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Dear Colleagues,

2011 has been a year of milestones in Czech culture and politics, which have been observed by various institutions in and beyond the Czech Republic. Throughout the year, performers and fans of classical music from Prague to L.A. to Shanghai have celebrated the 170th anniversary of the birth of Antonín Dvořák; a sampling of celebrations in the U.S. can be reviewed at www.mutualinspirations.org/. It is also been two hundred years since the birth of Karel Jaromír Erben, author of the still-popular collection of ballads *Kytice*.

To turn to more contemporary milestones in 2011, Václav Havel turned 75 on October 5, an event that was notably celebrated in Prague, at a private party at the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, and in New York, at a public discussion at the Bohemian National Hall (report to follow in the next issue of *CzLN*). On a sadder note, Jiří Dienstbier, Havel's longtime colleague in dissent, prison, and post-November Czech politics, passed away at the beginning of the year, as noted in an obituary in the present issue of *CzLN*.

2011 has also been marked by the valiant struggle for survival of the School of Modern Languages at the University of Glasgow, and in particular of its distinguished program in Czech studies. We believe that the voices of many outraged international Bohemists, including the leadership of IATC, in petitions and personal letters to the University administration helped avert the most immediate and drastic possible cuts to the program, but as our Glasgow colleague Jan Čulík has noted, "boj samozřejmě nekončí". We urge you to stay informed about developments in Glasgow (see blisty.cz/art/60274.html, savesmlc.wordpress.com/news) and to add your voice of support for the Czech studies program there if you have not already. In the current global environment of austerity and draconian budget-cutting, who knows which of our programs may be endangered next?

On a more optimistic note, we are pleased to present our current issue of *CzLN*, the first in which all articles have been subject to systematic peer review, as stipulated by new IATC guidelines. This issue's feature article, by Václav Cvrček (Institute of the Czech National Corpus, Charles University), is an introduction to the Czech National Corpus. We are delighted that Dr. Cvrček will provide additional insights on how to use the Corpus at an IATC-sponsored workshop at the January 2012 AATSEEL conference in Seattle. IATC will also be sponsoring a reprise of 2011's highly successful AATSEEL poster panel on language pedagogy, this time featuring presentations on Czech, BCS and Macedonian language teaching by scholars from eight different institutions.

Hoping to see many of you in Seattle,

Chris Harwood (Columbia University) and Susan Kresin (UCLA), IATC Co-Presidents, 2011-2013

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Introducing the Czech National Corpus

Václav Cvrček

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The project of the Czech National Corpus (CNC) was initiated in 1994 as a small independent research activity, conducted by a few enthusiasts led by Professor František Čermák. Since then the Institute of the Czech National Corpus, under the auspices of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, has been established as an infrastructure providing various types of support for linguists in the Czech Republic and abroad, as well as a research institution with numerous ongoing scholarly projects.

Although the Institute of the Czech National Corpus (www.korpus.cz) has been in charge of the CNC, it would not be possible to develop such a complex project without the participation of various collaborating institutions, including, among others, the Institute of Theoretical and Computational Linguistics, the Institute of Formal and Applied Linguistics, and the Faculty of Informatics, Masaryk University.

What can CNC offer?

CNC offers both written and spoken corpora, as well as separate synchronic and diachronic corpora.

The first synchronic corpus of written Czech, called **SYN2000**, was made public in 2000. This corpus is one of three representative and balanced corpora (**SYN2000**, **SYN2005**, **SYN2010**), with

the number denoting the year of public posting, and “SYN” indicating their synchronic textual base. Two other corpora are based solely on newspapers (**SYN2006PUB** and **SYN2009PUB**). Each of the balanced corpora contains 100 million words, whereas SYN2006PUB has 300 million words and SYN2009PUB has 700 million words. All corpora of the written language are lemmatized and morphologically tagged, with the error rate below 4 % and continuously decreasing.

This united corpus SYN is not a referential corpus, meaning that, unlike the other corpora, it can change over time: it can be enlarged by the addition of more data, annotation may be improved, etc.

CNC also provides spoken corpora. A decision was made to focus on collecting informal, unprepared dialogical utterances of socially comparable participants, as

[SYN] provides users with the unique opportunity to work with 1.3 billion words [...] a thousand times larger than the card-file catalogue used for lexicographic purposes in the past.

these were viewed as representing the linguistically most interesting material. Initially, data was gathered only in Prague (**PMK** = Pražský mluvený korpus, 0.5 million words) and Brno (**BMK** = Brněnský mluvený korpus, 0.5 million words). In the second phase, students from various universities in Bohemia were hired to collect recordings in their families or among friends and to transcribe them according to given guidelines. This resulted in the corpus **Oral2006**, which contains one million words. **Oral2008**, containing one million words, is sociolinguistically balanced (i.e. the same amount of text is taken from all basic sociolinguistic categories, such as age, sex, education and region), and efforts are now in process to interconnect the transcribed text to the sound. At present, data is gathered from all regions in the Czech Republic, and the newest oral corpus will be based on this collection. Spoken corpora are not tagged or lemmatized, because it is impossible to use the same tools for the lemmatization or tagging of spoken utterances as for written language.

A third important part of CNC is its **diachronic corpus** of Czech. The diachronic section of the CNC covers texts of a total of seven centuries of Czech language development, from the end of the 13th century to the beginning of the synchronic section (until 1989, inclusively, for journalistic and specialized texts, and until 1944, inclusively, for fiction). The first completed part of the diachronic section of the CNC was made accessible to the public in September 2005. It contained approximately

700,000 word forms. Now there are 2.5 million words publicly available in the corpus **Diakorp**. As the texts were originally written down or printed in different spelling systems (simple, digraphic, or diacritical orthography), their heterogeneous character necessarily demands somewhat specialized processing, both for the older written texts and for synchronic corpora. This

processing is oriented to the contemporary state of language, and to some extent is based on the current linguistic awareness of the corpus users. The processing of texts for the diachronic section therefore requires extensive and time-consuming human labor.

