czechoslovakia. The political changes that destabilized Communist power within East Europe and the introduction of a new political trend in the Soviet Union encouraged anti-Government associations in Czechoslovakia to take a vigorous role in pressing for reforms. The various Government organizations such as the Public Police and the Government Police acceptance of a growing political unrest during 1988, led to the belief that increasing public pressure towards the Government was an effective means to enforce political changes. The combination of events encouraged the Czechoslovak citizens to present openly their dissatisfaction with the one-party political system in Czechoslovakia.

During 1989, five major events significantly influenced Charter 77 development: (1) some Charter 77 signatories grouped together with other independent public associations to support political rallies and put persistent pressure on the Government institutions, although these public demonstrations themselves were not endorsed by Charter 77; (2) the establishment of a new independent

association OBRODA<sup>82</sup> by ex-Communists, some of whom were signatories of Charter 77; (3) Charter 77's new policy of supporting public demonstrations starting with a public rally on October 28, 1989 commemorating the founding of Czechoslovakia; (4) Charter 77 signatories' involvement during November 17, 1989 students' rally; and (5) Charter 77's involvement during the Velvet Revolution.

The end of 1989 found Charter 77 in the spotlight of a newly developing democratic political system in Czechoslovakia. Some of the Charter 77 signatories became involved in the Civic Forum<sup>83</sup> and therefore were involved in the political decision-making process, which influenced the future political system of Czechoslovakia. On the other side Charter 77 had to protect itself more and more from attacks by some members of Czechoslovak public who tried to erode Charter 77, by pointing out that many ex-Communists were Charter 77 signatories and held spokespersons' positions. This fact raised the question of Charter 77's ideological purity and loyalty to its roots. At the end of 1989 and later, the new democratic openness, which created the ability to question Charter 77's political legitimacy, became the bases for growing political attacks against Charter 77

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<sup>82</sup> Revival. A Club for Socialist reconstruction.

<sup>83</sup> Civic Forum (Občanské Fórum) was formed shortly after the mass demonstration on November 17, 1989

## OBRODA

Gorbachev's policy of Glasnost in the Soviet Union created hope to reform the Communist system in Czechoslovakia without the destruction of the Czechoslovak Socialist system. To accomplish this task some ex-Communists, mainly the Eurocommunists, decided at the end of 1988 to establish a new independent initiative OBRODA (Revival. A Club for Socialist Restructuring).<sup>84</sup> OBRODA began to fully function in February 1989.

Miloš Hájek, spokesperson of Charter 77 and former chairman of OBRODA, characterizes OBRODA in his interview as an association, that

was formed from ex-Communists initiative with a program of Perestroika.... It was based on an idea that the official leadership supports the idea [of Perestroika] but does nothing for it... and that it will be hard to persecute them [for their activity].... They wanted to create an opening for legal activity<sup>85</sup>

OBRODA's main aim was both to revive and to continue or strengthen the process of 1968. They believed that there was a possibility of reforming the Communist regime of Czechoslovakia and to introduce a Socialist system based on democratic principles in which the former Communists would play an

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<sup>84</sup> The Czech word *obroda* can be translated to English as Revival

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Miloš Hájek. *op.cit.* "ustanovena z bývalých komunistů s programem Perestrojky.... vycházeli z myšlenky že oficiální moc se k myšlence hlásí ale nic pro ni nedělá ... a že bude těžké je (pro jejich činnost) perzekuovat.... Chtěli dobýt prostor pro legální činnost."

important role.<sup>86</sup> During 1989 OBRODA was in close contact with Communist officials and had open meetings with some members of ÚV KSČ<sup>87</sup>, during which OBRODA's members suggested, that OBRODA and Communist Party of Czechoslovakia could work "together on a new program: a bilateral return to the Action Program<sup>88</sup> of 1968."<sup>89</sup> But, due to OBRODA's rivalry with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak Government rejected any kind of cooperation with OBRODA.

The founding of OBRODA was not only important for forming a future political structure of Czechoslovakia during 1989 and after, but for Charter 77 as well. For Charter 77, the establishing of OBRODA was important because some of Charter 77 ex-Communist signatories were the founding fathers of OBRODA. Benda in an interview suggested that "OBRODA is exclusively a movement of the ex-Communists with a few exceptions ... [but] not all 68'rs became members of OBRODA."<sup>90</sup> The ex-Communists made up 80% of the membership and about

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<sup>86</sup> Interview with Václav Trojan. *op.cit.*

<sup>87</sup> The Central Committee of The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

<sup>88</sup> The Action Program of the Communist Party was created in 1968, prior the August invasion, and outlined the program for democratization of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovak society as whole.

<sup>89</sup> Milan Otáhal. *Opozice. op.cit.* p. 68. "

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Václav Benda. *op.cit.* "Obroda je výlučně ex-Komunistické hnutí kromě nějakých výjimek ..., ne všichni osmašedesátníci z Charty vstoupili do Obrody."

40% were Charter 77 signatories.<sup>91</sup>

OBRODA, similar to Charter 77, preferred communication with the Czechoslovak Government, rather than a direct use of public rallies as a pressure medium.

Charter 77's non-political policy called for reform of the Socialist system rather than for its destruction. Reformation was in agreement with OBRODA's position.

By supporting similar means both associations could make parallel decisions. Also, it did not exclude ex-Communists from belonging to both associations at the same time.

The influence of the ex-Communist signatories, who could be biased by their membership in OBRODA, is illustrated by Charter 77 criticism and rejection of any kind of public rallies which would directly attack the structure of the Communist system in Czechoslovakia. OBRODA's members could not directly support any activity that would be aimed towards the destruction of Socialism or would suggest substitution of Socialism with another political system. Therefore it appears to be accurate to suggest that ex-Communists would influence Charter 77 decision-making and tried to swing it toward the policies that would be in an agreement with OBRODA's own political approach.

Although the ex-Communists (signatories of Charter 77) had full rights to organize themselves in other associations outside of Charter 77 as many

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with Miloš Hájek. *op.cit.*



non-Communist signatories did<sup>92</sup>, for Charter 77 their affiliation with OBRODA was not only problematic prior to 1989 but more so after the November Velvet Revolution. Václav Benda characterizes this problem by stating:

Mainly OBRODA was for us extremely problematic because of her direction [pro-socialist]. This is now [after 1989] perceived as a secret negotiation with the regime.<sup>93</sup>

The political changes after 1989 brought criticism of Charter 77 from the general public that until then saw Charter 77 as the foremost opposition force of the Czechoslovak Communist regime. Prior to 1989 Charter 77 connections with the former Communists did not play a major role. After 1989 the relationship opened a way for attacks from the previously silent majority, which did not openly oppose Communist supremacy. Furthermore, questions of some signatories having possibly cooperated with the former Communist regime were raised. Charter 77 - OBRODA connections played a vital role after November 1989, when Charter 77 was criticized by the Czechoslovak public for its close connections with ex-Communists.

During Charter 77 decision process, the Charter 77 ex-Communists signatories' connections with OBRODA created mistrust between the ex-Communists and

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<sup>92</sup> Interview with Petruška Šustrová. *op.cit.*

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Václav Benda. *op.cit.* "Zvláště ta Obroda byla pro nás jaksí krajně problematická, protože ten proud [pro-socialismus], protože to se teď [po roce 1989] vyčítá tajné domlouvání s režimem."

non-Communists signatories. This mistrust and the ex-Communists direct influence upon Charter 77 (some of the ex-Communists participated in the Team of Charter 77 Signatories) negatively influenced Charter 77 directions during 1989. Their influence had a negative impact on Charter 77 reform policy toward the public demonstrations and its approach towards other political issues which were not supported by some ex-Communist signatories.

### **Charter 77 Philosophy and the Mass Movement in Czechoslovakia**

The year 1988 ended with a public rally on December 10, 1988 commemorating Human Rights in Prague. The rally was organized by Charter 77 together with Children of Bohemia, VONS, HOS and Independent Peace Association.<sup>94</sup> The number of participants, according to the Czechoslovak Press Association, was 1,800. Other estimates were as low as 1,500 and as high as 15,000.<sup>95</sup> The number of people who participated is not significant; however the fact that people demonstrated their beliefs without major governmental reprisals was crucial.

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<sup>94</sup> Children of Bohemia (České Děti) - founded in May 1988 with an objective to restore the Bohemian Kingdom, protect nature and a total reconstruction of economy; VONS ( Výbor na obranu nespravedlivě stíhaných) Committee for the Defence of Unjustly Prosecuted - founded in 1978 as a respond to protect those who were unjustly prosecuted or persecuted by the Czechoslovak government organizations; HOS (Hnutí za občanskou svobodu) Movement for Civic Freedom - founded in October 1988 with an objective to promote pluralism and freedom; Independent Peace Association (Nezávislé mírové sdružení) - founded in April 1988 with an objective to pursue peace among various societies.

<sup>95</sup> "Setkání ke dni lidských práv. 10. prosince 1988, Praha, Škroupovo náměstí". *INFOCH* (Informace o Chartě). Vol. XI, No. 21. December 15, 1988. p. 4.

The lack of retaliation against the participants in the December 10, 1988 demonstration was due to a shift in police behaviour :

The gathering and departure [of participants] from the plaza was without any kind of incident, VB [Public Police] presence on the plaza was nonexistent, only among the crowd was a large number of plain-clothed StB [State Police]. But on the surrounding street there was an extensive number of VB with dogs, ready.

The non-militant approach of police and the uncharacteristic permission of the demonstration by the Prague 3 ONV (District National Committee) signalled changes in the Czechoslovak government's attitude toward independent public associations:

It is a public belief, that government institutions resignation toward the independent public associations meetings is a significant change in the state approach toward the independent associations. Although this does not mean the absolute legitimization of these initiatives, the Government accepted - publicly in the Mass Media - that independent associations exist in this country and that it is ready, in certain ways, to negotiate with them and their partners.<sup>96</sup>

The growth of public rallies in 1988 was a prelude to the public demonstrations of 1989. The non-violent approach toward the anti-Government associations by

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4. "Setkání i odchod z náměstí proběhly bez jakéhokoliv incidentu. VB na náměstí přítomna nebyla, v davu byl větší počet příslušníků StB v civilu. V okolních ulicích byla však připravena silná hotovost VB včetně psů." "Všeobecně se soudí, že ústup orgánů státní moci ve věci nezávislého občanského setkání je velmi významnou změnou v postoji státu k nezávislým iniciativám. I když nejde zdaleka o plnou legalizaci těchto iniciativ, státní moc uznala - navíc veřejně ve zdělovacích prostředcích - že nezávislé skupiny v této zemi existují a že je ochotna, za určitých předpokladů, s nimi jednat jako s partnery."

the Communist institutions, during the December 10, 1988 demonstration, signalled an opportunity to increase protests during 1989. An increasing number of common citizens' participation during rallies organized by these organizations indicated public support. Furthermore it legitimized some Charter 77 signatories' growing demands for a more militant approach towards Czechoslovak authorities.

The first major activity in 1989 endorsed by Charter 77 and other independent public associations commemorated the tragic death of a student, Jan Palach.<sup>97</sup> The combined effort of various associations publicly announced that they would lay wreaths and flowers at the statue of St. Wenceslas (Václavské náměstí) on Sunday January 15, 1989, but none of them called for a public rally in the Wenceslas Square. The police intervention against the representatives of independent associations turned the peaceful actions to a mass demonstration.

The militant action of Czechoslovak police against the representatives of the various associations and against the public resulted in what came to be known as Palach's week. Palach's week was a continuous demonstration of the Czechoslovak people at Wenceslas Square. The importance of Palach's week is in the fact that the rallies by Czechoslovak citizens were not organized or

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<sup>97</sup> Jan Palach (\*11.8.1948) was a student of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Charles University in Prague. On January 16, 1969 in the protest of 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union and the five armies of the Warsaw Pact, Jan Palach tried to take his own life by setting fire to himself. He died later on January 19, 1969, of his burns. Due to his tragic death, Jan Palach became the symbol of anti-communist struggle in Czechoslovakia. During the following years Czechoslovak authorities tried to suppress any kind of commemoration of his death.

called for by Charter 77 or other associations, but were based solely on public spontaneity:

The Monday, January 16, 1989 rally was a spontaneous reaction of the public. It was the kind of reaction 'now and here' toward the police action and imprisonment of independent associations representatives who wanted to lay flowers at the statue of St. Wenceslas. Neither the meetings during the following days of Palach's week were organized or called, people, somehow, began to meet everyday after 4 p.m. at the Wenceslas Square in hope that 'something will happen'. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday [January 17, 18 and 19] during the meetings people chanted on the Wenceslas Square 'Tomorrow here again' which was a call for repeating the demonstration that flowed freely from the gathering citizens....<sup>98</sup>

The public rallies that demonstrated dissatisfaction with the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia put pressure on the independent public associations, including Charter 77. The public needed to know their stand regarding the public demonstrations. As well the public wished to be informed about future actions. The independent public associations needed to develop a similar approach toward the public and to inform them if they were willing to support the public demonstration and to help organize them.

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<sup>98</sup> Oldřich Tůma. *Zítřka zase tady: Protirežimní demonstrace v předlistopadové Praze jako politický a sociální fenomén*. Ústav pro soudobé Dějiny AV ČR: Prague, 1994. p. 11. "Demonstrace v pondělí 16. ledna 1989 byla zcela spontánní reakcí veřejnosti, reakcí typu 'ted' a tady' na policejní zákrok a zadržení představitelů nezávislých skupin, kteří chtěli položit květiny k soše sv. Václava. Ani schromáždění na další dny Palachova týdne nebyla nijak organizována a svolávána, lidé se prostě vždy po 16. hodině začali na Václavském náměstí schromažďovat v očekávání, že se 'něco bude dít'. V úterý, ve středu i ve čtvrtek [t.j. 17., 18., 19., ledna] se ovšem vždy na Václavském náměstí skandovalo ono 'Zítřka zase tady' a výzvy k opakování demonstrací vycházely jakoby samovolně přímo od shromažďovaných občanů...."

For Charter 77 the proactive technique was a continuous dilemma. The original non-political policy worked against any kind of organized political public demonstrations directed toward the Communist regime. Although in 1988, Charter 77 developed a more proactive role, in response to the new generation's demands, in 1989 it seemed to begin to swing back towards Charter 77's former dialogue approach. One possible explanation for Charter 77's changing attitude was the Eurocommunists pressure on Charter 77's decision-making process.

Charter 77 expressed its disapproval of public demonstrations commemorating the Warsaw Pact invasion on August 21, 1968.<sup>99</sup> In its approach, Charter 77 called for a dialogue with the Government representatives. Charter 77's call for a dialogue was supported by some organizations such as OBRODA and John Lennon's Club. On the contrary, the more militant groups such as HOS and Democratic Initiative<sup>100</sup> supported open public demonstrations. The two different opinions not only created problems among Charter 77 conservative signatories and the younger generation, but also between the various independent public associations as well.

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<sup>99</sup> On August 21, 1968 armies of the Soviet Union and the armies of the five members of the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia to interrupt so called contra-revolution and put the end to Prague Spring. This intervention was rejected by the majority of Czechoslovak citizens and it was followed in the repression of political freedom in Czechoslovakia.

<sup>100</sup> The Democratic Initiative (Demokratická iniciativa), founded in September 1987 on the bases of Masaryk's traditional liberal-democratic beliefs. In its program, the Democratic Initiative called for a discontinuity of censorship, plural society, etc. In September 1989 it changed its name to Czechoslovak Democratic Initiative and declared itself as a political party which program supported a marked economy and the establishment democratic-pluralistic society. The major initiators of the Democratic Initiative were Emanuel Mandler, Karel Štindel, Bohumil Doležal and Martin Litomický.

When preparing the commemoration of the August invasion, the two fractions could not find similar approaches when informing the public regarding the upcoming activities. On the one side were the more radical associations, Democratic Initiative, HOS and T. G. Masaryk's Club which in their proclamation on August 9, 1989 called for an open public demonstration in the Prague centre.<sup>101</sup> In opposition was a group of independent public associations represented by Charter 77, John Lennon's Club and Independent Peace Association that, in their own proclamation dated on August 10, 1989, stated their opinions against any kind of public manifestation:

We have to accept that even during this year many people will try to define their approach how to demonstrate their disagreement with the situation in our homeland. The regime knows exactly the same, and it is ready - as is visible from the increasing campaigns - to act against any kind of disloyalty and to develop open aggression. Charter 77 and other independent association has fostered an idea to call for and to organize public protest in the streets. We do not want and we cannot demand these kind of actions, which would endanger the safety of citizens.<sup>102</sup>

Their solution was a dialogue with the regime using petitions that outlined the dissatisfactions of Czechoslovak citizens towards the Czechoslovak

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<sup>101</sup> Milan Otáhal. *Opozice. op. cit.* pp. 71-72.

