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EASTERN, WESTERN, OR PAN-EUROPEAN? RECENT EDUCATIONAL CHANGE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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INTRODUCTION

In a recent book, Vaclav Havel, playwright, poet, philosopher, former president of Czechoslovakia, and now president of the Czech Republic poses the following question:

"What will our schools be like?"

Havel answers the question as follows:

At all levels, schools must cultivate a spirit of free and independent thinking in the students. Schools will have to be humanized, both in the sense that their basic component must be the human personalities of the teachers, creating around themselves a "force field" inspiration and example, and in the sense that technical and other specialized education will be balanced by a general education in the humanities. (Havel, 1992b, p. 117)

In light of Havel's commitment to humanize schools, we approached a number of Czech educators in the summer of 1992 in order to determine whether or not they believed that schools and universities were indeed being humanized. Havel's own criteria of what constitutes humanization in education roughly guided our own inquiry. That is to say, we kept in mind the following questions when talking to these educators: are Czech schools and universities encouraging free and independent thinking among students? Are teachers actually inspiring their students on a human level? And is technical education being balanced by a more general form of education in the humanities? Our aim was to find out whether or not current educational change in the Czech Republic was guided by the kind of values that Havel elucidates. Put differently, we tried to understand the ways in which educational institutions might resist Havel's normative recommendations for change. In order to understand these twin processes of resistance and

change, we used a number of complementary theories. Our aim in doing so was to gain the most inclusive kind of understanding possible (McMurtry, 1988).

Clearly, history has overtaken us. During the time we were in Czechoslovakia in July, 1992, the Slovak parliament announced that they were formally seeking separation from the rest of the country. The following day, Havel announced that he was stepping down as president. Since then, a peaceful separation has been negotiated, and on January 1, 1993, the two states of Slovakia and the Czech Republic came into being. Havel himself was elected president of the Czech Republic while Michal Kovac, an economist who was expelled from the Communist Party of Slovakia during the period of "normalization" in 1970, is now president of Slovakia. Precisely how all of this affects our inquiry is unclear. Undoubtedly, these events muddy the waters of the story we attempt to tell. Whether or not this means that our inquiry is no longer accurate is for the reader to judge.

METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the kinds of changes that are occurring in the educational institutions of the Czech Republic, we spoke to two teachers and two teacher educators during a visit there in the summer of 1992. The first teacher was male, had a Ph.D. from Charles University in Prague, and 25 years' experience teaching mathematics at the Gymnasium level. The second was a female music teacher with a Master's degree from Moscow University in music and languages, who had 18 years teaching experience at a state-run school preparing students for the Czech Conservatory. Both teacher educators were women specialising in educational psychology (one in special education, the other in development). They each had Ph.D's from Charles University: one in Philosophy, Psychology, and Pedagogy, and the other in Pedagogy. The first had ten years' experience at the university level plus one year teaching in the Gymnasium, while the other had two years' experience at the university level and fourteen years' teaching handicapped and dyslexic children in different schools. Each conversation was bilingual, proceeding from a set of questions that we had formulated in English to a dialogue between Viola and the participants in Czech. This was followed by Viola's reporting their answers to me in English and by my taking extensive notes of their replies. The entire process was tape recorded. Among the questions that we asked were the following: what changes have taken

place since 1989 to the curriculum in schools/teacher education, to the structure of schools/pedagogical faculties, and the aims of schooling/teacher education? In seeking answers to these questions, we interviewed the two teachers separately, while the two teacher educators were interviewed together during almost an entire day. These differences were determined by the wishes of the participants. Each conversation lasted several hours.

Clearly, this is not a "scientific study" in the sense of the subjects being chosen at random, with their views measured by an instrument yielding a set of quantitative data, and upon which statistical analysis has been used (Anderson, 1990). Rather, our study was based on the kind of conversation the aim of which is to gain a clearer, more inclusive understanding of the issues in question (Keeves, 1988). This kind of research method provides answers to exploratory questions that have value in themselves (Husen, 1988). Indeed, the kind of conversations that we held have a far richer history than do the quantitative methods derived from seventeenth century physics (Whitehead, (1924)1953). They stem, indeed, from the Socratic tradition of dialogue that predates modern science by almost two thousand years (Grant, 1959). This tradition has been revived in different ways by such philosophers as Alfred North Whitehead, John Dewey, the critical theorists, and others (Dewey, 1916; Whitehead, (1933)1961; Habermas, 1972; Hendley, 1986; Sullivan, 1990). Moreover, the same method has been used to good effect to study women scientists and science educators from an African culture (Woodhouse and Ndongko, 1993). It seemed appropriate, therefore, to use a method based on dialogue to understand teachers' and teacher educators' views of the educational changes taking place in the Czech Republic.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Our inquiry was also guided by the following assumptions:¹

- 1) At an individual level, many people fear change, particularly change that offers them greater scope for personal and social freedom (Fromm, 1941). Such resistance may be the result of their having internalised norms learned in families or schools that negate both their own and others' full and free expression (Horkheimer, 1972; Havel, 1992b).
- 2) In order to overcome this opposition to freedom of expression, a process of self-understanding may be necessary in which individuals come to recognise both the repressive assumptions of schooling and

family life and their own ability to challenge these same assumptions by engaging in critical thought (Sullivan, 1990).

3) This process of emancipation from the curtailment of freedom proceeds by revealing some of the disguised aspects of the relationship between individuals and the social institutions that have shaped them (e.g. power, race, class, gender, ideology) (Sullivan, 1990).