The newest part of the CNC project is **InterCorp**. It is a large parallel synchronic corpus covering more than 20 languages, including English, German, French, Russian, Spanish, Italian, Croatian, Dutch, Slovak, Swedish, Polish, among others. Czech is “in the middle”; each text used for InterCorp has to have a Czech equivalent (either the text is an original Czech text translated to another language, or it is a translation into Czech). Parallel texts are aligned on the level of sentences, and the corpus is partially lemmatized and tagged (depending on the language and tools which are publicly available).

Tools

The CNC project focuses not only on collecting data, but also on developing tools that enable the exploitation of large corpora. The Corpus manager **Bonito** provides users with a wide range of options for constructing queries, viewing concordance lines, finding collocations, counting frequencies and basic statistic measures, and other ways of processing results. The manual is accessible at www.korpus.cz/bonito/instalace.php. This tool, created by Pavel Rychlý of the Faculty of Informatics, Masaryk University, is now being replaced by a newer version, called Word Sketch Engine, which is web based and accessible at www.korpus.cz/corpora.

However, not all corpora can be searched by these general tools. It proved impossible to adopt already existing tools for certain corpora, such as InterCorp, and it soon became clear that it is necessary to develop completely a new interface to fulfill the needs of comparative linguistic research. This tool, called **Park** (available at www.korpus.cz/Park), is being developed at the

Institute of Czech National Corpus by Michal Štourač, but thus far has very limited functionality relative to monolingual corpus managers.

The most recent tool developed at the Institute of the Czech National Corpus is called **SyD**. Its purpose is to facilitate corpus-based research of variants (morphological, orthographical, word-order, syntactic, etc.). It is publicly available at <http://syd.korpus.cz>, and it allows users to insert two or more language variants. The application then explores the usage of each variant in different types of text and provides the user with an extensive graphical summary of the sociolinguistic and stylistic features of these variants. Moreover, it can also compare variants over time, using the diachronic section of CNC, and show how the competing variants were used during the seven centuries of the history of Czech that are represented in the diachronic corpus.

Dictionaries and other outputs

CNC is also a research center which specializes on corpus and quantitative linguistics and corpus methodology. It has published various frequency dictionaries (*Frekvenční slovník češtiny*, 2004; *Frekvenční slovník*

mluvené češtiny, 2007, and *A Frequency Dictionary of Czech: Core Vocabulary for Learners*, 2011), as well as statistical description of Czech (*Statistiky češtiny*, 2009). In addition to these general works, CNC has also published three specialized dictionaries: two author dictionaries (*Slovník Karla Čapka*, 2007, and *Slovník Bohumila Hrabala*, 2009) and a dictionary of the language of the communist régime (*Slovník komunistické totality*, 2010).

Some publications are in a new book series called “Korpusová lingvistika”. One of most recent publications of the CNC is a corpus-based grammar of Czech (*Mluvnice současné češtiny*, 2010), which is the first description of both written and spoken Czech with a quantitative basis.

...a k čemu je korpus pro učitele češtiny jako cizího jazyka?

The Czech National Corpus not only provides tools for linguistic research, it is also a valuable requisite for any language teacher who wants to introduce his/her students to the real language as it is actually spoken or written. Moreover, the language corpora can be viewed not only as a database of various texts, but also as an almost inexhaustible source of examples of various language phenomena in their prototypical contexts. The spoken corpora, with their impromptu informal dialogues, can be a great source of interesting language data for presenting the differences between spoken and written Czech.

Not only teachers can profit from using the corpora in their classes. Students who use different types of corpora for their homework or for their own research are confronted with real language which can help them understand Czech literature, newspapers, and even casual small-talk in restaurants.

If you are interested in using Czech National Corpus, visit the web page www.korpus.cz and register (free of charge) for access to its resources.

Vzpomínky na Jiřího Dienstbiera

Masako U. Fidler
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Uplynulo víc než osm měsíců od smrti Jiřího Dienstbiera. Mezitím vyšla řada nekrologů a článků o tom, co všechno Jiří Dienstbier udělal: byl zahraničním zpravodajem, jedním z předních disidentů, Chartistou, topičem, ministrem zahraničních věcí, zvláštním zpravodajem Komise pro lidská práva OSN pro Federativní republiku Jugoslávie, Bosnu a Hercegovinu a Chorvatsko, místopředsdou vlády a poslancem Sněmovny lidu Federálního shromáždění za Občanské Fórum a potom za Občanské hnutí, senátorem, hostujícím profesorem na amerických univerzitách včetně Brownovské Univerzity, zakladatel Rady pro mezinárodní

vztahy. Seznam jeho činností je dlouhý a rozsáhlý, ale v těchto vzpomínkách bych chtěla napsat pár slov o speciální roli, kterou hrál Jiří pro studenty v USA a pro česká studia. Uvádím zde Brownovu Univerzitu jenom jako příklad, protože jsem přesvědčena, že na Jiřího vzpomínají podobně i na jiných školách v USA i v Evropě.