<sup>102</sup> "Slovo k srpnovému výročí". *INFOCH* (Informace o Chartě). Vol. 89, No.16. August 10, 1989. p. 3. "Musíme tedy očekávat, že i letos budou mnozí lidé hledat svůj výraz pro nesouhlas a poměry, které u nás panují. Totéž ovšem ví i mocenské vedení a chystá zase - jak nasvědčuje vystupňovaná kampaň - proti takovým projevům zasáhnout a vyvolat otevřenou konfrontaci. Chartě 77 a dalším nezávislým iniciativám se podsouvá úmysl svolavat a organizovat občanský odpor v ulicích. Nechceme však a ani nemůžeme vybízet k takovým akcím, které by za dané situace ohrožily bezpečnost občanů."

Government's denunciation of the August anniversary. In addition, Václav Havel saw the non-militant dialogue approach as a technique that would avoid any bloody confrontation with the Czechoslovak authorities. Havel feared that the public demonstrations would give the Czechoslovak institutions a reason to destroy the independent associations.<sup>103</sup> The collaborative language of independent initiatives, outlining one method of anti-Government approach as acceptable, would diffuse the confusion among the Czechoslovak population..

Charter 77's unwillingness to get directly involved during the August demonstration is characterized by the statement of one of Charter 77 signatories: "Chartists are surprised that something [the demonstration] is happening". The demonstration, according to John Bok "outflanked Charter [77]".<sup>104</sup> Charter 77 was represented during the demonstration only by individual signatories, who saw their representation as a personal issue. The criticism of Charter 77 non-involvement policy that followed led to a reevaluation of Charter 77 as an association and its stance on supporting anti-Government public demonstrations. This sparked discussions among the signatories "whether to demonstrate or not".<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Milan Otáhal. *Opozice. op.cit.* p. 71.

<sup>104</sup> Interview with John Bok. *op.cit.* "mnozí chartisté koukají že se něco dělá": "Chartu zaskočila".

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* "jestli demonstrovat nebo ne"



Emanuel Mandler, a representative of the Democratic Initiative, expressed his opinion regarding the needs and problems of cooperation among various independent associations in his interview with Milan Otáhal and Zdeněk Sládek:

Since the Spring 1989 there were disagreements if we should demonstrate or not. I do not think that this stance during the disagreements reflected political beliefs of individual persons. It reflected, how the individuals were able to judge a particular situation and what their private situation was.

When presenting his opinion regarding Václav Havel's readiness to cooperate with the Democratic Initiative he points out that:

At the time [October 1989] we thought that we knew how to approach [the political situation in Czechoslovakia]. Firstly, that we had to make contact with other associations and to cooperate with them. When [Václav] Havel had returned from prison, me and [Bohumil] Doležal had visited him twice. We brought him our program. The important fact was that Havel did not want to communicate with us. Correctly stated, he did not make time for us.

Emanuel Mandler sees Václav Havel's refusal to communicate, in the light of Havel's anti-political policy:

That is what seemed to be the major disagreement.... The only people with whom we could communicate were [Ladislav] Lis and [Rudolf] Battěk from HOS. Battěk after a consultation with Havel discontinued any significant contacts [with us]. At the end we discontinued any intentions to establish a political opposition. It would have purpose only if we were under an umbrella organized by all associations that had actual political significance, that meant

beside us and HOS. Charter 77 and Independent Peace Association.

Regarding the cooperation among the dissent groups, Mandler concludes that "... all dissidents were at that time very careful and smart to know that to organize a political opposition at the end of October 1989 is premature". Furthermore, Mandler points out that due to Charter 77's non-political activities the Democratic Initiative realized that cooperation with Charter 77 was impossible.<sup>106</sup>

Although the Charter 77 cooperation with other associations was minimal until after November 17, 1989, Charter 77 decided to support the October 1989 public rally. The sudden change in Charter 77 policy could stem from to the criticism of Charter 77 and the discussions among the leading signatories, who together with Václav Havel, believed that Charter 77 must become more aggressively involved among the general public. Charter 77 as a leading dissident force

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<sup>106</sup> *Deset pražských dnů: 17.-27.listopad 1989, Documentace*. Akademia: Praha, 1990. pp. 614 - 16. "V roce 1989 bylo už od jara hodně sporů o tom, kdy jít a kdy nejit demonstrovat. Nemyslím si, že stanovisko v těchto sporech vždycky odpovídalo politickému postoji daného člověka. Odpovídalo také tomu, jak byl schopen posoudit danou situaci a ovšem jaká byla jeho situace osobní." "Tehdy nám bylo jasné jak postupovat. Především, že se musíme obracet na ostatní skupiny a spolupracovat s nimi. Když se vrátil Havel z vězení, byli jsme za ním s Doležalem dvakrát. Nešli jsme mu náš program. Rozhodující zřejmě bylo, že Havel s námi v podstatě odmítal mluvit, přesně řečeno neudělal si čas." "To byl, zdá se, základní rozpor.... Jedini, s kým jsme mohli komunikovat, byli Lis a Battěk z HOSu. Battěk pak po konzultaci s Havlem od závažnějších kontaktů ustoupil. Na konec jsme na pokusy o vytvoření politické opozice rezignovali. Měla by smysl jen tehdy, kdyby v jejím rámci spolupracovaly všechny organizace, jejichž činnost měla faktický politický význam, tzn. kromě HOSu a nás Charta 77 a Nezávislé mírové sdružení." "...vlastně všichni disidenti byli v té době prozíraví a moudří a věděli, že vytvářet politickou opozici koncem října 1989 je předčasné."

could play a major role during the political changes in Czechoslovakia only if it had the support of a vast majority of the population. To increase its popularity, Charter 77 had to become more visible by becoming involved in public rallies as an association, rather than be represented by individual signatories

Prior to the October 1989 demonstration Charter 77 together with other independent associations signed statements that called for a public demonstration to commemorate the anniversary of the establishment of The Czech Republic on October 28, 1918:

Charter 77 has no other alternative than to put emphasis on the Czechoslovak Constitution that guarantees to all citizens the Right of Assembling on public places and that all administrative efforts to intercept this right is unconstitutional and possible police efforts against this right are without reason and inexcusable.<sup>107</sup>

In addition Charter 77 together with other independent initiatives, HOS, Democratic Initiative, OBRODA and Independent Peace Association, published a document which called directly for a public demonstration:

As representatives of independent associations we suggest to all citizens, who want to commemorate the founding of our state independently of official activities, to do so by their presence on Wenceslas Square and other main squares associated with this

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<sup>107</sup> "Prohlášení Charty 77 k 28. říjnu 1989". *VIA Praha* (Informační servis Východoevropské Informační Agentury). No. 056/89. 24.10.1989. p. 12. "Chartě 77 za této situace nezbývá než znovu zdůraznit, že Ústava ČSSR zaručuje všem občanům právo svobodně se shromažďovat na veřejných místech a že všechny administrativní pokusy omezit toto právo jsou protiústavní a případné policejní zásahy proti jeho naplňování jsou bezdůvodné a ničím neobhajitelné."

date, on Saturday October 28 between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. . We believe that peaceful demonstration of independent-minded citizens can be best expressed on October 28th, in response to the present situation in our country, to ourselves and the rest of the World.<sup>108</sup>

Charter 77's change of perspective can be explained by the growing influence of the younger generation within Charter 77 and the Eurocommunists' changing attitude during the Charter 77 decision making process. In addition, the growing public protest in Eastern Germany and the other Eastern European countries was a stimulus for political activities.

The beliefs of the younger generation are reflected in Jan Ruml's statement, made after the August demonstration:

If we will hide in our flats, which the situation during repressions offers, there will never be a single independent magazine published, a single book that is now outlawed. And at the same time whenever the regime will need, and that can happen anytime, it can unbind hysteria of confrontation, and we will rather step aside, so we do not crisscross to some undefinable powerful fraction of leading party. Then we did everything for nothing, because today all of that has no demonstrative approach.... Yes, [people] are today beaten and imprisoned for everything.... Everything may be worse but we cannot step back. The small political work cannot neglect this situation. If we do not want to be only a self-oriented movement divorced from reality, it [the political work] must grow from the public climate and later bring back an

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* p.1. "Jako představitelé nezávislých iniciativ doporučujeme všem občanům, kteří si chtějí připomenout výročí vzniku našeho státu nezávisle na oficiálních akcích, aby tak učinili svoji přítomností na Václavském náměstí a hlavních náměstích souvisejících s tímto datem, v sobotu dne 28. října v době od 15 do 16 hodin. Domníváme se, že klidná a spořádaná přítomnost svobodomyslných občanů může být za dnešní situace tím nejvýmluvnějším slovem k 28. říjnu a současným poměrům v naší zemi, jež můžeme říci sobě navzájem i světu."

understanding of political articulation.<sup>109</sup>

His approach reflected the beliefs based on the assessment of the political situation in Czechoslovakia and the controversial situations among the various independent associations. The new proactive approach did not fully discredit Charter 77 ideas of dialogue and other non-militant approaches but called for a united front by all independent associations that should better reflect the increasingly militant atmosphere among the Czechoslovak public.

The need to continue peaceful dialogue with the Czechoslovak authorities reflected the inability of some independent associations to assess the changing political situation in Czechoslovakia effectively. Furthermore, it suggested that some independent associations believed, that although the system was changing, there would be a place for Socialism in which some Eurocommunists could play a political role. This conclusion was supported by the fact that one of the associations that strongly opposed any kind of demonstrations during 1989 was OBRODA. Charter 77 and HOS, both strongly influenced by Eurocommunists, were divided in their decisions to demonstrate (or not) prior

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<sup>109</sup> Jan Ruml in Sport. Vol. I. No. 3. September 1989 in Milan Otáhal. *Opozice. op.cit.* p.74. "Jestliže teď zalezeme do svých bytů, a situace obtěžkaná represemi takové jednoduché východisko nabízí, nevyjde tu jediný nezávislý časopis, jediná zakázaná knížka. A kdykoli se to bude režimu hodit, co může být skutečně kdykoliv, rozpoutá hysterii konfrontace, a my před ní raději ustoupíme, abychom nezkřížili cestu nějaké blíže nespecifikované násilné frakci ve vedení strany. To jsme pak všechno dělali zbytečně, protože dnes to nemá demonstrativní povahu ... Ano, bije se a zavírá se dnes už za všechno... Všechno to bude možná ještě dalko horší, ovšem ustoupit už nelze. Drobná politická práce nemůže tuto situaci pominout. Nechceme-li se stát pouze sobestředným, od reality odtrženým usilím, musí vyrůstat ze společenského klimatu a zpět se do něj vracet s rozhledem a přehledem politické artikulace."

October 1989.<sup>110</sup> For Charter 77, dealing with the unity problem was the most painful. Founded on the political pluralism of various signatories, Charter 77 had to define a new approach which would satisfy all of its political factions. At the same time it should fully reflect the changing political situation within the Eastern Bloc by supporting the public push for political changes in Czechoslovakia.

### November 1989

On November 17, 1989 Czechoslovak University students in Prague organized a mass demonstration to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the tragical death of a medical student Jan Opletal.<sup>111</sup> In their proclamation the students stated:

We do not want only to reverently remember the circumstances, but we also want to actively support the ideals of freedom and truth, for which the participants gave their lives. Even now these ideals are seriously endangered and we do not want to be humiliated by our university colleagues, who fifty years ago

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<sup>110</sup> Oldřich Tůma. *op.cit.* p. 39.

<sup>111</sup> Jan Opletal died on November 17, 1939 as a result of his deadly wounds which he suffered during the anti-German demonstration in Nazi occupied Prague on October 28, 1939. His funeral on November 17, 1939 had developed into a mass demonstration which led to: an execution of student representatives; a mass deportation of students to concentration camps; and the closure of Czech universities. Furthermore, November 17 was established as the International Students Day.

heroically presented their ideals.<sup>112</sup>

The planned student demonstration gave a new meaning to further protest movements. It directly addressed the Czechoslovak Government and came from the younger generation. This introduced to the anti-Communist movement a new factor which not only the Czechoslovak institutions had to negotiate with, but also the independent public association had to incorporate into their struggle.

The demonstration on November 17, 1989 commenced in the Prague district of Albertov and then slowly moved under the observation of the police towards the Wenceslas Square. University students were joined during their protests by ordinary Czechoslovak citizens and collegiate students. During their march they carried various banners and shouted: "Freedom! Masaryk! Charter! Havel! Dubček! We want a new government! We do not want a one party government!"<sup>113</sup> plus other chants. When the mass arrived on the National Avenue (Národní Třída), just before it could enter the lower part of the Wenceslas Square, the demonstrators were stopped by the anti-demonstration squad of the Ministry of Interior.

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<sup>112</sup> Deset pražských dnů. *op.cit.* p.15. "Nechceme jen pietně vzpomínat tehdejší tragické události, ale chceme se aktivně přihlásit k ideálům svobody a pravdy, za něž jejich účastníci obětovali své životy. Neboť i dnes jsou tyto ideály vážně ohroženy a my se nechceme dát zahambit svými vysokoškolskými kolegy, kteří za ně před 50 lety odvážně vystoupili."

<sup>113</sup> "Deset pražských dnů". *op.cit.* p.17. "Svobodu! Masaryk! Charta! Havel! Dubček! Chceme novou vládu! Nechceme vládu jedné strany!"

The demonstrators were surrounded by the police and then brutally attacked.

The documents regarding the demonstration vividly describe the horror of the police attack:

**19.42[hours]** - A police cordon at Voršila street. the crowd is hermetically sealed from both sides, the people are sitting down with their hands above their heads and shouting: 'We have empty hands! We do not want violence! We do not want China! Jakeš<sup>114</sup> to garbage! Jakeš' Gestapo!

**20.11** - The first calls for disband from a place from which it is impossible to escape, beating -sticks and dogs' threaten. people are singing the National Anthem.

The brutal attack against the demonstrators did not stop. but grew in its intensity:

**20.40** - The first jam from the direction of the National Theatre [Národní divadlo], people hitting cars, trying to sit down, but the members of the Ministry of Interior are kicking them, trampling on them, making small channels between the people to break the crowd into smaller groups and mercilessly and shamelessly beating them. for a moment they stop the pressure against each other. people have nowhere to go, they are asphyxiating, between them are children younger than fourteen or fifteen years of age. People are hit and does not matter where. the pressure is increasing, people are hysterically crying, screaming, some of them have no room to breath.... Many of them are able to escape to Mikulandská Street where they are met with more force. The powerless students from the Prague schools, mad by horror are running to apartment buildings and hiding themselves in surrounding apartments of strangers. The number [of students] in individual apartments is as high as 120. The people are helping

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<sup>114</sup> Miloš Jakeš was the General Secretary of Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee.



us.<sup>115</sup>

Many ordinary citizens together with youths were beaten and injured; some of them were arrested. On November 18, 1989 the students announced a one week long strike in response to the brutal attack against them.

The vicious attack of the forces of the Ministry of Interior sparked the continuous revolt against the Government, the so called Velvet Revolution. The students, who were the main force behind the mortal assault on the Communist regime, were in the following days slowly reinforced in the struggle by members of various independent public associations. The crucial question in Charter 77 history is: What was Charter 77's role prior to and during the events of November 17, 1989 and shortly after?

Charter 77's attitude toward November 17, 1989 students' demonstration is reflected not only by its chronic political and ideological fragmentation that was fluctuating between its idea of supporting or not supporting public rallies, but

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* p.18. "19.42 - Kordon u Voršilské ulice, dav je uzavřen neprodyšně z obou stran lidé si sedají s rukama nad hlavou a volají: 'Máme holé ruce! Nechceme násilí! Nechceme Činu! Jakeše do koše! Jakešovo gestapo! 20.11 - První výzvy k rozchodu z prostoru, ze kterého nelze uniknout, vyhrožují obušky a psy, lidé spívají hymnu. 20.40 - První velký tlak směrem od Národního divadla, lidé narážejí do aut, pokoušejí si sedat, ale pořádkové síly do nich na zemi kopou, dupou po nich, dělají si mezi lidma uličky, kterými dav zmenšují a nemilosrdně a hanebně mlátí, vždy na chvíli tlačit přestanou, proti sobě, lidé nemají kam jít, dusí se, jsou mezi nimi i děti, kterým ještě nebylo ani čtrnáct, či patnáct let. Lidé jsou bítí hlava nehlava, tlak síly, lidé hystericky brečí, knčí, mnozí nemají prostor na dýchání.... Mnohým se daří uniknout do Mikulandské, ale na jejím konci na ně samozřejmě čeká další jednotka. Bezbranní studenti ze všech pražských škol, šíleni strachem utíkají do domů a schovávají se v okolních bytech u úplně cizích lidí. Počet v jednotlivých bytech je různý, až 120. Lidé nám pomáhají."

also the fragmentation of all independent movements in Czechoslovakia.