Pro nás, kteří se zabýváme češtinou, Jiří má speciální místo. Přínos Jiřího k českému programu na Brownu v roce 2003 byl obrovský. Jiří vyučoval dva kurzy: jeden na Watsonově Institutu pro mezinárodní vztahy (The Coming of Democracy to Czechoslovakia) a druhý na Katedře slovanských jazyků (Literature in Changing Eastern Europe)

(www.watsoninstitute.org/news_detail.cfm?id=80). Tři roky poté byl znovu pozván a přednášel o evropském pohledu na americkou mezinárodní politiku v rámci série přednášek o současných mezinárodních tématech, sponsorovaných ředitelem Watsonova Institutu (Director's Lecture Series on

International Affairs)(www.watsoninstitute.org/events_detail.cfm?id=832, kde je zvukový záznam přednášky). Např. Nemiah Laddová, která se specializovala na geologii i slavistiku zároveň, po bakaláři pracovala jako výzkumná asistentka na Českém vysokém učení technickém v Praze. Její kolegyně byly ohromeny, jak Nemiah zvládala nejen laboratorní, ale i administrativní práci v češtině. Andrew Malcovsky, student obecné lingvistiky i slavistiky, získal roční stipendium z Masarykovy Univerzity. Andrew je překladatelem české literatury. Anna Friedlanderová získala stipendium Undergraduate Teaching and Research Assistantship (UTRA) od Brownu a natočila interview s Jiřím, které jsme pak promítali studentům semináře o V. Havlovi. Lynn Perryová se teď zabývá zdravotnictvím v České Republice a v post-socialistických zemích. Poté, co navštěvoval kurzy Jiřího, Brian Corcoran získal univerzitní stipendium Royce Fellowship a jel do Prahy na další jazykové studium i na archivní práci o rockové hudbě v 70. a 80. letech v Čechách. Na svého bývalého studenta Briana Corcorana Jiří nezapomněl a všestranně mu pomohl, aby mohl pracovat v archivech a setkat se s klíčovými lidmi. Sebrané materiály a interview umožnily Brianovi napsat bakalářskou práci o roli rockové hudby v hnutí pro lidská práva v Československu. To vše nakonec Briana zavedlo na právnickou dráhu. Všichni, kteří bezprostředně přišli s Jiřím do styku, si nejenom dobře pamatují jeho příběhy a osobnost, ale předávají vše svým mladším následovníkům. Například v pozdější generaci studentů češtiny se orientoval na studium mezinárodních vztahů s důrazem

Jiřího působení naše studenty hluboce inspirovalo. Z našeho českého programu vyšla řada studentů, kteří dosáhli takové úrovně češtiny, že se mohli zabývat výzkumem a prací v češtině.

na Východní a Střední Evropu pozdější recipient Fulbrightova stipendia a stipendia ze State Departmentu Jeffrey Logowe. Doma v Praze, v Senátu ČR i na své chatě v Českém Ráji Jiří vždy uvítal ne jenom studenty, kteří se bezprostředně u něho učili, ale i další studenty zajímaví se o mezinárodní vztahy a Českou republiku. A pokud jde o návštěvy na chalupě - všichni často vzpomínáme na Jiřího nejenom jako osobnost, ale i jako na výborného kuchaře!

Když Jiří zemřel, Brian mi poslal email o tom, jak celou noc vyprávěl o Jiřím svým kolegům v námořnictvu, kde v současné době působí jako právník. Jeffrey Logowe mi poslal štos novinových článků z Česka o Jiřím. Lynn Perryová mi psala: "These afternoons at Czech coffee hours when he would come and chat are very precious memories for me".

Jiří byl velkorysý člověk a i přes největší potíže byl vždycky optimistický. Naši studenti si vzpomínají na Jiřího ještě dnes a mezi anekdotickými příběhy, které si pamatujeme, považují za nejcenější poklad tuto větu: "Já jsem vždycky spokojenej protože vždycky říkám, co si myslím."

Nedávno jsme byli v Praze na křtinách knihy Dienstbierových divadelních her. Recenze jeho knihy vychází v několika periodikách. Jednu tiskneme i v *Czech Language News*.

Jiří byl krásný člověk a velká osobnost - jsme šťastní, že jsme ho poznali.

Book Review

Jiří Dienstbier: O hostitelích a hostech (divadelní hry)

ed. Lenka Jungmannová
Praha: Galen, 2011; 282pp.
ISBN 978-80-7262-776-9

Reviewed by Christopher Harwood
Columbia University, USA

As the obituary in this issue of *Czech Language News* points out, the late Jiří Dienstbier was a man of many talents and many vocations. Most notably, he served as a foreign correspondent for Czech Radio (1964-1967); original signatory and spokesperson (1979, 1985) of Charter 77; co-founder (1978) and leading activist of VONS (The Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted); political prisoner (1979-1982); stoker (1982-1989); Minister of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia (1989-1992); UN special rapporteur on human rights in the former Yugoslavia (1998-2001); and Senator for the district of Kladno (2008-2011). Prior to this year's

posthumous publication of the collection *O hostitelích a hostech*, few knew that Dienstbier was also a playwright. In a burst of dramatic creativity from 1975-1978, he wrote five plays: the full-length dramas *Než upečeme selata* (*Until the Suckling Pigs are Roasted*, written 1975; revised for samizdat in 1977) and *Vánoční dárek* (*The Christmas Present*, written 1976; revised for samizdat 1978), the short two-act play *Hra o život* (*Play As If Your Life Depended on It*, 1976), and the two one-acts *Kontest* (*Contest*, 1978) and *Hosté* (*The Guests*, 1978). Then in 1983, after his release from prison, he wrote the one-act *Příjem* (*Reception*) as a sequel to Václav Havel's *Audience* (1975).

In her afterword to *O hostitelích a hostech*, Lenka Jungmannová indicates that Dienstbier himself never attributed too much importance to his plays, considering them “jakési pokračování svého společensko-politického vyjadřování, jako volné navázání na zprávy, komentáře, reportáže, články, glosy a eseje, které psával před nimi.” And indeed, his scripts do sometimes give the impression of being a kind of thinking-out-loud in dramatic form. The writer Zdeněk Urbánek, recording his response to the first five plays in a friendly letter to Dienstbier from 1978, suggested that the characters in *Než upečeme selata* were a bit too loquacious for the stage (“možná z divadelního hlediska trochu prozaicky mnohomluvní”). By contrast, Václav Havel reacted to Dienstbier's one-act *Kontest* with the observation that the dialogues between the play's protagonist and antagonist ought to be less documentarily realistic and more rhetorically polished. Urbánek also noted features of plot and characterization in *Vánoční dárek* that seemed better suited to “a short story, quietly read” or to “a moral-social novel” than to a theater piece for live performance.

Having read Dienstbier's plays one after another in a quiet room, I was less attuned to qualities that might limit their viability on the stage. Instead, I was struck by their verbal and situational wit, and also by the way that, when read in succession, they take the reader on a kind of tour of major dramatic genres of the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. *Než upečeme selata* is a self-consciously Chekhovian ensemble drama, set at a country house and filled with *Seagull*-like love polygons, troubled family relationships, and intersecting narratives of frustrated and partly realized artistic and professional ambition. While Dienstbier clearly modeled the overall dramatic structure of *Selata* on turn-of-the-century Russian realist theater, his characters' repartee, drinking habits and sexual mores belong recognizably to the creative intelligentsia of 1970s Czechoslovakia. With their world-weary urbanity and

frequent references to psychotherapy, marital infidelity, and unfulfilled erotic and/or artistic ambitions, they are actually reminiscent of characters from a Woody Allen film of the same decade. At the same time, there is something absurd—or perhaps even expressionistic—about the seemingly unmotivated violent actions of two characters toward the end of the play: sudden eruptions of tragedy-making behavior that appear to be prompted as much by a kind of atmospheric malaise as by any specific events that unfold in the course of the play.

Vánoční dárek is a more purely family-centered drama that explores the dysfunctional relations between a cynical, middle-aged Communist Party official; his vacuous and delusionally conflict-avoiding wife; their two neurotic young-adult sons, who openly despise the father; and the boys' girlfriends, who make the mistake of spending part of the holiday season with this troubled family. The male protagonists' relentless mutual hostility and the gradually revealed skeletons in the family closets are evocative of twentieth-century American psychological drama, like that of Eugene O'Neill or Tennessee Williams. As with *Selata*, though, the language and socio-political backdrop of

Vánoční dárek are up-to-the-minute mid-1970s Czechoslovakia. The poetics of *Vánoční dárek* at times also evokes that of European theater of the absurd, particularly in the mother's repetition (with variations) throughout the play of banalities about what a special time Christmas is and how nice it is to have the family together again.

Hra o život is also a family drama of sorts, but at the same time it

marks Dienstbier's turn from longer to shorter dramatic forms, and from larger ensemble casts to smaller ones focused on just a few characters, one of them a more-or-less stereotypical 1970s Czech dissident. In *Hra o život* the dissident is a thirty-something former professor named Josef, who now has a manual-labor job and lives in a cramped two-room apartment with his wife Markéta, his busybody mother, and his ailing father, a former concert violinist now confined to a wheelchair. While the father figure raises the theme of faithfulness to one's art—even when practicing it can be hazardous to one's health—the young couple's conversations often turn to Markéta's desire to have children and Josef's wish not to, at least for the time being. These exchanges are strongly reminiscent of the dialogues on parenthood in Havel's second Vaněk play, *Vernisáž*—right down to the pro-family arguer's amazement at the “genius” of small children's unexpected utterances. One wonders if Dienstbier was consciously echoing Havel's treatment of this theme in *Vernisáž*, or if this was just such an obvious topic for dissident

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intellectuals trying to live ethically and authentically in Normalized Czechoslovakia that the two writers came to it independently.

Apart from the *Audience* sequel *Přijem*, the Dienstbier play most indebted to the themes and structure of Havel's absurdist Vaněk plays is *Kontest*, a one-act that the author dedicated to real-life Czech dissident Ladislav Lis. It depicts the verbal "contest" or duel between a dissident protagonist named Los and his smooth interrogator Vegrich. Although some circumstances are different (notably, the dissident character in *Přijem* is already in detention, and Vegrich is a considerably more sophisticated adversary than Havel's Sládek), the basic dramatic situation is the same in *Kontest* as in Havel's *Audience*: a tool of the state security services unsuccessfully attempts to talk a high-principled dissident into a limited form of collaboration that the tool argues would be advantageous for both of them. Extra comic relief and eye candy in *Přijem* are provided by Krásná Evička, Vegrich's gorgeous secretary, whose assignment is to distract Los during the interrogation by taking every possible opportunity to re-cross her legs, flash him inviting smiles, and bend over to pick up deliberately dropped office supplies.

Hosté, the last play Dienstbier wrote in the 1970s, is also a one-act with two major male roles—one of them a Czech dissident named Jiří, an art historian turned window washer—and one supporting female role (Jiří's neighbor Markéta). And while the basic themes here are the same as in *Přijem*, *Kontest*, and Havel's Vaněk plays (i.e., the dilemmas of dissident ethics and tactics) the dramatic dynamics in *Hosté* are substantially different, because the dissident's main interlocutor is not a representative of the regime, nor even a slick apologist for avoiding conflict with the regime, like Michal and Věra in *Vernisáž*, or Staněk in *Protest*. He is rather a Russian friend and colleague of Jiří's named Grigorij, who wholly sympathizes with Jiří's position but offers a slightly different perspective on how the Prague Spring could have developed more favorably, and on what professional compromises are ethically acceptable for a Normalization-era academic trying to keep his job.

Finally, Dienstbier's *Přijem* revisits Vaněk and Sládek—the protagonists of Havel's *Audience*—ten years later, when both are in prison. Dienstbier largely reproduces the dynamic of the two men's interaction in the original one-act, with Sládek gregariously introducing Vaněk to the way things get done at the institution where Sládek is a veteran

and Vaněk a novice. As in *Audience*, the Sládek of *Přijem* tries to persuade Vaněk to "play the game" and do what he must to safeguard his own interests, and Vaněk laconically demurs. Only in the final minutes of the play does Vaněk undergo a sudden reversal, analogous to the one he undergoes in the final seconds of *Audience*, when he seems—abruptly and enigmatically—to take over Sládek's role as the voice of profanity and worldly *vychcanost*.