Because the commemoration of November 17 was a student action, Charter 77 and other independent initiatives did not endorse this demonstration and did not call for participation during this rally. Miloš Hájek in interview states:

On 15 or 14 or 16 of November [he could not remember the exact day], one of these three days the representatives of all independent initiatives met in my apartment. Present were Dana Němcová, [Emanuel] Mandler, I, Vladislav Lis and maybe [Rudolf] Battěk, but about that I am not certain, and three other people. We, absolutely, did not talk about November 17, we took that in our opinion as a students' activity and the students did not want us to participate; we talked about December 10, the Day of Human Rights, during which we wanted to repeat something similar as Škroupa Square [demonstration], therefore with the action of November 17, Charter [77] had nothing in common.<sup>116</sup>

The diversity among individual independent association and their continuous inability to form one common front in an attack on the Czechoslovak Government owed mainly to the political differences among them and the various ideological beliefs regarding proper strategies. Within Charter 77 and other independent associations which were connected to the Eurocommunists, the inability to act more aggressively or to support more aggressive anti-Government movements lay in the Eurocommunists' conviction that they could play a leading role in the

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<sup>116</sup> Interview with Miloš Hájek. *op.cit.* "15. nebo 14..16. listopadu, jeden z těchto tří dní se sešli v mém bytě zástupci všech nezávislých iniciativ, byla tam Dana Němcová, byl tam Mandler, byl jsem tam já, Vláška Lis a ještě myslím Battěk, ale to už nevím tak jistě, a další tři lidé; a vůbec jsme nemluvili o 17. listopadu to jsme brali na vědomí že je to studentská záležitost a studenti nechtějí aby jsme se do toho míchali; a mluvili jsme o 10 - tém prosinci, dni Lidských práv, kdy jsme chtěli opakovat něco jako Škroupovo náměstí, tak že s akcí 17. listopadu Charta neměla záměrně nic společného."

possible reform of the Communist Government. Not knowing the final result the Eurocommunists played a negotiators' role, rather than a militant revolutionary one.

Charter 77's underestimation of the importance of the November 17 demonstration was shown by the fact that some leading signatories, for example Václav Havel, left Prague prior to the demonstration:

[Václav] Havel left Prague, because he believed that [the student demonstration] will be one of the reasons during which he will be interrogated by the police; to avoid it he left. Therefore, not even the most active part of society counted on the actual development [of the demonstration].<sup>117</sup>

The 'involvement' of Charter 77 during the demonstration was represented by the presence of individual signatories, not representing Charter 77, but demonstrating their personal beliefs. Their participation during the demonstration have created an impression that Charter 77 was directly involved during the demonstration.

The events leading to December 17, 1989 and after were unexpected by many signatories. Jarmila Bělíková implied that Charter 77 was preparing a similar activity (December 10, 1989, International Human Rights Day), but what had

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<sup>117</sup> Interview with Petr Pithart. *op.cit.* "Havel odjel z Prahy, protože to pokládal za jednu z příležitostí při které bude obtěžován policií; tak aby tomu předešel odjel. Tak že ani ta nejaktivnější část společnosti nepočítala s takovým vývojem."

happened on November 17, 1989 nobody could have predicted<sup>118</sup>. Eva Joáchymová supports her opinion by stating that "Charter was not ready".<sup>119</sup> Rudolf Battěk and Martin Palouš expressed the same ideas.<sup>120</sup>

Peter Pithart explains Charter 77 unreadiness:

I believe that the whole dissent did not count on the changes that had occurred and therefore was not ready for it... It is interesting that people who did everything for the changes did not count on it.... They counted on some slow development similar to Gorbachev's reforms.... During the Fall nobody thought that the demonstration could grow into the situation that it grew into.<sup>121</sup>

The brutal attack by police against the students and citizens, as well the continued of the students' protest called for immediate actions by the independent associations. The public outrage and their readiness to act presented Charter 77 with an immediate need to make a decision. To keep a high public profile, Charter 77 had to abandon in part its non-political policy and present an action program which would support both public anti-Communist opinion and willingness to demonstrate.

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<sup>118</sup> Interview with Jarmila Běliková. *op.cit.*

<sup>119</sup> Interview with Eva Joáchymová on August 25, 1996 in Jarotice, done by Richard Pesik.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Rudolf Battěk *op.cit.* and Interview with Martin Palouš on August 19, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik..

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Petr Pithart. *op.cit.* "Jsem přesvědčen že celý dissent nepočítal s tou změnou která nastal a proto na ní nebyl připraven.... Je zvláštní že lidé kteří udělali tak hodně pro změnu s nečím takovým nepočítali ... Počítali s nějakým pozvolným vývojem v duchu Gorbačovských reform.... V podzimu nikdo nepočítal že manifestace může přerůst v to co přerostla."

The increasing animosity among various signatories, based in its political differentiations that grew in significance during 1989, was for a moment forgotten. The need to act and to develop programs that would bring political changes into Czechoslovakia was more important. The main question for signatories and the members of other independent association was: Is the time ready for a revolution? One of the discussions on what kind of approach to take took place on the night between November 17, 1989 and November 18, 1989 at Václav Benda's apartment:

There were about 15-20 people [students, signatories and other]<sup>122</sup>; they were slowly arriving from the demonstration. ... the discussion if to start a revolution or not took the whole night.... We believed that we needed 2-3 months more to get everything ready.

Due to the rapidly developing situation they decided at 7:30 a.m. to start a revolution:

We were able, during that night, to name all ordeals, all problems and all compromises that we will have to solve to ensure the possibility to succeed, but we did not predict the breakdown of the

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<sup>122</sup> Some of the people present were Václav Benda, Jiří Dienstbier, Martin Klíma and Marek Benda.

Federation.<sup>123</sup>

On November 18, 1989 the students announced a student strike and called for public support of their struggle for political changes in Czechoslovakia by organizing a general strike on November 27, 1989. The most active part of the Czechoslovak society immediately after the November 17, 1989 demonstration were employees of Prague theatres who announced a strike to support students' demands. The various independent associations, except HOS, reacted slowly to support the students' call for a militant and political response to the Prague events.

Charter 77's inability to react accordingly to the situation was a direct result of its unreadiness or inability to assess the situation. Furthermore, Charter 77's political division and the influence of signatories, such as Václav Havel, who were strong supporters of a non-political policy, dictated Charter 77's approach to the issue of politicization of Charter 77 directives. Charter 77's inadequate response to the situation is reflected in the Charter 77 document published on November 18, 1989 condemning the Government's reaction on November 17, 1989. The document was not as strong as the situation demanded:

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<sup>123</sup> Interview with Václav Benda. *op.cit.* "sešlo se 15-20 lidí jak postupně přicházeli ze schromáždění.... Celou noc discutovali o tom jestli spustit revoluci či ne.... Byli přesvědčeni že jim schází 2-3 měsíce aby bylo vše připraveno"; "Až do rozpadu Federace jsme dokázali do jednoho jmenovat během té noci všechny rizika, všechny problémy, všechny kompromisy, které budeme muset vyřešit... měli šanci na úspěch."

(1) We request that the members of the Communist Party and the Government of our country, who are responsible for the brutal attack against their own citizens immediately submit their resignations. (2) It is necessary to immediately pursue a real nationwide dialogue regarding the future reforms, during which all components of our society together with non-Communists political parties, the Church, intelligentsia, workers, students and independent associations will be plenipotentiary participants. Charter 77 is ready to offer during this dialogue its service. (3) The dialogue is at this moment unavoidable. Therefore we appeal to all citizens to help with all peaceful devices to fulfill this task. We guarantee that we will support all peaceful protest activities against the supreme authority.<sup>124</sup>

When the document was delivered to the striking Realistic Theatre (Realistické Divadlo), where the students, members of the entertainment media and some representatives of independent associations were making decisions regarding the future manoeuvrers, it was already outdated.<sup>125</sup> Ironically, Václav Havel's entrance to the growing revolutionary situation was not acceptable as well:

Václav Havel returned to Prague on Saturday evening [November 18, 1989], 'not to become a leader of the developing revolution, but to attend a play *Res publica II*, during which was to be shown a part of his play. Therefore, he arrived to the striking theatre in his

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<sup>124</sup> Deset pražských dnů. *op.cit.* p.35. "(1) Považujeme za nezbytné, aby ze stranického a státního vedení naší země okamžite odstoupili ti, kteří jsou přímo zodpovědní za brutální postup proti vlastním občanům. (2) Je nezbytné okamžite zahájit vskutku celospolečenský dialog o cestě budoucích reforem, jehož se budou moci plnoprávně zúčastnit všechny složky naší společnosti včetně nekomunistických politických stran, církví, inteligence, dělníku, studentstva a nezávislých iniciativ. CHARTA 77 jako jedna z mnohých iniciativ je připravena nabídnout k tomu to dialogu své služby. (3) Dialog je v krátké budoucnosti opravdu nevyhnutelný. Apelujeme proto na veškerou naši veřejnost, aby již teď pomohla všemi pokojnými prostředky k jeho uskutečnění. Ujistíme se, že všechny takové pokojné akce protestu proti mocenské zvlášti budeme rozhodně podporovat."

<sup>125</sup> Milan Otáhal. *Opozice. op.cit.* p. 99.

suit.<sup>126</sup>

The inability of Charter 77 to react was criticized after the Velvet Revolution and supported conclusions that Charter 77 decisions were influenced by ex-Communists signatories who wanted to make concessions to the Communist government.

Although at first Charter 77 and other independent associations were not the major actors of the newly developed anti-Government movement which was the domain of the students and actors and actresses, the situation had changed on November 19, 1989. On this day Charter 77, together with other independent associations, the students and representatives of theatres established the Civic Forum. From this day the most important decisions were made by the representatives of dissent and the students were slowly pushed aside.

### **Charter 77 and the Civic Forum**

After November 17, 1989 the representatives of independent associations realized the need for an organization which would represent all of the independent associations and at the same time direct and organize their further

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* p.99. "Do Prahy se vrátil Václav Havel v sobotu večer 'ne proto, aby se stal vůdcem právě propukající revoluce, ale proto, aby zhlédl představení Res publica II. ve kterém má být použita ukázka z jeho hry'. Do stávkujícího Realistického divadla se proto dostavil ve společenském obleku."



approach when dealing with the Government authorities. As outlined before, their endeavour to establish a similar organization prior to November 17, 1989 collapsed because of the political positions of various associations. Miloš Hájek points out that between August-October 1989 representatives of independent associations met regularly at Black Brewery (Černý Pivovar). They were Václav Havel, Dana Němcová (Charter 77), Emanuel Mandler (Democratic Initiative), Rudolf Battěk (HOS) and Milos Hájek (OBRODA). The reason for their meetings was to "establish an organization" that would be ready to act when the situation presented itself. Furthermore, Hájek stresses that during these meetings, OBRODA suggested that Cardinal Tomášek and Alexander Dubček would be "moral representatives of the new association"<sup>127</sup> The endeavour was, at that time, in vain due to the political and ideological differences of various independent associations.

The situation on November 17, 1989 and the days that had followed critically influenced the independent associations' need to establish an organization that would connect them together and represent them. The group with the most initiative to establish an organization representing the majority of independent associations was gathered around Václav Havel. The majority of them were from the Team of Charter 77 Spokespersons.<sup>128</sup> The initial conception of a new

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<sup>127</sup> Interview with Miloš Hájek. *op.cit.* "založit nějakou organizaci"; "duchovní představitelé nové organizace".

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Václav Trojan. *op.cit.*

organization that would coordinate the struggle of independent associations took place on November 19, 1989 at Havel's apartment. Miloš Hájek remembers that Sunday November 19, 1989:

In the morning he got a phone call from [Emanuel] Mandler ... that all of them should meet. At the same moment Václav Korel with Jan Urban came to visit him. They outlined an idea to establish a coordinating committee of opposition called Forum.<sup>129</sup>

Hájek mentioned that Mandler had a similar idea, but when he tried to contact him, they found out that Mandler was imprisoned. After a short discussion they decided to go to see Václav Havel. They separated, in order to avoid police attention: Jan Urban went first and Milos Hájek followed him. At the same time Havel had already called a meeting at his apartment. When Miloš Hájek arrived at Havel's apartment, Jan Urban informed him that the decision had been made to call a new organization Civic Forum (Občanské Fórum). The people present at this meeting were Václav Havel, Jan Urban, Miloš Hájek, Saša Vondra, Jiří Křížan, Ladislav Lis, Jiří Štindel and Radim Palouš. Rudolf Battěk and Pavel Bergmann joined them later.<sup>130</sup> During their discussion it was decided to draft a document to outline the Civic Forum mandate:

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<sup>129</sup> Interview with Miloš Hájek. *op.cit.* "Ráno mi volal Mandler ... že by se měli všichni sejít. V tom ho přišli navštívit Václav Korel a Jan Urban [s myšlenkou] měli by jsme založit koordinační výbor opozice, mohlo by se to nazývat Fórum."

<sup>130</sup> Pavel Bergmann in an interview with Karel Stanek. "Přicházela půlnoc, Zrodilo se Občanské Fórum". *Občanský Deník*. Vol. 1, No. 169. Saturday, November 17, 1990. p.3. ; Interview with Václav Trojan. *op.cit.* ; Interview with Miloš Hájek. *op.cit.*

Everybody decided that there is need to write a document that will outline the basic political demands and a goal to assume initiative. Václav Havel then sat down, thought and wrote. At 6 p.m. we should met again and edited the text. The idea was that they would call a meeting at Činoherní Club at 8 p.m..<sup>131</sup>

The importance of Václav Havel and other Charter 77 signatories during the founding of Civic Forum was visible from the following initiatives of Civic Forum and its initial statement. The organization that would express an interesting, and a united approach towards political negotiations with the Czechoslovak authorities was, after many unsuccessful attempts prior to November 17, 1989 finally established.

The Civic Forum's statement written by Václav Havel reflected Charter 77 anti-political policy and signatories' influence. It was first read during the initial founding meeting in Činoherní Club on November 19, 1989 at 10 p.m.:

It accepted the idea of dialogue, as was proclaimed by Charter [77] since its first document and was understood as 'a kind of round table' for negotiations with the Government institutions without any demands and limited public participation; the document did not support a general strike, which was the strongest weapon of opposition; because the general strike included in its fight against the Government the whole spectrum of society which became the

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<sup>131</sup> Pavel Bergmann. *op.cit.* "Všichni se dohodli, že je třeba vydat prohlášení se základními politickými požadavky a s cílem převzít iniciativu. Václav Havel si tedy sedl, přemýšlel a psal. V šest večer se všichni měli znovu sejít a text zredigovat. S tím, že na osmou večer se svolá do Činoherního klubu shromáždění."

real political subject.<sup>132</sup>

The continuation of Charter 77's ideas was characterized as Václav Trojan points out by the fact that Civic Forum was open "basically to everybody who wanted to participate in the democratization of the country".<sup>133</sup> Similarly Jan Štern suggests that: "Civic Forum was in some point the denouncement of Charter 77 and an extension of HOS".<sup>134</sup> Václav Benda concludes that "Charter (77) as an organizational power ... played a key role at the beginning of Civic Forum ... if we understand under the meaning of Charter and all of those organizations that were established under its umbrella or cooperated with Charter".<sup>135</sup> Dana Němcová believes that the reason for Charter 77's influence within Civic Forum was that the signatories were finally ready to play important roles within Civic Forum because of their readiness and the fact that they "had something to tell the people".<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, the influence of Charter 77 on the

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<sup>132</sup> Milan Otáhal. *Opozice. op.cit.* "Prosadilo se pojetí dialogu, jak jej Charta proklamovala od svého prvního prohlášení a který byl chápán jako druh 'kulatých stolů', jako vyjednávání se statní moci bez jakýh koliv podmínek a s omezením vlivu veřejnosti; prohlášení totiž nepodpořilo Generální stávku, která byla nejsilnější zbraní opozice, neboť zapojovala do boje proti režimu nejširší vrstvy obyvatelstva, jež se stávaly skutečným politickým subjectem."

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Václav Trojan. *op.cit.* "pro každého kdo chtěl spolupracovat na demokratizaci státu."

<sup>134</sup> Interview with Jan Štern. *op.cit.* "Občanské Fórum bylo v jistém smyslu jaké si dovršení Charty a bylo přímou návazností na HOS".

<sup>135</sup> Interview with Václav Benda. *op.cit.* "Charta jako organizační síla ... hraje v prvopočátcích Občanského Fóra klíčovou roli ... pokud si pod Chartou představujeme i ty organizace které pod její záštitou vznikaly nebo [s ní] spolupracovaly."

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Dana Němcová. *op.cit.* "měli lidem co říci."

Civic Forum decision making process was detectable from Civic Forum's slowly increasing application of pressure by using a dialogue approach towards the Czechoslovak Government<sup>137</sup>, rather than a more militant one.

In addition, the organizational structure of Civic Forum was similar to the structure of Charter 77. It gave the signatories political decision making control over Civic Forum. The highest political body within the Civic Forum was called the Crisis Centre (Krizový Štáb):

The hegemony within Civic Forum acquired a group around Václav Havel; it was called the Crisis Centre that made all important decisions. Its members were V. Havel, A. Vondra and J. Křížan. Associations and individuals, who had principally different opinions regarding further progress, were in some way pushed aside.<sup>138</sup>

The Crisis Center was later replaced by the Coordination Center of Civic Forum (Koordinační Centrum Občanského Fóra), Prague . Its main objectives were to organize all Civic Forum assemblies that were established in Czechoslovakia and to inform the public. In addition:

The Coordination Center acted on behalf of the Civic Forum when dealing with central governmental and international institutions.