Despite their thematic and structural similarities to Havel's Vaněk plays, Dienstbier's dissident dramas have a decidedly different rhythm and texture. Although they contain some elements of grotesque stylization, they do not go as far in this direction as Havel's plays do. In particular, they do not employ Havel's signature technique of having characters repeat the same or slightly reformulated lines several times in the same play. Consequently, Dienstbier's characters for the most part do not come across as grotesque automatons, but rather as

verisimilar human beings. Dienstbier's dialogues are also notably wittier; whereas Havel's characters (particularly in the Vaněk plays) tend to speak at comically awkward cross purposes, Dienstbier's often engage in real verbal jousting. In the end, both men's plays about dissidents are both funny and disturbing, but they create those impressions in quite different ways.

Taken together, Dienstbier's plays of 1975-1983 constitute a

fascinating laboratory, in which the author—then a banned journalist unable to address a larger audience—experimented with a variety of traditional and experimental dramatic forms to explore "by other means" the social and political concerns of contemporary Czech intellectuals. The plays give us an opportunity to revisit that troubled period of Czech history and view it in a light distinct from that cast by other literary and dramatic works with the same setting. And they allow us to appreciate a previously little known aspect of the wit and creativity of a remarkable man best known for his courageous civic engagement at that time and for his leadership and public service in the years since.

Dienstbier's plays of 1975-1983 constitute a fascinating laboratory, in which the author—then a banned journalist unable to address a larger audience—experimented with a variety of traditional and experimental dramatic forms to explore "by other means" the social and political concerns of contemporary Czech intellectuals.

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**CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIETY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
SVU STUDENT AWARDS FOR THE YEAR 2012
Dr. JOSEPH HASEK AWARD**

The Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences (SVU) is announcing a competition for the 2012 Dr. Joseph Hasek student awards. The names of the winners will be announced in the Society's newsletters.

The main purpose of the Society's awards is to generate and encourage scholarly interest in Czech and Slovak affairs among university students living outside the Czech and Slovak republics. There will be one prize for the best undergraduate and one for the best graduate study dealing with some aspect of Czech and/or Slovak history, politics, or culture. The winners will receive the \$250 Dr. Joseph Hasek award, a year's membership in the Society, which includes a year's subscription to the Society's newsletter, and a Certificate of Merit.

The following rules apply:

- 1) The paper must be submitted **by the professor** in whose class it was presented and should be accompanied by his recommendation.
- 2) The study must have been written for an undergraduate or graduate course during the academic year 2011-2012. Chapters of theses or dissertations are not admissible.
- 3) The deadline for submission is **MAY 15, 2012**.
- 4) The study essay should be submitted in five copies to professor Vera Borkovec, 12013 Kemp Mill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20902. It must be typewritten, double-spaced and submitted in Czech, Slovak, or any of the major Western languages (English, French or German).
- 5) The Student Awards Committee which will judge the quality of the submitted essays consists of: Prof. Ivo Feierabend (San Diego State University), Prof. Milan Hauner (University of Wisconsin), Dr. Vlado Simko (SVU Executive Board), Dr. Zdenek David (SVU Executive Board), and Chair, Prof. Vera Borkovec (American University).
- 6) Submitted papers are not returned.

Book Review

David Bíróczy: *Czechs in America. The Maintenance of Czech Identity in Contemporary America.*

Master's Thesis. Lambert Academic Publishing AG & Co.
KG, 2010; 86pp. ISBN 978-3-8383-3423-3.

Reviewed by Lida Cope, East Carolina University

The objective of Bíróczy's *Czechs in America* is "to determine to what extent Czech Americans maintain a Czech identity in contemporary America" (p. 3). The questionnaire used to collect data for this study (2002-3), along with the text of the thesis, can be found at www.czechsinamerica.wz.cz. The thesis consists of five chapters: "Introduction," "Historical Background," "Research Study: Methods," "Results and Commentary," and "Conclusion."

Part II, "Historical Background," begins with the 1990 Census data reporting that 1,300,000 ethnic Czechs lived in the United States at that time (Fischetti 1997). The author lists the main political, religious, and, most importantly, economic reasons for early Czech immigration beginning in mid-17th century. The first large wave of

immigration to urban cities such as New York, Chicago, and St. Louis and to rural regions of Texas and eastern states of Midwest occurred in the 1850s and 1860s. Between the 1870s and 1890s, the second wave of immigrants settled mainly in rural parts of Kansas and Nebraska. Immigration from the Czech lands (part of Austro-Hungary until 1918) continued in the 20th century, but it has never reached as high a number and as strong a concentration as the historic waves marking the 2nd half of the 19th century. Today, Texas boasts the largest population of Czech descent in the US (p. 8), and Nebraska's percentage of residents claiming Czech ancestry tops other states (p. 10).

The author continues with brief portrayals of immigration to the particular rural regions and urban areas as introduced earlier with the first and second waves of immigration, and during the 20th century (drawing chiefly on the work of Chada 1981; Polišínský 1996; and Saxon-Ford 1998). Consistent with these works, we learn that the "Golden Age of Czech-American Culture" through the 1930s (including a brief period of unprecedented unity among distinct religions and benevolent and fraternal groups in support of the Czechoslovak independence in 1918), was followed by a period of decline in numbers of Czech-speaking Americans, and by the post-1948 "twilight

of the Czech American community” (Chada 1981), marked by increased assimilation and forced estrangement from any familial ties in the old home country (15-16). Next, the author gives a brief overview of the émigré movement motivated by “the fear of Nazism, World War II, and then Communism” through the Prague Spring of 1968 and by politically favorable changes in Czechoslovakia in 1989, with immigration among “mostly single young people wanting “to learn about life beyond the ‘iron curtain’” and to improve their economic standing (17-18).

The chapter then offers biographical vignettes of several famous “personalities of Czech American descent” (18-22), such as Ray Kroc, a founder of the McDonald’s restaurants; Eugene Cernan, the first astronaut of Czech descent that reached the Moon; as well as Madeleine Korbel Albright, Miloš Forman, and Martina Navrátilová (cf. Rechcigl, 2000; Saxon-Ford, 1998), whose achievements belong to more recent history. The last section of this chapter, relying largely on Chada (1981) and Saxon-Ford (1998), outlines the development of Czech-American cultural institutions, concluding the historical background with a focus on the building of the Czech American community: its members’ religions, educational aspirations, political attitudes, forms of artistic expression, and various fraternal organizations. As for religion, most Czech Americans belonged to the Catholic Church (which was also the only church recognized by the Austro-Hungarian Empire). Despite the fact that the Catholic Church has remained the strongest, especially in rural areas, “one-third to one-half of all Czechs ceased to practice Catholicism when they came to America” (24), as they no longer feared persecution and thus returned to their true Protestant beliefs as Moravian Brethren, Presbyterians, or Episcopalians. On the other end of the spectrum were Czech Freethinkers, opposing any religion but fighting especially the domination of the Catholic Church. Survivors of the Hapsburg oppression, Freethinkers fully exploited their newly-gained opportunity for free expression. Both religious groups and Freethinkers were actively involved in the establishment and maintenance of Czech schools.

The descendants of both Moravian Brethren (who established “the sixth oldest college in America, the Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania” as early as 1742; 26) and Catholics ran schools that Czech children attended in place of American elementary public schools where Czech was the main language of instruction. Freethinkers started supplementary schools that offered Czech-mediated instruction in the afternoons and on the weekends. However, assimilationism of the 1930s and 1940s and gradual integration of ethnic Czechs into the

mainstream American society spelled the end of Czech-only schools. Today, Czech continues to be taught at several American universities. And as a source of “free quality education” in Czech for children, the author highlights a Czech school at the Bohemian Hall in New York taught on Friday afternoons (27) (see www.bohemianball.com/en/CommunityCzechAndSlovakSchool.php and www.radio.cz/en/section/panorama/focus-on-both-language-and-culture-at-weekly-czech-school-in-queens)

As for their political expression, most Czechs were drawn to the ideals of the Democratic Party. The author notes the service, for example, of August Haidusek (“first Czech Texan to earn a legal degree”), and Anton Cermak (“Chicago’s first foreign-born mayor”); and the support for socialism especially among Czech factory workers in some urban areas like New York City (28-9). Art-wise, American Czechs are known for their love of traditional music and dances, especially polka music that enjoyed the height of popularity across America toward the end of the 19th century (30). In addition to numerous polka bands, American Czechs have earned high respect as classical musicians: Who would not have heard about such famous Czechs as Emma Destinová and Antonín Dvořák? In addition, American Czechs established many theatrical groups. Today, the Czech Center in New York is one of the spaces for cultural exchange where Czech plays (typically performed in English) can be seen.

The question, “Do you think it is important for Czech Americans to preserve the Czech language?” yielded mostly positive responses.

Beginning with early Czech settlements, ethnic Czechs built fraternal organizations many of which have reinvented themselves and continue to thrive today. In the author’s words, “Czech fraternalism took the form of benevolent societies; dramatic, choral, cultural and sports clubs; or educational and charitable organizations” (33). Indeed, “every third Czech American was a member of a fraternal organization before WWI” (38). Drawing particularly on Chada (1981), Saxon-Ford (1998), and Rechcigl (2003), Bíróczi traces the establishment of such organizations as The Slavic Linden (Slovanská Lípa); the Czech-Slav Benevolent Society (Česko-slovanský podporující spolek), and its female counterpart, the Unity of Czech Ladies (Jednota českých dam) – today the Czechoslovak Society of America; various Catholic unions (e.g. the Catholic Worker/Katolický dělník); and the American Falcon (Americký Sokol), which, as typical for other surviving organizations today, blends “its Czech-American character” with open membership (36). In addition to flourishing life-insurance-selling fraternal organizations such as the Slavic Benevolent Order of the State of Texas (Slovanská Podporující Jednota Státu Texas/SPJST), more recently established organizations such as the American

Friends of the Czech Republic, the Czech-North American Chamber of Commerce, and the Czechoslovak Society for Arts and Sciences (Společnost pro Vědy a Umění/SVU) promote various connections and collaboration with the Czech Republic (37-8).

Embracing print culture, Czech American settlers were avid readers, and from amongst many prolific writers arose entrepreneurs publishing Czech newspapers in the US as early as 1860 (the American Slav/Slowan americký in Wisconsin; and the National Gazette/Národní Noviny in Missouri). “Between 1875 and 1911, a total of thirty different dailies were published in the Czech-American community,” along with 18 semi-weeklies, 160 weeklies, and 96 monthlies and semi-monthlies (39-40; cf. Chada 1981; Saxon-Ford 1998). Today, the number of Czech-language newspapers has dropped to “over half a dozen” dailies (mentioned is *Hospodář*, a periodical published out of West, one of the two remaining Czech-language newspapers based in Texas), in addition to some English-language periodicals for American Czechs (40).

Other expressions of Czech heritage in the U.S. today include cultural festivals with koláče (Czech pastry), ethnic food, music and dance, and traditional costumes/kroje (e.g., Westfest in West, Texas, or Dožinky in New Prague, Minnesota) and, less prominently, Czech American weddings, which, with modifications, still take place in some rural areas (42-3). The section on other aspects of Czech American life, then, outlines the process of assimilation as “a logical result of the new challenges which Czechs had to face” from the moment of their arrival, yielding a combination of “Czech tradition and American pragmatism” characteristic for American Czech identity today (43-4; cf. Chada 1981). Nearing the conclusion to this chapter, the author touches upon the present-day relationship with the Czech Republic, from which, he notes, “we can expect a good fortune for Czech-American cooperation” (46; cf. also Polišenský 1996; Rehcígl 2003). Bíróczy then devotes the last thirty pages to his research study.