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<sup>137</sup> Interview with Václav Benda. *op.cit.*

<sup>138</sup> Milan Otáhal. *Opozice. op.cit.* "Hegemonii v OF získala skupina kolem V. Havla; tzv. Krizový Štáb, v němž vznikala všechna důležitá rozhodnutí, se zkládal z V. Havla, A. Vondry a J. Křížana. Skupiny a jednotlivci, kteří měli zásadně odlišný názor na další postup, byli do značné míry zatlačeni do pozadí." pp.102 - 103.

based on initiatives of various forums.<sup>139</sup>

The representatives of the Coordination Center were primarily signatories of Charter 77.<sup>140</sup> The importance of the Coordination Center of Civic Forum, Prague increased dramatically during 1990, prior to the first free elections in Czechoslovakia, when it had an imminent impact on the selection of Civic Forum candidates for the elections.

The political development at the end of 1989 in Czechoslovakia brought a growing political division among Charter 77 signatories. Some of the signatories left the political scene of the new Czechoslovak political arena:

Some of them told others that they would not try to obtain political power, but that they would continue as they did till then.... I think, that the majority of people were unambitious in the dissent not because they would like to acquire some power, but because they wanted to live in freedom and truth. And when this situation [new political freedom] happened, they believed that there was no reason to obtain power.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Dedset Pražských dnů. *op.cit.* p.553. "Koordinační centrum zastupuje Občanské Fórum v jednání s centrálními státními a mezinárodními institucemi, a to především na základě námětu a doporučení místních OF."

<sup>140</sup> "Jak to chodí v Koordinačním centru; Rudému Právu odpovídá tisková mluvčí KC Občanského Fóra Jana Ryšliková". *Rudé Právo*. Vol. 70. No. 38. Wednesday February 14. 1990. p. 8.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Helena Klímova on August 5. 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik. "Někteří si řekli že nebudou usilovat o to aby získali politickou moc ale pokračovat takovým způsobem jako doposud.... já si myslím že spousta lidí se neangažovala v disentu ne že by chtěli uchvátit moc ale proto že chtěli svobodně a pravdivě žít, a jakmile ta možnost nastala tak nebyl dál důvod snažit se získat moc."

On the other side, there were the signatories, mainly the ex-Communists, "people who were used to organized political activities"<sup>142</sup>, and those who belonged to the pinnacle of Charter 77, who saw the new political system as their opportunity to be elevated to the "political elite".<sup>143</sup> The political differentiation among the signatories led to signatories within Charter 77 and Civic Forum being influenced by different political fractions within both organizations. They began to slowly merge together with other new political parties.

The growing political disagreement that resurfaced within Civic Forum and Charter 77 influenced the selection of a candidate for a new Czechoslovak President after Gustav Husak resigned in December 1989. There were two major candidates for the office: Václav Havel, the Charter 77 signatory and outspoken member of Civic Forum, and Alexander Dubček, the former General Secretary of Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee and the leading political figure of Prague Spring 1968. The determination of Alexander Dubček to become the President, supported by ex-Communists, is characterized by his negotiation with Václav Havel regarding his candidacy:

[Václav] Havel said, we were negotiating for about three hours [with Alexander Dubček] and Dubček was too stubborn to give up.

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<sup>142</sup> Interview with Petruška Šustrová. *op.cit.* "lidé kteří byli zvyklí na organizovanou politickou činnost."

<sup>143</sup> Interview with John Bok. *op.cit.* "politická elita."

He continuously thought that it could be him [a new president]. Then we told him that Chairman of the Federal Assembly is also a big post. Then he finally changed his mind, but when he was on his way from Prague to Bratislava he phoned suddenly from Jihlava, says Václav Havel, Dubček says by phone that he changed his mind [to seek the presidency]....<sup>144</sup>

The support of Alexander Dubček's candidacy by the ex-Communists within Charter 77 and Civic Forum is demonstrated by Zdeněk Jičínský's, a signatory of Charter 77 and ex-Communist, act of nomination. Jaroslav Šabata remembers that Jicinsky once told him that "it is not good, they proposed Havel and I did not succeed by nominating Dubček; there was probably 30 voices for Havel and 6 for Dubček. The number may not be correct; there is a possibility that nobody recorded it."<sup>145</sup> The election of Dubček as President would, for the ex-Communists, develop a bridge between the Prague Spring 1968 and the events of 1989. Furthermore, it would conclude their rehabilitation process and legitimize their opposition toward the Czechoslovak Government. In addition, Dubček's loyalty to Socialism and ideas of reform Communism would help the ex-Communists to obtain political influence within the new Czechoslovak Government. For others, mainly Havel, Dubček's importance was that he was a Slovak. His involvement in the post-November political development would

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<sup>144</sup> Interview with Jiří Ruml. *op.cit.* "Havel říkal, mi jsme jednali asi tři hodiny s Dubčekem, a Dubček furt nechtěl ustoupit, pořád jako by si myslel že jako by to mohl být on. A pak jsme mu řekli že Předseda Federálního Shromáždění je taky velký post; a on se pak nakonec nechal přemluvit ale jel zpátky z Prahy do Bratislavy ale najednou z Jihlavy telefonoval, říká Václav Havel. Dubček do telefonu říká že si to rozmyslel."

<sup>145</sup> Interview with Jaroslav Šabata. *op.cit.* "Je to špatný, oni navrhuji Havla, já jsem s Dubčekem neobstál. Hlasy byly asi 30 Havel a 6 Dubček.... Čísla nejsou přesná, pravděpodobně to nikdo nezaznamenal."



guarantee continuity of Czechoslovakia.<sup>146</sup>

At the end, Václav Havel was elected the President of Czechoslovakia on December 29, 1989. He took his presidential oath to Alexander Dubcek who had been, one day prior to the presidential elections, elected Chairman of the Federal Assembly. The disagreements among the ex-Communists and the non-Communists within Charter 77 and Civic Forum were for a moment again put aside.

The end of 1989 found the dissent and the signatories in a new political sphere to which they were elevated because "these people from the dissent, these Chartists knew each other, believed in each other and were able immediately to connect with each other to actively cooperate".<sup>147</sup> On the other side, their new political experience created a problem for the signatories and the dissidents who became involved in the political process. The new experiences caused a slow deterioration in their abilities to cooperate over time. The political differences that were somehow forgotten during the time when they all fought the totalitarian power of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, started slowly to resurface. Later, during the period of growing political pluralism, the cooperation which was based on their trust of other dissidents could not be accomplished:

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<sup>146</sup> Interview with Jan Štern. *op.cit.*

<sup>147</sup> Interview with Ivan Havel on July 31, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik. "Ti lidé z toho disentu, ti chartisté, se znali navzájem, důvěřovali si a mohli velice rychle se dát dohromady a být schopni velmi aktivně spolupracovat."

If then people were basically concentrated towards the one idea, then after November, when the full political spectrum was established, everybody began to connect themselves with its own [political ideology], and this started political fights.<sup>148</sup>

This process of deterioration continued during the following years and was one of the main reasons for end of Civic Forum, and also of Charter 77's active life.

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<sup>148</sup> Interview with Jiří Vančura on July 29, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik. "Jestliže tenkrát lidé více méně byli upnuti ke stejné myšlence, tak po listopadu, když nastalo celé to politické spektrum, každý se přihlásil k tomu svému a tam docházelo už k politickým bojům."

## **Chapter III**

### **The Discord**

**1990 - 1992**

#### **New Beginning**

At the end of 1989 Charter 77 found itself in a new political spectrum which was created by the continuing downfall of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia during the Velvet Revolution. The political changes which were introduced after November 1989 included (1) the elimination of the leading role of Czechoslovak Communist Party; (2) the democratization of Czechoslovak political system; (3) the creation of new independent political parties within and outside the Civic Forum; (4) the election of Václav Havel as the President of Czechoslovakia; (5) the institution of Freedom of Speech and (6) the holding of free elections. All strongly influenced Charter 77's development. The growing democratization of Czechoslovakia produced an atmosphere during which Charter 77 signatories and some members of the new Czechoslovak society questioned the need to continue Charter 77 within a politically pluralistic Czechoslovakia. For some signatories, the continuing work of Charter 77 was an important factor to guarantee citizens' rights. Others believed that the new political system would produce new public associations which would be more suitable for the

democratic system than Charter 77. The above circumstances influenced Charter 77 to continue only to the end of 1992.

The new political system of Czechoslovakia brought with it criticism of Charter 77 by the Czechoslovak public. The members of the Czechoslovak community who had been persecuted by the Communist regime during the 1950's saw Charter 77 as a political failure because Charter 77 included the ex-Communists among its signatories. Some Czechoslovak citizens who had suffered during the Communist purges of the 1950's<sup>149</sup> openly attacked Charter 77 and accused it of cooperating with the former Communist regime. These citizens' attacks against Charter 77 negatively influenced not only Charter 77's reputation as a whole, but also the attitude of ordinary Czechs and Slovaks toward Charter 77.

Since the Charter's inception, the period 1990 -1992 was the most critical one. The new political situation, which allowed the creation of new political parties within the Czechoslovak political order, mirrored the political differences among Charter 77 signatories. The political attacks against Charter 77 by some members of Czechoslovak populations did not help Charter 77 to adjust to the new political atmosphere. In the end, Charter 77 had to question its own importance and its own ability to guarantee Democracy and Human Rights in the Czechoslovak pluralistic system. The crises that were created by the political

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<sup>149</sup> I could not find any reference regarding the attacks against Charter 77 by Czechoslovak citizens who were suppressed by the Communists after the 1968.

situation after the Communist downfall at the end of 1989 had a deadly impact on Charter 77.

## Political Differences

Charter 77 was founded in 1977 by a multitude of political and non-political signatories who represented a wide spectrum of Czechoslovak dissent. The signatories political affiliations ranged from ex-Communists to Catholics to signatories with no political or religious beliefs. The political differences among Charter 77 signatories were mainly ignored prior to the Velvet Revolution. The signatories were able to develop a consensus on most of the decisions that were made due to the signatories united cause: the humanizing of the Communist Regime in Czechoslovakia.

After November 1989, when the political situation in Czechoslovakia changed, the submerged political differences from the 1977-1989 era of Charter 77, resurfaced immediately. The creation of new political parties encouraged some signatories to return to new or old political ideas. Their growing political differentiation created a problem for possible consensus among the signatories. The consensus was vital for Charter 77's survival:

The people who wanted to be active in political life chose a profile ... that had particular political ideas which were sometimes in disagreement with Charter 77.... After that the consensus on Charter grounds was impossible.... After all, this would not be a

problem, because there was always opportunity for meetings among the people, but only under the condition that they would forget their political activity.<sup>150</sup>

The signatories' focus on the new political life in Czechoslovakia and their support of different political systems brought Charter 77 closer to its destruction. Trying to forget their individual political affiliations became more difficult as election time drew near. Many signatories played an important role as individual candidates, but their differences made it impossible for them to retain their political impartiality within Charter 77 itself.

Although many signatories were candidates of the Civic Forum, the leading political force during the Parliament elections in April 1990, they started to represent various political ideologies from Capitalism to Socialism. Within the Civic Forum, signatories were able to affiliate with distinct political groupings present under the Civic Forum's umbrella: reform Communists, Socialists, Social Democrats, Catholics and others. Many signatories saw the Civic Forum as an informal organization in which they were able to express their thoughts and associate themselves with those signatories or non-signatories who represented their ideological stream. For many of them, the Civic Forum was only the

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<sup>150</sup> Interview with Jiří Vančura. *op.cit.* "lidé kteří chtěli být aktivní v politice se profilovali ... s určitými politickými názory které nebyly vždy v souladu s Chartou.... Pak už na půdě Charty consensus nebyl možný.... To by nevadilo, protože stále zůstával nějaký prostor kde by se lidé mohli setkávat, ale museli by zapomenout na svoji politickou činnost."

beginning of their new political careers.<sup>151</sup> In the April elections, some of them were elected to political positions such as Peter Pithart, Jiří Dienstbier and Zdeněk Jičínský.

There were two major reason for candidates success. The first was that they "had something to say to the people".<sup>152</sup> The second was that the political affiliation of Charter 77 signatories, who were involved in the Civic Forum, was hidden by their membership within the pluralistic Civic Forum. Therefore, they were not, in public opinion, associated fully with any political ideology. Due to their campaigning as Civic Forum's candidates, they were not seen by the voters as representatives of the united opposition to the former Communist regime. Therefore, the success at the polls came from the electorate expressing a 'no' vote against the old Communist regime.

After the elections the political differences among the signatories and other members of the Civic Forum deepened and various political parties began to emerge from the Civic Forum. This continuous division restricted the successful work of the Civic Forum during the following years. The creation of new political parties with diametrically different ideologies created a irreparable problem for the Civic Forum.<sup>153</sup> During the following months the Civic Forum tried to solve

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<sup>151</sup> Interview with Dana Němcová. *op.cit.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* "měli lidem co říci".

<sup>153</sup> "Kam kráčí OF?". *Lidové Noviny*. Vol. 3, No. 210. 8.11.1990. p. 7.

the problem of its existence in the rapidly changing political scene of Czechoslovakia. The solution, suggested mainly by Václav Klaus and opposed by Václav Havel and others, was to politicize the Civic Forum.<sup>154</sup>

Unfortunately, politicization meant that not all political forces could be represented and work under the Civic Forum's umbrella. The Civic Forum, realizing the necessity of political transformation, ceased to exist as a non-political multiparty organization in February 1991 and transformed itself to a new political Civic Forum. The new Civic Forum was comprised of two political parties: the Civic Democratic Party and the Civic Movement (Občanská Demokratická Strana. Občanské Hnutí).<sup>155</sup> The political differences among representatives of various political beliefs jeopardized the historical roots of political and pluralistic associations.

In the new democratic system, some of the signatories saw no need for a political and pluralistic association that would protect citizens from the attacks of the new authorities. Some of the signatories believed that, in the new system, they could not attack political figures who were elected from their ranks for their political misbehaviour and for disregarding Human Rights agreements. Others believed that after many years of fighting the same enemy and for the same cause there was nothing to fight for any more and therefore no reason to

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<sup>154</sup> "Hnutí nebo strana?". *Rudé Právo*. Vol. 71, No. 234.: 6.2. 1990. p. 2.

<sup>155</sup> Jiří Honajzer. *Občanské Fórum: vznik, vývoj a rozpad*. Orbis: Praha, 1996. pp. 45-46.



continue their activity. Ivan Havel expresses this idea in his interview:

It [to change ones attitude] takes some time during the freedom ... people realize their own beliefs and differences.... At first they stopped associating themselves periodically on personal and intimate bases.... They start to associate themselves with their parties and ideologies.... This creates fragmentation which is a result of the situation during which the fraternal enemy that connected them ceases to exist.... In the freedom they began to be more independent.... It is sad that during the present time, the people who were before friends do not trust each other [now] and attack each other for things that somebody does or does not do.<sup>156</sup>

The fragmentation and political differences were mirrored in Charter 77 work and resulted in many ideological and political controversies among Charter 77 signatories. Although these problems had deepened with time, Charter 77 was able to co-exist with the Civic Forum for almost one more year.

The political struggle among signatories was even more intense during the June 1990 election to the Federal Assembly and the Czech National Council. Under the Civic Forum umbrella, Charter 77 was able to nominate 22 candidates.<sup>157</sup>

The candidates need to obtain voters acceptance did not stop them from attacking each other. During his run for a political seat in the Federal Assembly

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<sup>156</sup> Interview with Ivan Havel. *op.cit.* "Chvilku to trvá než si ve svobodě ... lidé si uvědomí své vlastní názory, rozdily .... Zaprvé se přestanou stýkat tak často, osobně a důvěrně. Začnou se přiklánět ke svým stranám a ideologiím. Tak vznikne fragmentace jako důsledek toho že přestal existovat společný nepřítel který je spojoval... Ve svobodě začínají být více nezávislí.... Je to smutné, že v současné době lidé kteří byli dříve přáteli, teď si nedůvěřují, napadají se, proč kdo co dělá."

<sup>157</sup> Honajzer. *op.cit.* p. 24.

in Brno district, Peter Cibulka attacked his fellow signatory Jaroslav Šabata. Peter Cibulka introduced the dirty methods of campaigning when he brought up Šabata's Communist past: "Cibulka suggested that former Communist's [Šabata] erstwhile ideas of the 1950's"<sup>158</sup> ".<sup>159</sup> Peter Cibulka extended his attack against all ex-Communists and Communists<sup>160</sup> when he demanded the Communists be "purged from Charter 77".<sup>161</sup> Peter Cibulka's style represented the general understanding of the new freedoms. In their opinion that gave them liberty for personal attacks against their opponents.

The changing personal relationships among Charter 77 signatories were directly influenced by the emerging political views within Charter 77. The individualistic ambitions of some Charter 77 signatories contrasted with Charter 77 previous non-political rivalry among the signatories and their rapport with the public. The new political struggles among Charter 77 signatories brought Charter 77 to the verge of breakdown because of signatories individual political ambiguity.

Not all Charter 77 signatories pined for an active political life. For the majority of the signatories, the main goal was to sustain their struggle for Human Rights and

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<sup>158</sup> Cibulka meant anticommunist's witch-hunt by the leading members of the Czechoslovak Communist Party during the 1950's.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with Jan Štern. *op.cit.* "Cibulka vytáhnul na toho bývalého komunistu jeho bývalé názory z 50 let."