As for the actual study (Part III: “Research Study: Methods”)(Bíróczy in *Czech Language News* 30 (9-10)) data were collected via a questionnaire (print & electronic versions; Appendix 1, 82-5). Apart from demographic data, the instrument consisted of 17 questions focused on the following: Respondents’ awareness of their ancestral origin; the role of language; familiarity with Czech American press and websites, as well as with Czech American organizations; views on and personal

involvement in “preservation of Czech traditions and heritage” in Czech American communities; views on the make-up of the Czech American identity; experiences with Czech schools; “awareness of Czech contribution to American society”; ties with the Czech Republic; and ethnic self-perception (48-9). The electronic version of the questionnaire proved more helpful than the printed version, and 290 Czech Americans had participated by the summer 2003 deadline. The author acknowledges that his respondents, “mainly those contacted through the Czech

The author concludes that “the relatively high percentage of young Czech Americans who visit Czech-American websites (30%) suggests that the Czech-American culture on the Internet is likely to survive”

American organizations, are already more involved in the happenings in the Czech American community,” and therefore, “cannot be a representative sample of Czech Americans” (51). The data collection did not exclude “the recent Czech immigrants,” but the author maintains that they are few in number and thus their views “could not significantly influence” the study’s results (50), which are to represent cross-generational tendencies. The respondents were divided into the

following age groups: 16-30 (N=52), 31-45 (N=40), 46-60 (N=102), and 61 and older (N=96). This grouping was “the only distinction used for analysis” (51). Most respondents were well educated and about 60 percent of them were women (52).

Part IV, “Results and Commentary,” presents all the findings with tabulated results and graphs. As for the awareness of ethnic origin, most respondents knew about their ancestry, with older respondents being able to provide “more detailed and specific” answers (54). Examining the importance of the Czech language showed that “almost one-third of the youngest respondents do not speak any Czech,” whereas “only 1 in 10 of the oldest have no knowledge of Czech”; and that English is a first language for 88% of all respondents (55). The question, “Do you think it is important for Czech Americans to preserve the Czech language?” yielded mostly positive responses. Nearly 90% of the youngest respondents gave as the main reason preserving their heritage, and older respondents noted the utility of having another language, gaining a better understanding of self, or maintaining connections with the Czech Republic (57). Clearly, younger Czech American respondents tend to attribute little importance to the knowledge of Czech (58). Next, while Czech American press does not have much popularity among most respondents, nearly half of them would visit Czech American websites (with the older respondents in the lead), particularly to research genealogy, listen to music on radio stations, read electronic periodicals/newsletters, participate in discussion groups, and watch Czech news. The author concludes that “the

relatively high percentage of young Czech Americans who visit Czech-American websites (30%) suggests that the Czech-American culture on the Internet is likely to survive” (60).

The fact that many respondents were informed of the questionnaire through their ethnic organizations already suggests that most respondents will be aware that these organizations exist. The results suggest that membership in these organizations is more typical for older age groups (people above age 46), and that awareness typically corresponds with membership. Overall, while over half of all the respondents “know of at least one Czech-American organization”, the majority of the youngest Czech Americans know of none (61). The three best-known Czech American organizations, in this research, are the Slavonic Benevolent Order of the State of Texas (SPJST), American Sokol Organization, and Czech Heritage Society of Texas (62). (Relative to this ranking, it may be useful to recall that most questionnaire responses came from Texans of Czech descent). As for preservation of Czech traditions, the findings suggest that “about half of the respondents keep Czech traditions in their community” (most frequently named means of doing so were Czech food, music and dance, and Czech holidays) (63). Not surprisingly, the older respondents are more likely to be involved than the younger ones even though “almost half of Czech Americans aged from 16 to 45 years keep Czech traditions” as well (63). The questionnaire also revealed that “there are more Americans who realize that keeping Czech traditions is important than those who actually preserve them” (64). Still, the author believes that such awareness by both old and young makes it more likely that at least some of the Czech traditions will be preserved in the future.

Responses to the question, “Have you ever attended any Czech schools?” were skewed by the fact that most first-generation “exiles” had some Czech schooling before they arrived in the US. What we can discern from these data, however, is that more than one third of the respondents over the age of 61 attended a Czech school and that, in this respect, this age group outdid the other three. According to the author, this finding “suggests that ethnic Czech educational institutions were quite common in America about fifty years ago” (65). Often mentioned as places for learning Czech today were the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Nebraska.

Czechs are said to love Czech food, music, and dance; have a strong work ethic; cherish familial ties; be frugal; be proud in their heritage; share some physical characteristics; love beer; be honest and have a good sense of humor; and value education. “Czech language” is listed (68), perhaps somewhat vaguely, as the 12th characteristic.

As to ethnic Czech festivals and other cultural events, the data indicate that “about half of Czech Americans” knows of Czech-related events organized in their communities (66). The author speculates that the percentage differences among the four age groups might have to do with varied interpretations of the notion of “community,” from the local to a community in a much broader sense, and the fact that younger people more often live away from traditional Czech-American communities” (66-7). Overall, the author concludes that Czech Americans remain “culturally very active” and continue to be proud of their heritage, though maintaining it in the future will not be without challenge. With regard to being Czech American, then, most respondents recognize that American Czechs share certain characteristics. The generational differences, again, exist: for example, where 80% of the oldest age group, 61 and up, give a positive answer, only 60% of the 16-30 age group do. These shared characteristics are listed in the order of frequency (the frequencies themselves are not given).