<sup>160</sup> Some Party members became Charter 77 signatories after November 17, 1989.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Jiří Hájek. *op.cit.* "vyloučení komunistů z Charty".

to continue the non-political policy of Charter 77 rather than engage in unfriendly political struggle:

What had happened had happened so softly because in the leadership were people who were real and absolute humanitarians; who made many terrible mistakes because of their humanitarian nature, and who expected the humanism, the belief of content, the belief of cooperation from everybody [to work]. That was a basic mistake.<sup>162</sup>

The humanitarian beliefs of some Charter 77 signatories promoted them to struggle to continue their non-political involvement during and after the Velvet Revolution. Some of the signatories, who at first become a part of the new Czechoslovak political structure, had left the political scene before and after the 1990 June elections. They, together with the signatories who chose the non-political path, focused their attention on Charter 77 perspectives in the new society.

The needs for a non-political approach by Charter 77 for its survival characterized Ladislav Hejránek's main address during Charter 77 first nation-wide meeting in Prague in March 1990:

The main question is: What we who decide to stay do?; we who do

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<sup>162</sup> Interview with Eva Joáchymová. *op.cit.* "Jak to proběhlo, proběhlo proto tak jemně protože v čele byli lidé kteří byli skuteční absolutní humanisté, kteří dělali nesmírné chyby právě tím svým humanismem. Že právě předpokládali humanismus, vůli ke kontenzu, vůli k dohodě u všech ostatních, což je samozřejmě základní chyba."

not have any political - that means technocratic political potencies - ambitions as the priority of our determination and on our scale of values? In the founding document of Charter 77 one can read: Charter 77 does not want to 'accentuate its own programs of political or sociological reforms or modifications'. By signing this document nobody is obligated that he/she cannot be a part of these programs. Nevertheless, that he/she would not present this as a Chartist and would not force Charter 77 to become an organization or, even, to become a political movement with these programs formulated and enforced [freedom] must stay the unquestionable obligation.<sup>163</sup>

The non-politicization of Charter 77 seemed to be difficult to achieve because many of Charter 77 leading signatories became assimilated in the daily part of Czechoslovak political life. Their politicization directly or indirectly influenced Charter 77's development and decision making process. It was increasingly difficult to avoid, even when those signatories who were not politically active, tried to stop the politicization of Charter 77. This was one of the major reasons for Charter 77's inability to continue its activity as it had prior to November 1989.

## Attacks

The new political structure of Czechoslovakia encouraged public attacks against Charter 77 during the early 1990's. These attacks resembled the anti-Charter 77

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<sup>163</sup> Ladislav Hejránek, "Krise Charty 77!", *Lidové Noviny*, Vol.3, No.23, 24.3.1990, p.2. "Hlavní otázka zní: co máme a budeme dělat my, kteří zůstaneme? My, kteří nemáme politické - a to znamená technicky, mocensky politické - zájmy na prvním místě ve své životní orientaci a na svém hodnotovém žebříčku? V základním dokumentu čteme že Charta nechce 'vytyčovat vlastní programy politických či společenských reforem nebo změn. Tím se jistě nikdo nezavázal, že se nikdy nebude na vypracování takových programů podílet. Že to však nebude dělat jako chartista a že nebude prosazovat, aby se Charta 77 stala organizací nebo dokonce politickým hnutím, které by takové programy formulovalo a prosazovalo to zůstává nepochybným závazkem."

campaigns used during the Communist supremacy. Part of the Czechoslovak society, represented by the anti-Communist political prisoners of the 1950's<sup>164</sup> in Czechoslovakia, openly attacked Charter 77. These individuals, now mostly in their 60s, tried to incriminate Charter 77 by suggesting Charter 77 signatories' cooperation with the former Communist regime and the Soviet spy agency KGB. They believed that Charter 77 was nothing more than a puppet of the Czechoslovak Communist regime, and an association that hid those Communists who were dismissed from the Czechoslovak Communist Party after August 1968. The former political prisoners of the 1950's took the opportunity of Freedom of Speech to question the political and international significance of Charter 77 during its struggle against the Czechoslovak Communist regime and its role during the climax of the anti-Communist movement on November 17, 1989 and the following period.

The public attacks on Charter 77 were first appeared in Středočeský Expres between October 24 and 26, 1990. They were titled "Sensational Revelation of the Background of the Last Year November 17 Turmoil".<sup>165</sup> In this article a former prisoner of the 1950's, Miroslav Dolejší,<sup>166</sup> attacked Charter 77 for its

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<sup>164</sup> After the Communist's takeover in 1948, many Czechoslovak citizens of the bourgeois backgrounds or anti-Communists political tendencies were either imprisoned or dismissed from their jobs and purged from the Czechoslovak Universities. These Communists' activity applied to whole families who were accused from 'unfriendly' attitudes towards the new regime.

<sup>165</sup> Senzační odhalení pozadí události loňského 17. listopadu.

<sup>166</sup> There could not be found closer references regarding the reasons of his arrest or persecution.

large number of ex-Communists signatories and presented a view that Charter 77 was controlled by the former Communist regime.

Interestingly, Dolejší's accusation of Communist conspiracy under the Charter 77 umbrella was not the first. Prior to his article Peter Cibulka, a Charter 77 signatory, also published in October 1990, an article in which he states:

I had suspicions about those people [who are now in power] that they, during the Fall of 1989, (some people said that actually in October) concluded a grandiose agreement together with a certain group from the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the State Police which probably stated 'you [the Communists] will give up the leading positions of the Party and not shoot us and we, on the other hand, will guarantee that nothing will happen to you'.<sup>167</sup>

Peter Cibulka's accusations, which were influenced by his anti-Communists obsession, were directed undoubtedly against the ex-Communists and Social Democrats within the Charter 77. His statements were fuel for Dolejší's indictments. Although Cibulka's accusations were not meant to discredit all Charter 77 signatories, he and Dolejší saw the ex-Communists, after 1989, as their prime enemies.

Miroslav Dolejší's accusation was based on his belief that the Communists who

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<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* p.8. "Podezřívám tyto lidi [kteří jsou dnes u moci] z toho, že na podzim 1989 (říká se že už dokonce v září) uzavřeli velký obchod s určitou skupinou v KSČ a StB jehož obsahem asi bylo: vy se vzdáte vedoucí úlohy strany a nepostřílíte nás, a my vám za to zaručíme, že se vám nic nestane."

were dismissed from the Czechoslovak Communist party after 1968 were an added dimension that could be used by the Communist regime in a crisis situation such as occurred on November 17, 1989 to prevent the Communist Government breakdown. He believed that to conceal their activities, the Communists organized themselves in the association of Charter 77.<sup>168</sup> Dolejší saw Charter 77 as a Freemason's (Zhido-masoneria) Lodge orchestrated by KGB, the State Police, CIA and the Israeli secret service MOSAD:

During these services there was nothing else to accomplish, then in the right moment Charter 77 could peacefully obtain the power from the Communists. The reason was to hold this power for themselves. This was all conspired by KGB and orchestrated by Mr. Hegenbart from the Central Committee of Czechoslovak Communist Party with the help of dismissed Communists from 1968, who organized themselves in OBRODA.<sup>169</sup>

In his accusations Dolejší contended that Charter 77-OBRODA connection was a reality due to some ex-Communists association with both associations. Furthermore, the large number of ex-Communists who signed the Charter 77 founding document offered plausibility to support Dolejší's accusations.

Many Czechs and Slovaks accepted Dolejší's claim despite their knowledge of

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<sup>168</sup> Jan Štern. "Dějiny viděné v *Expresu*". *Listy*. Vol. XXI, No.1.1991. p. 7.

<sup>169</sup> Václav Kraus. "Senzační odhalení: Chartu 77 měli řídit čtyři tajné služby". *Občanský Deník*. Vol. 1, No. 153. 30.10.1990. p. 3. "V těchto službách prý nešlo o nic jiného, než aby v určitém okamžiku mohla Charta 77 v klidu převzít moc, a to proto aby jí vlastně nadále udržela pro komunistický režim. Tohle všechno prý z pověření KGB řídil pan Hegenbart z ÚV KSČ přes vyhozené komunisty v roce 1968, kteří se združili v OBRODE."

Charter 77's role in the Communist's collapse and the fact that many of Charter 77 signatories, the ex-Communists and non-Communists, had been prosecuted by the former Communist Government. The reason can be found in the mentality of people who, during the Communist supremacy, had remained silent. Their inability to cooperate or to be active participants of the Czechoslovak dissent after November 1989, appeared to be a political or moral weakness on their part. To compensate for their shortcomings, they attacked Charter 77 on these grounds.

because within Charter 77 there were too many ex-Communists they refused to become a part of Charter 77.... Furthermore, they blamed the ex-Communists for dismissing them from their jobs.<sup>170</sup>

Libuše Šilhánová viewed the attacks as an outgrowth of Czech national character. She called them a reflection of

a narrow Czech pity.... An aversion to the people who were heroes.... It was some feeling of culpability that they did nothing.... That they were only manipulated instruments of totality.... Finally they had realized it and from then on they looked, with self-pity, at those who rebelled actively and who publicly participated against the Government.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Interview with Rudolf Battěk. *op.cit.* "Že tam v Chartě bylo moc ex-komunistů a proto tam nešli... Vyčítali že ex-komunisté je vyhazovali z práce."

<sup>171</sup> Interview with Libuše Šilhánová on August 19, 1996 in Prague, done by Richard Pesik. "malý český čecháckovský... averze k lidem kteří byli hrdiny.... Byl to určitý pocit viny že oni nic nedělali... že byli nástrojem totality manipulování.... Najednou jim to došlo a pohlíželi na ty kteří odporovali a projevovali se veřejně proti moci s proviněním."



Their conclusion was: "enough Charter".<sup>172</sup> The inability to cope with their past silence when they were unable to actively participate in the reformation or the destruction of the Communist regime, caused many of them under Dolejší's influence to start to question the legitimacy of Charter 77.

The 'silent majority' wanted a violent settling of accounts with Communism and saw the non-violent revolution introduced by the dissent following the violent November 17, 1989 student demonstration as just another reason to support anti-Charter 77 attacks. In the non-violent mandate of the anti-Government struggle, many Charter 77's opponents saw a connection between Charter 77 and Communists. Jan Štern observed that:

the massacre on National Avenue [Narodní třídě] on November 17 was undoubtedly in advance prepared police provocation, but the outcome of this action was not as the initiators [police] anticipated.... Mr. Dolejší sees this situation differently: The massacre was not only the provocation, but also, in advance, a prepared signal. 'After that signal the initiative was given to Charter 77 - this exhibits that the preparations was due to cooperation.'<sup>173</sup>

Both of them, Cibulka and Dolejší, omitted the basic fact that the Charter 77's non-violent and non-political policy, together with Charter 77's political pluralism

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<sup>172</sup>*Ibid.* "Dost bylo Charty."

<sup>173</sup> Jan Štern. "Dějiny". *op.cit.* p. 8. "Masakr na Narodní třídě 17. listopadu byl bezpochyby předem připravenou policejní provokací, jejíž následky se však iniciátorům vymkly z rukou.... Pan Dolejší však vidí situaci trochu jinak: masakr nebyl jen provokací, byl zároveň smluveným signálem. 'Po něm byla iniciativa okamžite předána Chartě 77 - to dokazuje, že v přípravách byla spolupráce'."

proved to be correct during the Velvet Revolution. Charter 77's policies and the leadership of Václav Havel that did not support any violent acts against the former Communist Government prevented a bloody suppression of the Velvet Revolution. Therefore, the accusation that Charter 77 cooperated with the Communists at that time was unfounded.

The most plausible supposition Dolejší's and other opponent's attacks against Charter 77 during 1990 and after is, that they were trying to discredit the Left-oriented politicians prior to the June 1990 elections. Their accusations would politically help the emerging Right Wing opposition:

This disinformation fable, which less informed people could easily believe, was exactly timed during the period of a campaign against the so called Left, in which the Right wing extremist included 'sixty-eighters'<sup>174</sup> and the Socialist believers of all kinds. It is not an accident that this 'document' included the names: Jičínský, List, Šabata, Uhl, Jan Ruml, Rychetský, Pithart, Mečiar, Dienstbier, Urban, Havel's family completely, Palouš, Kantůrek, Benda, Zeman, but also Klaus and others. The document is directed at all of those who fought against Totalitarianism and who do not demand anything other than the Democratic and plur

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<sup>174</sup> The ex-Communists who were dismissed from the Czechoslovak Communist Party after August 1968.

<sup>175</sup> Václav Kraus, *op.cit.* p.3. "Tahle desinformační báčorka, již mohou méně informovaní lidé docela snadno naletět, byla přesně načasována v době rozjeté kampaně proti takzvané levici, kam pravicový extremisté zahrnují 'osmašedesátníky' i sociálně smýšlející všeho druhu. Není náhodou, že v tomto 'dokumentu' figurují jména Jičínský, List, Šabata, Uhl, Jan Ruml, Rychetský, Pithart,

The attacks against the Charter 77 signatories who, during the 1990's, were either representatives of the Czechoslovak Government or politically involved, were nothing more than the fabricated political assaults created by those who were not in power. By implicating Charter 77 signatories with the former Communist Government, the representatives of Extreme Right Wing ideology wanted to discredit members of the Czechoslovak dissent, who until then were the major opposition force. The accusations which could be perceived by some members of the Czechoslovak public as the truth could help the Extreme Right politicians to gain both power and popular support.

The accusations, although untrue, were damaging for Charter 77. The public, influenced by the charges, started to question Charter 77's intentions during the Velvet Revolution and the ex-Communists role within Charter 77. Unable to fully recover from the accusations and the growing political differentiations among the signatories, Charter 77, as a whole, tried to clarify its purpose within the new Czechoslovak society. The signatories who were singled out by the public attacks against Charter 77 began to slowly drift away from Charter 77 activities, back to their own private lives.

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Mečiar, Dienstbier, Urban, rodina Havlova kompletně, Palouš, Kantůrek, Benda, Zeman, ale i Klaus a další. Míří v podstatě na všechny, kteří bojovali proti totalitě a kteří neusilují o nic jiného než o demokratický pluralitní systém, jaký známe z vyspělých západních zemích, včetně svobodného trhu. Že do toho výčtu byli zahrnuti i lidé kteří levicově nikdy nesměřovali? Co na tom? Byli v Chartě řízení KGB a dalšími světovými rozvědkami!"

## The Last Days

When Charter 77 was founded in 1977, nobody predicted that the Communist regime of Czechoslovakia could ever be defeated. There were no plans, no thoughts of what might happen should Communism in Czechoslovakia be terminated and replaced by Democracy. By 1989 this dream emerged and many saw the potential of it becoming a reality. For many signatories, the defeat of the Communist supremacy raised questions: What to do with Charter 77? How do we continue our activities in a free Democratic state?

Following the November 17, 1989 students' demonstration, many Charter 77 signatories, besides being involved in the building of new a Czechoslovak system, had to decide what Charter 77's next activities would be. The Team of Charter 77 Spokespersons met on December 16, 1989 to discuss possible aspects for Charter 77's future:

During the Team of Charter 77 Spokespersons meeting, it was decided, that Charter 77 would continue its activities because there would be continuous infractions of Human Rights even in the Democratic society. Equally important was, for some of the present spokespersons, the security of social rights for the members of the present bureaucratic system, for example the members of the State Police remained a concern. During the meeting a working group was established that should develop a new Charter 77 document. This document would formulate an interpretation of Charter 77 work and outline Charter 77

perspectives and important tasks.<sup>176</sup>

For many signatories the continuation of Charter 77 activities was important mainly during the immediate period following the November 1989 demonstration. But in the following months with the development of the Czechoslovak political structure the future of Charter 77 was evidently not as clear by the end of 1989.

In March 1990 Information Service (Informační Servis) published an article by Jan Ruml under the title "What to do with Charter 77? The Future of the Most Important Public Initiative of Czechoslovakia Remains a Mystery".<sup>177</sup> His article was published prior to the first general assembly of Charter 77 signatories. The assembly that should include for the first time all of Charter 77 signatories was to be held on March 18, 1990. Jan Ruml, in his article, outlined not only his concerns regarding Charter 77 survival in the Democratic Czechoslovakia, but also the premise that supported the need for an association such as Charter 77:

It is obvious: the current predicament is supporting earlier forecasts, that Charter 77, which was artificially held together by

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<sup>176</sup> "Jednání kolektivu mluvčích Charty 77". *VIA PRAHA OS* (Informační servis Východoevropské Informační Agentury), 17.12.1989, p. 2. "Z rozpravy na zasedání kolektivu mluvčích vyplínulo, že Charta 77 bude ve své činnosti pokračovat, neboť k porušování lidských práv bude docházet i v demokratickém společenském uspořádání. Jako aktuální se v tomto smyslu jevila některým účastníkům zasedání obrana sociálních práv příslušníků dosavadních byrokratických struktur, např. příslušníků StB. Na zasedání vznikla pracovní skupina, která vytvoří návrh nového dokumentu Charty 77, v němž by měl být znovu formulován smysl práce Charty 77, pojednání o jejich perspektivách a aktuálních úkolech".

<sup>177</sup> "Co s Chartou 77? Budoucnost nejvýznamější Občanské iniciativy Československa zůstává otázkou".

the totalitarian State Police repressions, would still have its importance, but the miracle of the signatories' solidarity, which helped Charter 77 to survive, would be dismantled. Due to these facts it is vital to understand that the Charter 77 solidarity did not function solely because of pressure by the system. It was based on a singular idea of morality against the ideology of immorality. This idea was the main motto for a collective tolerance, deference and the ability to fathom the persecutions of others as your own demur.<sup>178</sup>

Regarding the concept of Charter 77 remaining active or the need for a similar organization Jan Ruml speculated:

The situation of an outside freedom, in which we due to our exertions belong, does not negate the concept of Charter 77.... We are starting again from almost nothing. Being influenced by the recent past, Charter 77 continues to address us with its preceding inexorable and incorruptible voice, which informs us about our own responsibility as a human being for him/herself and other things.... If a person does not want to be only an awkward part of History, he/she must continuously enmesh him/herself with something. Within Charter 77 every person has an opportunity to comprehend this idea.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Jan Ruml. "Co s Chartou 77?: Budoucnost nejvýznamější Občanské iniciativy Československa zůstává otázkou". *Informační servis*. No.50. 6.3.-13.3. 1990. p.2. "Jedno je jisté: skutečnost svědčí hlasům, které předpověděly že policejní represí totalitního státu uměle stmelovaná Charta 77 sice neztratí své opodstatnění, že se však rozpadne mnohdy až závažná pospolitost signatářů, jež umožnila Chartě všechno přežít. Zde je nutno si uvědomit že solidarita uvnitř Charty 77 nefungovala pouze vlivem tlaku systému. Byla to společně sdílená idea mravnosti oproti ideologii nemravnosti, jež byla hlavním motivem pro vzájemnou toleranci, úctu a schopnost považovat pronásledování druhého za vlastní újmu."

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.* "Situace vnější svobody, v níž jsme se také vlastním přičiněním octli, myšlenku Charty 77 bezprostředně neakcentuje.... Začínáme jako by znovu a znova. A jak na nás dychá právě uplynulá epocha, hovoří Charta 77 svým dřívějším neuprosným a nepodplatitelným hlasem, upozorujícím na odpovědnost člověka za sebe sama i za věci jiné.... Nechce-li člověk být pouze jejich [dějin] trapným příběhem, musí neustále sám sebe nečím přesahovat. Charta 77 byla a pořád ještě je příležitostí, aby si to uvědomil."

The question regarding Charter 77 survival continued to tease the minds of Charter 77 signatories throughout Charter 77 last years of its existence. At the beginning of the Czechoslovak new political system. Charter 77 did not lose its original importance as a watch dog over political decisions, but with the increasing democratization of Czechoslovakia, its mandate could be seen as obsolete.

The debates regarding Charter 77 continuance perpetuated until Charter 77 second general assembly in 1991. At this assembly Václav Havel expressed his ceaseless support of Charter 77 survival: Perhaps, one day Charter 77 will be the only thing to which the society will be able, due to its moral values, look up to.<sup>180</sup> František Janouch explores Václav Havel's idea by the following:

In the societies that move from Totalitarianism to Democracy various unpredictable events, occurrences and antitheses can occur. It is important that we have a public association ready to act.... The reason is that we, in Czechoslovakia, have black and white ideas regarding Freedom and Democracy: we believe that when we destroy the governing of one totalitarian government everything will be wonderful. But everything is more complicated. What was able to be accomplished in November 1989 does not mean that this country does not need public independent associations. On the contrary! Without them we can be swept to a dead end street. Correctly stated we can move from

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<sup>180</sup> Václav Havel in Václav Slavík. "Charta 77, jak dál?". *Rudé Právo*. Vol.1, No.53. 4.3.1991. p.3. "možná, že jednou bude Charta to poslední, o co se bude moci společnost jako záchytný bod těchto hodnot opřít."

Totalitarianism to Democracy and than back again.<sup>181</sup>

The continuation of Charter 77 was, for many signatories a guarantee of a democratic process in Czechoslovakia. It would prevent the return of any kind of totalitarianism

Some Charter 77 signatories believed that during the following years, Charter 77 should concentrate on the issues that were not included in its agenda prior November 1989. Therefore Charter 77 had to refocus its initiatives towards the issues<sup>182</sup> that had resurfaced in Czechoslovakia after November 1989:

Not all of our documents are published. Therefore there is some kind of censorship. This is the reason why it is important to talk about these things.... Before it was enough to focus on Human Rights issues, but now the pinnacle of ideas and professionalism is much higher.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Jana Klusáková. "Hovoříme s profesorem Františkem Janouchem: Lecos je jinnak". *Lidové Noviny (Nedělní vydání)*. Vol. 4, No. 93. 20. 4. 1991. p.1. "Ve společnostech, které přecházejí od totality k demokracii, může dojít k různým nenadálостem, příhodám a zvrátům. Je důležité, aby bylo Občanské Hnutí, připravené zasáhnout.... V Československu totiž máme o demokracii a svobodě černobilou představu: doufáme, že odbouráme vládu jedné totalitní formace a všechno bude v pořádku. Je to ovšem mnohem složitější. To, co se podařilo uskutečnit v listopadu 1989 neznamena, že tato země nepotřebuje nezávislé Občanské společnosti. Naopak! Bez nich se můžeme znovu dostat na slepou kolej, odněkud tamtéž; přesněji řečeno od totality k demokracii a zpět.

<sup>182</sup> The growing racism and discrimination against some parts of Czechoslovak society.

<sup>183</sup> Miroslav Šiška. "S Hanou Ponickou o Chartě 77 a Česko-Slovenských vztazích: Je lepší vrabec v hrsti". *Rudé Právo*. Vol.1, No. 220. 20. 9. 1991. p.1. "Ne všechny naše dokumenty jsou přijímané a uveřejňované. Existuje tedy jistá cenzura, což je podkladem toho, že jsou věci které je třeba říkat.... Dříve víceméně stačilo ovládnout oblast lidských práv, dnes latka nároků na odbornost stoupá."



To accomplish its tasks, Charter 77, according to Alena Hromádková, had to define its new identity:

It is a question of finding a new identity in this new era - for now I can accurately point out only one: Charter 77 is an association of people who battle under the circumstances that to others may seem hopeless.<sup>184</sup>

Alena Hromádková saw Charter 77 new identity as its departure from "an abstract Left oriented broadness" towards an increasingly positive capitalistic dogmatism.<sup>185</sup> Therefore, some signatories believed that the continuity of Charter 77 could be guaranteed only by its modernization by creating from Charter 77 a political body; the original Charter 77 purposes had become irrelevant.

The problem of Charter 77's survival lingered throughout 1992. The signatories interviews with magazine Listy, in 1992 outlined this constant problem. There were two major camps among Charter 77 signatories, representing two diametrically different ideas. Some of them, for example, Radim Palouš and Jiří

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<sup>184</sup> Robert Dengler, "Zápasíme s hloupostí, zlobou i sebou samými: mluvčí Charty 77 Alena Hromádková o přemáhání zla v nás", *Rudé Právo*, Vol.1, No. 257, 29.10.1991, p.3. "To je otázka pro hledání nové identity v nové době - zatím mohu se vši rozhodností prohlásit jen jedno: i nadále to [Charta 77] je z velké části společenství lidí bojující v podmínkách, jež se druhým zdají být beznadějně."

<sup>185</sup> Alena Hromádková, "Co s Chartou 77?", *Studentské Listy*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1990, p.4. "abstraktní levicové vágnosti."

Hájek, supported the idea of maintaining Charter 77. In their opinion Charter 77 should play the role of a watchdog overseeing the Czechoslovak Government's record regarding Human Rights. Other signatories, such as Ladislav Hejdlánek and Libuše Šilhánová, believed that Charter 77 should cease its activities and terminate its present existence. The political activities of some Charter 77 signatories could not, in some signatories perceptions, guarantee Charter 77 political independence in the same spirit as it had prior 1989.<sup>186</sup>

As a result of this ongoing problem, Charter 77, in November 1992 published its final document which was signed by all signatories from the period of 1987-1992. This document presented the cessation of Charter 77 active life:

Charter 77 - as an informal public association - ceased its historical role. Some elements of its founding document, its free structure and its way of functioning were designed to work in the totalitarian system in which Charter 77 was born. This environment required a specific character of public activities which is not applicable in the free society. Because this we have decided to end Charter 77 existence. To maintain the Charter 77 legacy, we have named a group of signatories: Rudolf Battěk, Dana Němcová, and Jozef Vohrizek [to act as the custodians of the Charter 77's ideas].<sup>187</sup>

The document stressed Charter 77 ideas and suggested that Charter 77

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<sup>186</sup> "Charta 77: Zda být či nebýt, a když být tak jak". *Listy*. Vol. XXII, No.1.1992. pp. 6-16.

<sup>187</sup> *Listy*. Vol. XXII, No.6. 1992. p. 42. "Charta 77 - jako neformální občanská iniciativa - dohrála svou historickou roli. Některé prvky jejího základního prohlášení, její volná struktura a způsob její práce odpovídaly totiž totalitním poměrům, ve kterých vznikla. Tyto poměry vyžadovaly specifický a ve svobodných podmínkách nepoužitelný model veřejného působení. Proto jsme se rozhodli práci Charty 77 uzavřít. Péči o odkaz Charty 77 pověřujeme kolektiv mluvčích Rudolfa Battěka, Danu Němcovou a Josefa Vohryzka."

signatories should continue to devote themselves to the Charter 77 legacy and to sustaining Charter 77 presence in their everyday lives.

Although there were many factors that influenced Charter 77's final decision to conclude its activities, both internally and externally, the internal problems among the signatories played the most vital role in Charter 77 discord. Jiří Vančura summarized this idea in his speech at the Fourth Schwarzenberk Assembly<sup>188</sup> in September 1995. According to Vančura, the combination of two situations were the reasons for Charter 77 inability to continue its activities: (1) the departure of key signatories from Charter 77 after November 1989 and (2) the old Charter 77 signatories' failure to accept new signatories after November 1989<sup>189</sup>. In addition, the behaviour of Alena Hromádková, one of the Charter 77 spokespersons during 1991-1992 period, was rejected when she tried to redefine Charter 77 into a charitable organization for socially less fortunate signatories. This was a signal of Charter 77's departure from its primary focus. Therefore, "the final declination of Charter 77 was not accomplished by its adversaries and enemies, but by the signatories themselves."<sup>190</sup> In the end, the inability of signatories to adjust to the new public demands, was the main reason why Charter 77 signatories could not preserve and maintain an association

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<sup>188</sup> The meeting of former dissidents named after the place where it was held..

<sup>189</sup> They distrusted those who signed Charter 77 after November 1989.

<sup>190</sup> Jiří Vančura. "Pro IV schwarzenberské setkání". The photocopy of original speech donated by Jiří Vančura during my visit of The Czech Republic. September 1995. p. 11. "závěrečný úpadek Charty 77 nezpůsobili její odpůrci či nepřátelé, za ten můžeme především my chartisté sami".

which helped to destroy the Communist supremacy in Czechoslovakia.

Even when Charter 77 discontinued its active life in its primal form, some of the signatories continued their regular or irregular meetings. The difference was that the meetings were rarely attended by all, but were divided, depending on individual signatories relationships and sadly, their political beliefs.

Unfortunately, some of the signatories had grouped themselves around Peter Cibulka. They rejected Charter 77 termination and tried to maintain the Charter 77 in some form. The main result was that Cibulka's Charter 77 have preserved only the name. The prime goal of Cibulka has been to change his Charter 77 into a Right Wing organization that would bar ex-Communists from its membership.<sup>191</sup> For the former Charter 77 signatories this has been a total disgrace to Charter 77's legacy. Therefore, the majority of Charter 77 signatories disassociated themselves from Cibulka's Charter 77.

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<sup>191</sup> Jiří Vančura. "My jsme Charta nová". *Listy*. Vol. XXII. No. 3. 1993. p. 47.

## Chapter IV

### The Cord

As in any association, Charter 77 activities, decisions and philosophy were based on ideas of the most influential and experienced signatories. They were able to formulate their opinions in procedures that were acceptable and understandable by the majority of signatories. Later, their objectives become the moral obligations of Charter 77 directives. The signatories who influenced Charter 77 development the most ranged from a former Communist Jiří Hájek to a philosopher Ladislav Hejdínek or anti-Communist Václav Benda.

Two men in Charter 77 legacy stand above them all. Professor Jan Patočka and the present President of The Czech Republic Václav Havel. Although Patočka's presence in Charter 77 was short, due to his death as a result of police interrogations, his philosophical and moral<sup>192</sup> values influenced Charter 77 for the rest of its active life. Patočka's philosophical legacy together with Václav Havel's personality and beliefs become the spinal cord of Charter 77 and outlined Charter 77 philosophical and moral objectives that became Charter 77's unwritten rules. Although Havel's continuous emphasis on moral and social justice excluding militant anti-Government actions was criticized, it proved to be

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<sup>192</sup> His beliefs in moral and social justice of all citizens based on human equality without any political oppression.

correct not only during Charter 77 active life, but mainly after November 1989 Taking a pro-militant role as was forwarded by the younger generation, Charter 77 would not have been able to survive the Communist Government oppression and the Velvet Revolution would not have been occurred without human sacrifices. The correctness of their approach carries Charter 77's legacy into the present day.

Jan Patočka was born on June 1, 1907. He died on March 3, 1977. He graduated with a University Degree from Philosophy (Habilitation). His World-wide and European importance grew mainly during the period after 1948 when he was for his beliefs and humanitarian thoughts dismissed from the Charles University of Prague where he was lecturing. He was not reinstated to professorship until 1968. In 1971 he was pressed to take unwanted retirement from the University. He continued his lectures in privacy at the so called Patočka's University until his death in 1977.<sup>193</sup>

Patočka's world-prestige is illustrated by the fact that in 1935 he was visited by Edmund Husserl one of the leading European philosophers. Later, during the 1960's he was visited by Jean-Paul Sartre. His home University were meeting places not only for the Czechoslovak students but also for people living abroad "who now represent the entering European civilization". To recognize his World-wide importance the University of Cachy presented Patočka in 1972 with

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<sup>193</sup> Vilém Prečan, ed., *Charter77. op.cit.* p. 482.

a Honorary PhD in absentia.<sup>194</sup>

One of the most important parts of his life was during the last months before his death. At the end of 1976 and the beginning of 1977, Patočka become one of the vital founding fathers of Charter 77. His philosophical beliefs which promoted "standards of Truth and Goodness, standards of authentic humanity"<sup>195</sup> become the manifesto of Charter 77 for its entire active live.

According to Patočka, Charter 77 was an association of people who based their beliefs on moral obligations to promote, without any political or personal gains, Civil and Human Rights:

It means that the signatories do not act on the behalf of their own interest, but from an onus, from an order, which is above any political obligations and political rights and which is their real and correct paradigm. The Charter 77 signatories do not claim a title to any political offices and any unique amendments; they do not want to be any moral authority or any 'conscience of society'; they do not rise themselves above anybody and do not judge anybody: their struggle aims only towards sheltering the purity of thought that there is some higher authority and that they are obligated to it by their consciences and the various states by their signatures....<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> "Celým životem filosof". *Listy*. Vol.XXII. No. 2. 1992. p.12. "kteří dnes representují nastupující evropské civilizace". p. 12.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.* p.12. "úroveň Pravdy a Dobra, úroveň opravdového lidství".

<sup>196</sup> Jan Patočka . "O povinnosti bránit se proti bezpraví". In Vilém Prečan. *Charta 77. op.cit.* p.33. "To znamená že signatáři nejednají ze soukromého zájmu, nýbrž z pouhé povinnosti, z příkazu, který stojí výše než politické závazky a politická práva a je jejich pravým, jedině spolehlivým základem. Signatáři Charty 77 si nedělají nárok ani na politické funkce, ani na zvláštní práva, nechtějí být žádnou morální autoritou, žádným 'svědomím společnosti', nepovyšují se nad

The signatories should draw attention to the problems regarding the society and to try to define possible solutions regarding the misconducts that violated the basic Human and Civil Rights in Czechoslovakia. They should base their judgments on their beliefs of Truth and Humanity.

Martin Palouš summarized Patočka's philosophical ideas regarding Charter 77:

According to Patočka, there was only one thing which those who decided to join the movement [Charter 77] agree upon: the conviction that man as man is obligated to resist injustice and that this obligation 'entails the responsibility to inform anyone about, whatever, injustice to which an individual is subjected....' The only 'program' of the Charter, in Patočka's view, was a kind of modern version of classical Socratism: not to compete for political power or undermine the criminal regime through clandestine operations, but to bring truth, morality and virtue back into the corrupted and ideologically empty public discourse....<sup>197</sup>

Patočka's 'Moral Justice', which was above any political ambitions and which was based on the social equality and tolerance of people, was in his lucidity the only logical pattern that Charter 77 signatories should follow and promote.

After Patočka's death the moral obligation to follow his legacy rested upon Charter 77 signatories. One of the most important personalities among Charter

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nikoho a nikoho neodsuzují, jejich usilování směřuje pouze k tomu, aby zachovali při životě a čistotě vědomí, že taková vyšší autorita existuje a že jsou jí povinni svým svědomím a státy svými podpisy...."