Additionally, the survey targeted the respondents’ awareness of Czech contributions to the American society (69). The author grouped responses to this open-ended question into seven categories, again listed in the order of frequency. Among the contributions are a strong work ethic; “Czech music and dance;” artistic, scholarly, and sport-related contributions; cuisine; promoting close family ties; and adding to the educated pool of Americans: “In fact, Czech Americans enriched American society mainly by being themselves, as most ways in which they contributed [...] correspond with their previously stated characteristics” (69). Further, nearly half of the respondents have visited the Czech Republic (including about 80% of the oldest and about 20% of the youngest age group). Overall, the respondents expressed positive feelings about their visits although some “did not like the xenophobia of the Czech people, increasing commercialism, or graffiti on historical buildings” (71). Surprisingly, the author states that “more than 40% of Czech Americans participating in this research would like to live in the Czech Republic” (71), although 35% of them did not clarify whether they meant a temporary or permanent stay. The results were quite steady across all age groups. Lastly, the question about ethnic self-perception offered four categories: “Czech, American, Czech American,” and “American Czech” (the latter two were combined for the purpose of the analysis) (85). The author recognizes that the question was limiting for some respondents, such as Texans, who would add the “Czech

Texan” and “Moravian Texan” categories. In the results, only one-third of all respondents considered themselves “American” (with nearly two-thirds coming from the youngest age group), a few (from the participating first-generation exiles) claimed “Czech” identities, and two-thirds considered themselves “American Czechs” or “Czech Americans” (73).

To summarize the resulting tendencies, the author highlights the fact that mostly older people can still use Czech in a variety of situations although most consider the language as a symbol of identity; the Internet holds the greatest potential for any ethnocultural maintenance efforts; membership in ethnic Czech organizations is significantly lower among the young Czech Americans; preservation of Czech traditions is considered important but claims of personal involvement are rare; the symbolic ethnicity is typically expressed through participation in ethnic events and festivals; most respondents agree on certain shared characteristics when describing Czech Americans; many like to visit the Czech Republic, which helps sustain the Czech-American ties; and regardless of their ethnic self-perceptions, most respondents continue to be aware of their ethnic heritage. Unsurprisingly, “the Czech identity is more preserved by older Czech Americans” (74), even though the author is hopeful that members of the youngest group will transform their heritage awareness into active roles in preserving it in the future.

The thesis offers a nice synopsis of the long history of ethnic Czechs in the United States and interesting vignettes about famous Czech Americans in our distant and more recent past, and it taps into the pool of current generations to gain some insight into the current state of Czech identity in the US. The results are relatively well presented, with the graphs helping to keep readers on their toes. The author keeps the analysis simple and draws on a limited selection of scholarly research, covering especially well the main historical turns but attending very little to more recent scholarship that would have helped substantiate the study’s methodology and results. Also, the thesis does not seem to have been subject to much editorial work prior to its publication as a book. These objections aside, David Bíróczy should be commended for offering a most recent study on ethnocultural attitudes among ethnic Czechs in the US, which makes a valuable contribution to the field.

Three Women Writers Win Czech & Slovak Prizes

British Czech and Slovak Association

Three women writers shared the prizes in the British Czech & Slovak Association’s 2010 writing competition. The winner of the first prize of £300 was Jitka Jenkins, with *A Night with the Vixen*. This consists of the musings of a man of 70 as he listens in London to Janáček’s opera *The Cunning Little Vixen* and thinks back to an idyllic visit to Czechoslovakia in 1962, and to his meeting then with a woman who was lovely but out of reach. Two second prizes of £100 were awarded.

One went to Frances Jackson, a student at Oxford University. She wrote *Letter from Moravia*, some wry observations on what it is like to be a young woman there while on an exchange at Masaryk University in Brno. The other was won by Gerta Vrbová, with *Our First International Meeting in Prague*. This is a moving memoir that tells not only of a physiology conference held in Prague in 1956 but also of her own first meeting with her British husband, against the background of the restrictions imposed by the Communist régime.

The 2011 competition has closed and the results

are awaited. The BCSA will be running the competition again in 2012. A first prize of £300 and a second prize of £100 will be awarded to the best 1,500 to 2,000-word pieces of original writing, in English, on the links between Britain and the Czech and Slovak Republics (or their predecessor states), or describing society in transition in the Republics since 1989. Submissions are invited from individuals of any age, nationality or educational background. Entrants do not need to be members of the BCSA. Entry is free. Entries should be received by 30 June 2012. For more information e-mail prize@bcsa.co.uk.



Gerta Vrbová (left) and Jitka Jenkins receiving their prizes from the BCSA’s Competition Administrator Edward Peacock

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CzLN is a newsletter published by the International Association of Teachers of Czech. The editorial office is currently at the Dept. of Slavic Languages, Brown U. and serves the diverse Czech language community as a forum for information on research, teaching, and organization of Czech language instruction. CzLN's mission is to contribute to the promotion of interdisciplinary and international cooperation as well as the integration of theoretical and applied aspects of language study. CzLN is an open exchange of information and ideas and the editorial board welcome ideas and submissions for inclusion in the next issue.

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CALL FOR PAPERS – THIRTEENTH ANNUAL CZECH STUDIES WORKSHOP at the University of Texas at Austin

The thirteenth Annual Czech Studies Workshop, to be held at the U. of Texas at Austin (April 27-28, 2012) welcomes proposals for papers on Czech topics, broadly defined, in all disciplines. Slovak topics will also be considered. In the past, our interdisciplinary conference has drawn participants from colleges and universities in the US and abroad. Areas of interest have included: anthropology, architecture, art, economics, education, film, geography, history, Jewish studies, literature, music, philosophy, politics, religion, and theater. Work in progress is appropriate for our workshop format. Junior faculty and advanced graduate students are particularly encouraged to participate. Limited funding is available to reimburse participants' travel and accommodation costs.

Please send **an abstract of approximately 450 words and your CV** to: czechstudies2012@gmail.com. Be sure to include your name, full address, institutional affiliation, daytime telephone and e-mail address. Alternatively, you may send a hard copy of your abstract and personal data to:

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The firm deadline for receipt of proposals is January 8, 2012. For more information, please contact Tatjana Lichtenstein (tatjana.lichtenstein@mail.utexas.edu)