<sup>197</sup> Martin Palouš. "Evolution of Human Rights Groups: From Dissidence to Public Interest Law". *Czech Helsinki Committee*. p.3. The photocopy of the original paper donated by Martin Palouš during my visit of the Czech Republic.



77 signatories who decided to sustain, promote and develop Patočka's ideas was Václav Havel. He was born on October 5, 1936. Between 1955-1957 he studied in the Faculty of Economy at the Technical University of Prague.

After his military service in 1957 he worked as a stage technician at the Theatre ABC in Prague. Later he became a theatre playwright and author. In 1966 Havel finished studies of drama at the Faculty of Academy of Musical Arts in Prague. Since 1968 he was self employed as a writer and dramatist. During the period 1968-1970 he was a Chairman of Club of Independent Writers. The first time he was arrested and charged with subversion of the state was in 1969 when he signed a document rejecting the process of normalization. Since 1970 he was, for most of the time, employed as a labourer.

In 1976-1977 Havel was one of the founding fathers of Charter 77 and its first signatory and spokesperson. For his activities he was many times interrogated and imprisoned by the Czechoslovak authorities. Due to his many imprisonments his health was weakened and he never fully recovered since. In 1998 Havel undertook a few surgeries due to his poor health. After November, 17 1989 he became active in the Civic Forum and was one of the key figures who negotiated the political transformation in Czechoslovakia from Communism to Democracy. On December 29, 1989 he was elected the President of Czechoslovakia and later after her division into two independent states of Czech and Slovaks in December 1992. Havel was elected the President of The Czech

Republic. He has served as President ever since. Havel holds many honorary degrees from various Universities around the World and he was twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>198</sup>

During his mission as a Charter 77 signatory, Václav Havel continued the anti-political policy of Charter 77 and promoted the dialogue approach with the Communist Government instead of the more militant technique. His idea of dialogue with the Communist Regime helped to protect not only Charter 77, but also the Czechoslovak public from any possible militant repressions by Czechoslovak authorities. Furthermore, his ideology of dialogue promoted Humanitarian and Moral means and values needed to 'correct' the totalitarian system without rejecting the social values of tolerance and understanding on which the society should be based.

In Havel's model society the citizens should play the most important role during the decision making process. Only their moral values and virtue together with humanity can guarantee their rights and social advantages. His disbelief that a multi-political system can guarantee this is obvious in the following statement:

The political turn towards a real person I see as something more important than the turn towards regular tools of Western (or in the other words Bourgeois) Democracy. If in 1968 I believed that our problems could be resolved by establishing some opposition party.

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<sup>198</sup> Martin Hodný, ed., *Českoslovenští politici, 1918/1991: Stručné životopisy*. M.Hodný: Praha, 1991. pp. 34-35.

which would be able to publicly compete for the power with the ruling party. I now know that this process is not as simple, because no opposition party can on its own - as any new election law - guarantee the society that it [society] would not become the victim of a new rape.<sup>199</sup>

Havel's vision of a new social structure of society moved far beyond the democratic structure of the Western World.

His 'post-Democratic society' of which Charter 77 was the first step was based on ideas of existentialism:

The prospect of 'existentialist revolution' is ... mainly a prospect of 'moral revitalization of society' that means a radical renewal of authentic individuals towards, what I [Havel] call 'a human order' (which cannot be substituted by any political order). A new experience of being; renewed and established in universality; a newly granted 'higher responsibility'; a newly founded interpersonal relationship to another human being and towards the human community: this is the path towards which we should incline to.<sup>200</sup>

He continues to outline the importance of humanity instead of any kind of

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<sup>199</sup> Václav Havel. *Moc Bezmocných*. Lidové Noviny: Praha, 1990. p. 61. "Obrat politické pozornosti ke konkrétnímu člověku vidím jako cosi podstatně hlubšího než je obrat k obvyklým mechanismům západní (anebo - chcete-li - buržoazní) demokracie. A jestli jsem si ještě v roce 1968 myslel, že se náš problém vyřeší založením nějaké opoziční strany, které bude umožněno veřejně soutěžit o moc se stranou dosud vládnoucí, pak už dávno vím, že tak snadno to vskutku nepůjde a že žádná opoziční strana sama o sobě - tak jako žádný nový volební zákon sám o sobě - nemůže garantovat společnost, že se nestane brzy obětí nějakého nového znásilnění."

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.* p.61. "Perspektiva 'existenciální revoluce' je ... především perspektivou mravní rekonstrukce společnosti. to znamená radikální obnovu autentického vztahu člověka k tomu, co jsem nazval 'lidským řádem' (a co nemůže být suplováno žádným řádem politickým). Nová zkušenost bytí; obnovené zakotvení v univerzu; nově uchopená 'vyšší odpovědnost'; znovu nalezený vnitřní vztah k druhému člověku a k lidské pospolitosti; to je zřejmě směr, o který půjde."

political interactions. In his opinion, this should translate to a society that would replace the needs for government institutions. The regular principles of control and discipline would be replaced by "people's self-control and self-obedience".<sup>201</sup>

Havel's ideology based on moral values of Truth and Morality, similarly to Patočka's own philosophy, continues to govern his life even during his Presidency. In 1990 during his New Years Address to the Czechoslovak citizens Havel, stated his hope:

Maybe you will ask about what kind of republic I dream. I can answer to you: about a republic that will be independent, free, democratic, about a republic that will economically prosper and at the same time will be socially unbiased, in short about a humanistic republic, which will serve people and therefore will have hope that people will serve her. About a republic of multipurpose educated people, because without them it is impossible to solve any of our problems. Humanistic, economic, ecological, social and political.<sup>202</sup>

He outlined the basis elements of his philosophy in the address to the members of Parliament of The Czech Republic on February 23, 1993:

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<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.* p.62. "lidskou sebekontrolou a sebekázní".

<sup>202</sup> Václav Prečan, ed., *Václav Havel: Projevy, Leden-Červen 1990*. . Nakladatelství Vyšehrad: Praha, 1990. p.18. "možná že se ptáte, o jaké republice sním. Odpovím vám: o republice samostatné, svobodné, Demokratické, o republice hospodářsky prosperující a zároveň sociálně spravedlivé, zkrátka o republice lidské, která slouží člověku, a proto má naději, že i člověk poslouží ji. O republice všestranně vzdělaných lidí, protože bez nich nelze řešit žádný z našich problémů. Lidských, ekonomických, ekologických, sociálních i politických."

The theme of moral political objectives and basically humanistic demeanor resurfaces in our history often. It can almost be said, that it is one of our leading motives. The sense of gradual self-responsibility towards objectives of humanistic society seems to erupt from experiences that peaceful existence in our dimension is impossible if there is not Peace around us. It was probably our geopolitical locus that taught us not to only care for ourselves but to foster in us a concept for moral political diameter. For Masaryk, the ethic was a authentic base for Democracy; and not that long ago it was Jan Patočka, who again prioritized the political importance of truth as a moral pinnacle.<sup>203</sup>

Havel's ideas of Truth and Morality proved to be a sound vision during Charter 77 active life and continues to be the moral mirror of the Political actuality in the present Czech Republic. Without his and Patočka's philosophical beliefs, Charter 77 would not represent the moral values that make up Charter 77's ultimate legacy.

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<sup>203</sup> Václav Havel. 1992 & 1993. Paseka: Praha, 1994. p. 55. "Téma mravních východisek politiky a vůbec lidského konání se vynořuje v našich dějinách často, dalo by se dokonce říci, že je jedním z jejich vůdčích motivů. Pocit zvýšené spoluodpovědnosti za věci lidského společenství zde možná pramení ze zkušenosti, že pokojný život v našem prostoru je nemyslitelný, není-li mír i kolem nás. Zřejmě to tedy bylo samo naše geopolitické postavení, které nás naučilo nezajímat se jen o nás samé a pěstovalo v nás smysl pro mravní rozměr politiky. Pro Masaryka byl etický základ demokracie samozřejmostí a nedávno to byl Jan Patočka, kdo znovu zreflektoval politický význam pravdy jako veličiny mravní."

## Epilogue and Conclusion

When visiting The Czech Republic in 1996. I found that the hopes of creating a perfect Democracy had not been achieved. The developing Democracy did not erase the problems which were the focus of Charter 77 during its existence. The growing problems of racial discrimination against the Romany (Gypsy) people living in the Czech Republic and the lustration laws prohibiting the high ranking Communists of the former Czechoslovak Communist Party from holding any significant governmental posts were examples of the wrongly implemented Democracy.

Because the new Democratic system failed to solve the increasing discrimination and social problems of the Czech society, The Czech Republic needs a public association similar to Charter 77. Founded on the non-political principles by people with diverse political views, Charter 77 guaranteed nonpartisan, sound criticism of political mismanagement by the former Communist Government. The non-political principles of Charter 77, supported by the majority of its signatories, were crucial for conducting its activities effectively. In the pluralistic society which was born after November 1989 an association based on the same principles would help define the problems that the society has encountered. It would undertake the same functions as groups such as The Canadian Civil Liberation Association and the Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties.

Charter 77 was found in January 1977 as a direct result of Czechoslovak Government totalitarian practices when dealing with Human and Civic Rights of its citizens. Although the International Treaty on Human and Civic Rights was incorporated into the Czechoslovak Constitution, the Communist Government practices were far from those that were expected by ordinary citizens. Disappointed with the Czechoslovak Government implementation of Human Rights, a group of Czechoslovak citizens decided to form an independent non-political association which would observe Czechoslovak Government records on the Civic and Human Rights. The association had no formal membership. The affiliation with Charter 77 was based on signing various documents that Charter 77 published during its active life. The signatories belonged to various political trends, from former Communists, who were dismissed from the Czechoslovak Communist Party after the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968, to intellectuals, representatives of the underground, anti-Communists and others. To avoid conflict among the signatories Charter 77 chose non-political and non-militant approaches when dealing with the Czechoslovak Government. To be able to arrive at consensus, Charter 77 established, from various Charter 77 political fractions, the Core of Charter 77 Signatories. In addition, three spokespersons from former Communist, intellectuals and the underground were chosen each year to represent Charter 77. They, together with former spokespersons, were the Core of Charter 77. Immediately after its establishment Charter 77 was attacked by the Czechoslovak authorities and its signatories were imprisoned and interrogated

by the Czechoslovak police. Nevertheless, Charter 77 was able to survive until the final encounter with Communism and become one of the most important dissident groups in Czechoslovakia.

Unfortunately Charter 77 was unable to survive in the post-Communist Czech Republic due to the immaturity of some signatories who, although they could function without any political prejudice during Charter 77's active life, could not respect the differences within a political pluralistic society. Due to their inability to evolve they were unable to adjust themselves to the rapid political changes and to understand the problems that were presented to Charter 77 after 1989: to accept post-1989 signatories and to develop new perspectives that would reflect the needs of a Democratic society. A revitalized Charter 77 should reflect its primary mission and try to ignore political differences among signatories. But the growing desire of some signatories to advance themselves politically and the contrasting lack of interest of others to remain active destroyed the pluralistic law of political tolerance within Charter 77. The Charter 77 signatories foreseeing these problems had no other choice than to abolish Charter 77's active life, before more dramatic changes in its structure would lead to its politicization.

Charter 77 encountered similar difficulties prior 1989 however the political tolerance among the Charter 77 signatories members helped Charter 77 overcome these problems to accomplish its main mission - the criticism of



Czechoslovak Communist Government's poor record regarding Human Rights. As the political changes in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc after 1985 slowly undermined the power of the Communist Government new bolder political forces started to emerge. The friction among the ex-Communists signatories and non-Communists signatories inhibited many of Charter 77 decision processes. The signatories were able to overcome these problems to become a major leading force of the Czechoslovak dissent because of the need to continue their task of forcing the Czechoslovak Communist Government from power after the student demonstration on November 17, 1989.

Prior to 1989, Charter 77 had to deal with its isolation from the rest of the Czechoslovak society due to the Czechoslovak institutional pressure. To eliminate the threat of becoming a Ghetto culture, Charter 77 tried to open itself to the public by introducing the idea of "parallel communities". The concept of individual communities were appealing to intellectually or culturally educated individuals who were not Charter 77 signatories and this opened Charter 77 to a larger public. In addition, the so called Generation problem within Charter 77 during the second half of the 1980's put pressure on Charter 77 to act more aggressively than before. As a result of this new influx, Charter 77 become more publicly active during the late 1980's. The increase of public activity helped Charter 77 to overcome its isolation without compromising its non-political policy.

After the student demonstration on November 17, 1989 Charter 77 became active in the democratization process of Czechoslovakia. Together with other independent associations, Charter 77 established the Civic Forum which became the main political force dealing with the Communist regime during the Velvet Revolution. After the dismissal of the Communist Government, many signatories were elevated to strong political positions in the new Czechoslovak Government. Charter 77's leading figure, Václav Havel became the President of Czechoslovakia. Some signatories, however, chose to continue their non-political support of Charter 77's mission so as to shed light on political mishaps, like watchdogs, during the era of democratization. The growing political differences among the signatories and the public misconceptions of Charter 77 mission and its activities prior November 1989 created fatal issues for Charter 77. Unable to fully cope with these problems or to define a new role, Charter 77 ceased its activity in November 1992. Although new associations similar to Charter 77 were established in The Czech Republic none of them were of the same caliber as Charter 77.

During my Czech visit in 1996 I asked the Charter 77 signatories<sup>204</sup> about their perspectives of Charter 77 in 1996 and the need for a similar association. Only a few, more for nostalgia than reason, believed that Charter 77 would have a role in The Czech Republic today. The majority stressed the idea that an

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<sup>204</sup> Because Charter 77 was not a organization it could never be officially discontinued , therefore the Charter 77 signatories stay the signatories forever.

association like Charter 77 would be obsolete in the present Czech Republic. They believed that HOS and the new organizations, that were established after November 1989, such as Czech Helsinki Committee and the Movement Protecting Freedom and Tolerance together with political parties can execute an equal or improved mission than Charter 77 <sup>205</sup>

Regrettably, Charter 77 became a victim of its own structure. Founded on Professor Patočka's philosophical beliefs of political tolerance and social justice that were later perfected, after his death, by Václav Havel's humanistic non-political policy, Charter 77 could not survive political, sociological and economical competitiveness which was introduced by the reborn Capitalist society. In fact, the new political structure was alien to the majority of the signatories because they never lived in a Capitalist - Democratic system or were too young to internalize the Czechoslovakia Democratic period before Communism. Their lack of experience with a multi-party system became more evident during the political careers of some signatories. In some instances, their political immaturity and lack of experience with economic competition developed into a dissatisfaction with politics. Living no more among the people who were able to tolerate and to accept the variety of political views, the signatories were unable to make united decisions which were vital for Charter 77 survival.

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<sup>205</sup> The Collections of Interviews and Questionnaires in the author's possession.

The signatories' political virtue seemed to be dangerous to those who criticized Charter 77. Some criticism could be based on the genuine anti-Communist beliefs, where for others the motives were to discredit Charter 77 in order to make personal political and economical gains. To accomplish their task, they condemned Charter 77's acceptance of political pluralism that allowed the ex-Communists to be Charter 77 signatories. Some of them viewed the presence of ex-Communists as collaboration between Charter 77 and the former Communist Government. These attacks, combined with some signatories' growing political discontent with Charter 77 non-political policy made it impossible for Charter 77 to continue its activity after 1992.

Nevertheless, Charter 77 will remain one of the foremost dissident forces in The Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia) history because of its role in bringing down the Czechoslovak Communists' supremacy. The political changes which were introduced by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union that spread to Eastern Europe could not on their own fully and expeditiously deliver the necessary political changes in Czechoslovakia. Charter 77, owing to its previous activities and international and domestic importance, was able to provide mediation between the Communist Government and anti-Government dissidents' associations. Charter 77 was able to provide new political figures, from its signatories, who were needed after November 1989. Without these leaders' experiences with Charter 77 the political situation in Czechoslovakia during the Velvet Revolution might have been violent. Their passive non-political approach of dialogue

prevented possible bloodshed during the Velvet Revolution and allowed a smooth transition of the Communist system.

At the end, those who were involved with Charter 77 as signatories or as citizens of The Czech Republic should remember the Charter 77 message:

Retain Charter 77 within ourselves and within our neighbourhood as a moral legacy, that is not weakened by everyday politics, and remains as a solution in the instance that Human Rights may be trampled again. This has not happen yet, so we must do everything possible to keep it this way. Therefore, everybody should enforce and fight for these principles with the help of an organization that is closest to his/her beliefs.<sup>206</sup>

For the signatories, there are memories of their endless struggle and cooperation with strangers who become friends regardless of their political beliefs. Presently, many are unwilling to communicate with each other, hindered by the political differences that once bonded them. Nevertheless, they are forever connected through their past. It remains that they are morally responsible to continue the Charter 77 legacy in their daily lives.

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<sup>206</sup> Jiřina Šiklová. "Uchovejme Chartu v sobě". *Listy*. Vol. XXII, No. 2 .1992. p.9. "Uchovejme v sobě a ve svém okolí Chartu 77 jako morální odkaz, který není každodenní politikou oslabován, a jako postup a řešení pro případ, že zde budou znovu pošlapávána lidská práva. Zatím to není, a snažme se, aby k tomu již nikdy nedošlo. Tyto zásady ať každý prosazuje a bojuje za ně v takové organizaci, která je mu názorově nejbližší."

## Appendix I

### The Brief Biography of Interviewed Charter 77 Signatories<sup>207</sup>

#### Rudolf Battěk

Born in 1924 in Bratislava to Czech parents; 1932-1939 lived in Banská Bistřica; 1939 after the founding of the independent Slovak Republic his family was moved to Prague; 1943 finished his apprenticeship as a mechanic; at the end of the war participated in the anti-Nazi movement; 1952 graduated from the University and began working as an economist; 1958 for his refusal to participate during the Parliamentary elections dismissed from his job and employed as a mechanic in SONP Kladno; 1965 reinstated as a specialist in the Department of Sociology ČSAV; 1968 he was one of the founders of KAN (Club of engaged non-Party members); elected to the Czech National Council; 1969 for his participation in so called petition 'Ten points' divested of his parliamentary immunity and arrested; 1971 imprisoned; 1972 imprisoned for three and half years; December 1976 and January 1977 one of the founding signatories of Charter 77; 1980 a Charter 77 spokesperson; 1981 sentenced to seven and half years which was later reduced to five and half years; 1988 the founding member of HOS; 1989 signed the first manifest of the Civic Forum; 1990 elected as a representative of the Civic Forum into the Federal Assembly; 1992 left the

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<sup>207</sup> Not all interviewed signatories are included due to the lack of information.

parliamentary position: 1994 elected as a Chairperson of the European Movement in the Czech Republic; 1996 he was a candidate to the Senate of The Czech Republic; he was never a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

### **Jarmila Běliková**

A Charter 77 signatory since January 1977; imprisoned for seven months; she was never a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party; prior the Velvet Revolution worked as a social curator; involved in VONS; 1990 worked on a documentary for the Original Video Journal; 1996 employed as a psychologist.

### **Václav Benda**

Born in 1946; philosopher and mathematician; Doctor of Philosophy; until 1977 worked as a programmer; February 1, 1977 became a Charter 77 signatory; April 24, 1977 one of the founding members of VONS (Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted); 1979 a spokesperson of Charter 77; 1979 imprisoned for four years; 1984-1985 a Charter 77 spokesperson; he was never a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party; 1989 the member of the Civic Forum; 1989 a founding member of KDS (Christian Democratic Party); 1989 elected as a deputy to Czechoslovak Federal Assembly; working as an editor of philosophical journal PARAF; 1990 elected as a leader of Christian Democratic Party; presently works as a Director of Institute of Documentation and

Investigation of Crimes of Communism; 1996 a member of ODS (Public Democratic Party); has an honorary Doctorate.

### **John Bok**

He was never a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party; March 1977 a Charter 77 signatory; work as locomotive engineer, self employed; interrogated; imprisoned for three weeks; imprisoned in November 1989 for five days; a Charter 77 active signatory; after the Velvet Revolution a close associate of Václav Havel; 1990 a candidate of HOS to the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly; 1989 a member of the Civic Forum - Transnational Party; 1996 a technical manager; 1996 a civic activist.

### **Miloš Hájek**

Born 1931; a historian; for his involvement in the anti-Nazi movement sentenced by the Nazi to death; a PhD in philosophy, habilitation; 1941-1970 a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; 1968 a Director of Institute for History of Socialism; 1968 a deputy of Vysocanský Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; 1970 dismissed from the Communist Party, lost his job; January 1, 1977 a Charter 77 signatory; 1988-1989 a Charter 77 spokesperson; 1988 a founding member of OBRODA; interrogated by the Czechoslovak police for his activities; 1989 a member of the Civic Forum- OBRODA; 1989 a Chairman of



OBRODA: involved in integration of OBRODA into ČSSD (Czech Social Democratic Party); 1996 a member of ČSSD; pensioner-historian.

### **Dana Němcová**

Born in 1934; graduated from the University; psychologist; 1976 dismissed from her employment for her support of discriminated musicians; January 1, 1977 a Charter 77 signatory; a VONS member since 1978; worked as a cleaning lady and caretaker; 1979 for her activities in VONS sentenced for two years with a probation; 1989-1990 a Charter 77 spokesperson, imprisoned in January 1990 for 10 days; after the Velvet Revolution worked for the Czech Helsinki Committee.

### **Martin Palouš**

Born 1950; 1974 a PhD in Natural Science; continued studies of philosophy; until 1977 worked as a programmer; January 1, 1977 a Charter 77 signatory; he was never a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party; 1977-1980 employed as a stoker and cleaner; 1980 employed as a programmer; 1986-1987 a Charter 77 spokesperson; wrote semizdat essays in philosophy; 1989 a deputy of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly;

**Petr Pithart**

Born in 1941; graduated from the Faculty of Law at the Charles university in Prague; 1960-1968 a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party; 1962-1970 an assistant on the department of theory of state and law at the Faculty of Law, Charles University of Prague; 1966-1968 a Chairman of the interdisciplinary committee; 1969 graduated at St. Antony's College in Oxford; 1968 dismissed from the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; 1970-1972 employed as a worker; 1977 a Charter 77 signatory; 1979-1989 semizdat writer; November 1989-February 1990 a member Coordinate Center of the Civic Forum; January 1990-June 1990 a deputy of Czechoslovak Federal Assembly; February 1990-June 1990 a vice-Chairman of Czechoslovak Government; June 1990 a deputy of the Czech National Council; 1996 elected to The Czech Republic Senate

**Jiří Ruml**

Born 1925; journalist; 1968 a Chairperson of the Journalist Union in Prague; 1945 a Czechoslovak Communist Party member; 1969 dismissed from the Communist Party; worked as a technician; January 1, 1977 a Charter 77 signatory; since 1977 employed as a worker; 1981-1982 imprisoned; 1984-1985 a Charter 77 spokesperson; October-November 1989 imprisoned; 1989 a candidate of the Civic Forum; 1989 a chief of the editorial staff of Lidové Noviny;

1990 a deputy of Czechoslovak Federal Assembly; presently a writer and pensioner.

### **Libuše Šilhánová**

Born 1929; journalist and sociologist; a PhD in philosophy; until 1970 a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; after 1970 employed as a worker; January 1, 1977 a Charter 77 signatory; 1987-1988 a Charter 77 spokesperson; a member of VONS; 1990 a deputy of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly;

### **Jaroslav Šabata**

Born 1927; psychologist, a PhD in philosophy, habilitation in psychology; a former docent at Purkyně University, Brno; a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; a regional Party functionary; 1968 a District Chairperson of Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Committee, Brno; 1969 expelled from the Party; since 1969 worked as a worker; 1971 sentenced to six and half years; 1976 released on a probation; January 1, 1977 a Charter 77 signatory; a Charter 77 spokesperson 1978. 1981-82. 1987-1987; 1978-1980 imprisoned; a VONS member; semizdat writer; 1990 a deputy of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly.

### **Jan Štern**

Born 1924; journalist and publicist; University diploma in philosophy and history; a member of The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; 1969 dismissed from the Communist Party; since 1969 worked as a worker; a Charter 77 signatory; 1986 -1987 a Charter 77 spokesperson; 1988 a founding member of HOS; presently pensioner.

### **Petruška Šustrová**

Born 1947; publicist; studied philosophy; 1969-1971 imprisoned for her activities in the group Movement of the Revolutionary Youths; worked as a post official; could not finish her studies; she was never a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party; January 1, 1977 a Charter 77 signatory; 1977 a VONS member; 1985-1986 a Charter 77 spokesperson.

## Appendix II

### Dotazník<sup>208</sup>

#### (Questionnaire)

'Charta 77: Boj, problémy a Výsledky'

'Charter 77: Struggle, Problems and Accomplishments'

Vážený Pane/Paní:

Důvod pro tento dotazník je získání údajů potřebných k ukončení diplomové práce z historie. Tato práce bude zaměřena na problémy v době trvání Charty 77 a na politické a životní úspěchy signatářů Charty 77 v současné české společnosti. Zaměřením se na období trvání Charty 77 před a po Sametové Revoluci pomůže objasnit jestli jejich bývalé názory a přesvědčení společně s podepsáním Charty 77 ovlivnují jejich současný život.

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<sup>208</sup> I included a summary of some answers. The Questionnaire was distributed to pre-November 17, 1989 Charter 77 signatories. There was about 1,400 signatories prior the November 17, 1989. The Questionnaire was distributed to 100 signatories. Twenty seven signatories returned the Questionnaire, 20 men and 7 women.

Výzkum je prováděn 'master' studentem panem Richardem Pešíkem na Manitobské Universite v Kanadě. Všechny informace získané za pomoci dotazníku budou použité jen pro akademické účely. Děkuji vám předem za Vaši spolupráci a pravdivost vašich odpovědí. V době mé návštěvy České Republiky během července a srpna 1996 bych rád navštívil některé obdržitelé dotazníku a uskutečnil s nimi rozhovor.

Když budete potřebovat více místa pro Vaše odpovědi na otázky, použijte prosím Vás další stránky.

Z akademických důvodů je dotazník proveden v obou jazycích.

Děkuji Vám za Vaši spolupráci

Richard Pešík

Prečtetě si celý dotazník než začnete odpovídat na jednotlivé otázky.

Sir/Madam:

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain data needed to complete a master's thesis in history. The thesis will focus on Charter 77 problems during its active life and on political and socioeconomic accomplishments of Charter 77

signatories in the present Czech society. The careful study of their lives prior and after the Velvet Revolution, will disclose whether they maintain their previous beliefs, but also how their affiliation with Charter 77 influenced their present lives.

The work will be conducted by a master's student Mr. Richard Pesik at the University of Manitoba. All the information collected throughout this questionnaire will be used for the academic purposes only. Your cooperation and sincerity are greatly appreciated. The questionnaire may be followed by an interview during my visit of the Czech Republic during July and August 1996.

If you need more space to answer the questions, please feel free to use additional paper.

For academic purposes the questionnaire is prepared in both languages.

Thank you for your participation

Richard Pesik

Please read the whole questionnaire before you answer the individual questions.

Jméno a příjmení:.....

(Full name)

Zaměstnání: **13 pensioners, writers, professors, priests, others**

(Occupation)

Současná politická příslušnost: **21 non, 1 DEU, 3 CSSD, 10DS, 1 SD-**

(Present political affiliation) **LSNS**

Politická příslušnost těsně po roce 1989: **6 OF, 2 CSSD, 1KDS, 1 OF-**

(Political affiliation shortly after 1989) **OBRODA, 1 LSD**

Politická příslušnost před rokem 1989: **1 Democratic Initiative,**

(Political affiliation prior 1989) **1 OBRODA**

Byl/a jste někdy členem Československé Komunistické Strany: **15**

(Were you ever a member of the Communist party of Czechoslovakia)



Jestliže ano, kdy a jak dlouho: **between 24 to 16 years**

(If yes, when and for how long)

Kdy jste se zapojil do Charty 77: **the end of 1976 till beginning of**

(When did you join Charter 77) **1977**

Jak dlouho jste byl/a signatářem/kou Charty 77: **never ended**

(For how long were you a Charter 77 signatory)

Jaká byla Vaše pozice v Chartě 77: **7 spokespersons**

(What was your position within Charter 77)

Byl/a jste uvězněn/a Československými úřady za Vaši spolupráci s Chartou 77:  
**19 - imprisoned or interrogated**

(Were you imprisoned by the Czechoslovak Government during your participation in Charter 77)

Jestliže ano, kolikrát a jak dlouho jste byl/a uvězněn/a po každou dobu Vašeho uvěznění: **varies from hours to days and years**

(If yes, how many times and for how long each time of your imprisonment)

Jaké bylo/y Vaše zaměstnání před Sametovou Revolucí: **varies**

(What was your occupation(s) prior the Velvet Revolution)

Jaký byl Váš měsíční příjem před Sametovou revolucí: **varies**

(What was your monthly income prior the Velvet revolution)

Zlepšila se Vaše životní úroveň po Sametové Revoluci: **18 - yes**

(Has your standard of living improved after the Velvet Revolution)

Jestliže ano/ne, jak: **varies**

(If yes/no, which way)

Jaký je Váš současný měsíční příjem [nemusíte odpovídet]: **varies**

(What is your present monthly income [optional])

Jaká byla Vaše politická činnost během Sametové Revoluce a během následujícího roku: **3 - none**

(What were your political activities during the Velvet Revolution and the following year)

Věříte že lidská práva jsou zaručena pro všechny občany v současné České Republice: **11 no, 4 yes and no**

(Do you believe that the Human Rights as they are outlined by the Constitution are guaranteed to all citizens of the present Czech Republic)

Jestliže ano, jak: **Constitution, political pluralism, etc.**

(If yes, how)

Jestliže ne, proč: **racial problems, Lustration law, not enforced and**

(If no, why) **followed, etc.**

Věříte že organizace jako byla Charta 77 je potřebná v současné České Republice: **5 yes, 2 yes and no**

(Do you believe that there is a need for an organization similar to Charter 77 in the present Czech Republic)

Jestliže ano, proč: **to outline and monitor problems in the present**

(If yes, why) **Czech Republic**

Jestliže ne, proč: **new organizations which can present better**

(If not, why) outcome were established since 1989; political pluralism.

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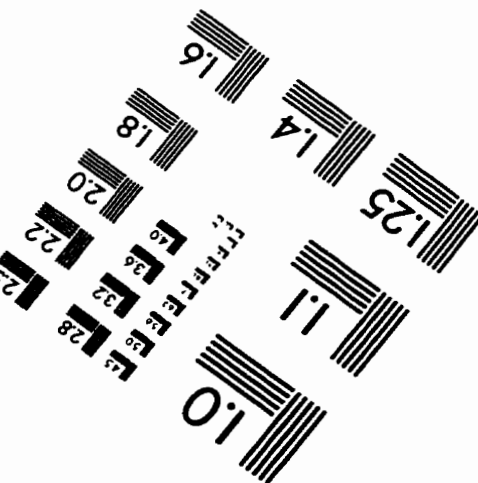
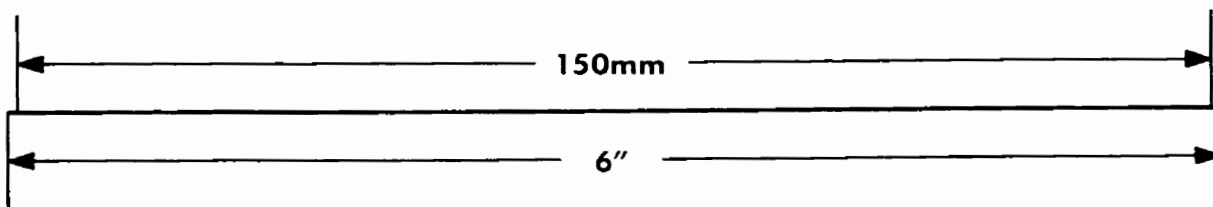
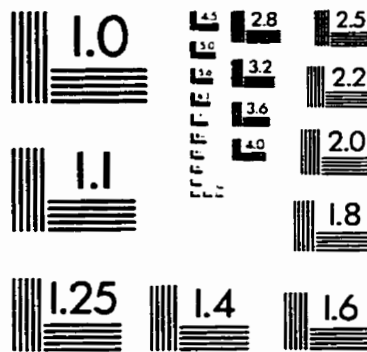
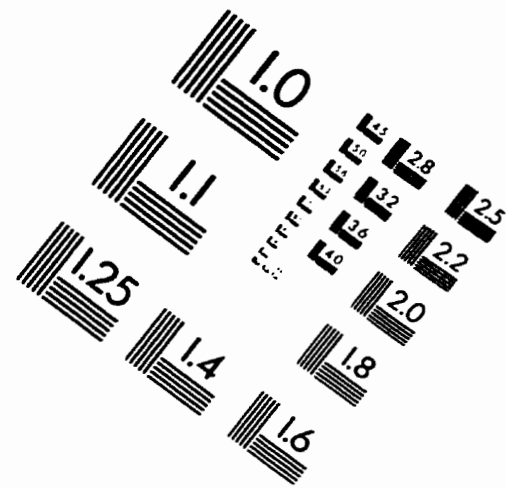
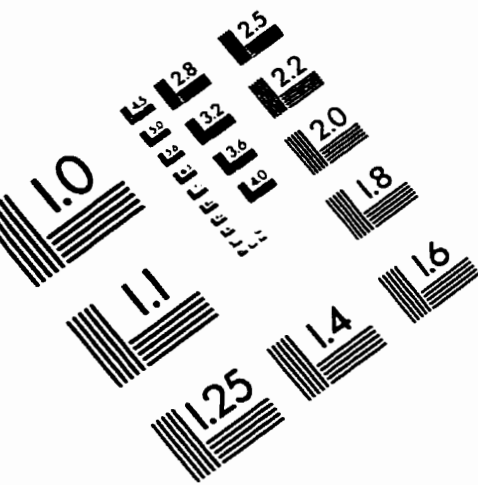
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