4) The same process also enables individuals to understand the ways in which their knowledge and interests are related to more general human interests that are currently suppressed in schools, families, and other institutions (Habermas, 1972). In this way, individuals come to recognise that the relationships, institutions, and norms that constitute their daily lives can be confronted by critical thought where they are oppressive of human dignity and freedom (Freire, 1970).

5) In countries such as the former Czechoslovakia, this process of oppression entailed a specific form of Freire's "culture of silence." Individuals learned to lie to themselves and to others in order to survive the brutality of a totalitarian system that threatened their very survival, as well as that of their families (Havel, 1986). The result was a society in which official propaganda and family life shared one underlying theme, namely a fear of the truth. In terms of the power of the state, the communist party feared truth lest it reveal them as cruel, manipulative, and inhumane. Families were afraid of truth lest the young should speak out against tyranny and bring down the full power of the state upon them all. The result was a population whose consciousness was submerged and inert (Havel, 1990).

6) A further result of this oppression was the production of a Czech culture of "totalitarian kitsch" where "all answers are given in advance and preclude any questions." Art, like daily life, could reveal no deeper, transcendent meaning for fear that this would raise "queries and doubts" about the regime's legitimacy. Artists, like teachers and other intellectuals, refrained from telling the truth in the same way as ordinary people. Posing questions became a liability to one's survival, since they were "like a knife that slices through the stage backdrop and gives us a look at what lies hidden behind it (Kundera, 1984, p. 254)."

7) Both Vaclav Havel and Milan Kundera recognise that this process of the levelling of the human spirit takes place in all regimes, whether socialist or capitalist. The culture of silence, living in untruth and totalitarian kitsch, is not peculiar to the former Czechoslovakia, Soviet Union, or Eastern Europe. It thrives quite nicely under

capitalism which exerts similar demands upon its citizenry not to pose questions that cannot be immediately answered (Kundera, 1984). This is because capitalism shares many of the same assumptions about material progress, the value of technology and science, and humanity's relationship with nature (Havel, 1991 & 1992a). In order to emancipate ourselves from these assumptions a project of worldwide proportions is now required.

8) Clearly, education in the form of schools, colleges, and universities has a huge role to play in this human project of emancipation (Havel, 1992b). At the same time, these institutions are constrained by a network of interests which systematically inhibit their emancipatory potential. The new educational slogan that proclaims the need for schools to "produce graduates capable of competing in the global marketplace" is ubiquitous (Gray, 1990). Moreover, "the new totalitarianism of consumption, commerce and money" (Havel, 1990, p.20) subverts the critical inquiry that distinguishes education and demands that schools and universities be pliant to the laws of the marketplace that are based on zero-sum competition (McMurtry, 1991). This is as true in Canada as it is in Czechoslovakia, Mexico, or the United States.

9) While competition among trading blocs was of both ideological and economic significance during the Cold War, the advent of capitalism as a truly world system entails that competition among them now becomes the only imperative at both the economic (Cook, 1993) and cultural levels (Chartrand, 1992). Schools reflect this shift by adopting curricula in which vocational skills become predominant for all students, whatever their academic level (Davis, 1990). Students learn the need to compete in a marketplace where capital can lower wages almost at will because of the availability of cheap labour at both local and global levels (Coulby, 1984; Arnove, 1982). Indeed, students come to accept increased competition both within and beyond the classroom as an *a priori* good.

10) The place of Czechoslovakia in this international division of labour has shifted from being a peripheral country within the Soviet-dominated trading bloc to one that is now dependent both culturally and economically on Western trading blocs (whether European or North American) (Havel, 1990). This new dependency appears less constraining because of its emphasis on individual freedom. However, it brings with it unemployment, an emphasis on efficiency, and a form of economic determinism (McMurtry, 1991). These various factors may undermine the quality of education by tying it too closely to the market

and negating students' need to learn in more disinterested and critical ways (Czech Association of Mathematicians and Teachers of Physics, 1991-92). This, indeed, is the fear of a growing number of Czech educationalists.²

It is in the context of these assumptions that we approached four teachers and teacher educators in order to determine how they viewed the changes taking place in the Czech school and university systems.

SCHOOLING: EASTERN, WESTERN, OR PAN-EUROPEAN?

In this part of the paper we concentrate on the views of the two teachers that we interviewed. In addition to understanding the views that they expressed, we also try to relate these views to the central question discussed in this paper; namely, what are the normative assumptions underlying current educational change in the Czech Republic?

EASTERN/WESTERN?

Both teachers expressed reservations about the kinds of change taking place in education. This scepticism was based on a concern for what they saw as a decline in the quality of education. This decline was evident to them in both the specific disciplines of mathematics, physics, and music that they teach, and in the general approach to education currently being taken by the government. Concretely, both teachers linked this decline in quality with a rush to adopt Western aims and methods of education without an accompanying process of reflection on their suitability to the Czech situation.

For example, first, the number of hours of mathematics taught each week in the Gymnasium had been reduced from six to two since 1989. This change in the curriculum reflects a decline in the importance of mathematics relative to other subjects (Botlik, 1991/92). Under Soviet Marxism, mathematics had an important role to play because of its direct connection with science and technological development. The free market reforms of the Czech government now reward such university disciplines as law, business, and medicine. The importance of mathematics to these disciplines is largely overlooked at the Gymnasium level.

Second, individual instruction in singing and different instruments is currently being replaced with instruction in groups of seven or eight. This practice, adopted from Germany in particular, makes it more difficult for students to learn to sing or play proficiently.

Examinations in music are being cancelled because they are considered too stressful for students, thereby lowering the standards in music education. In addition, there is a strong move towards the privatisation of music education. Increases in tuition make it difficult for many of the students to continue their studies. Tuition, which was free before 1989, had stabilised at 375 Czech Crowns (about \$US11 for 3 months).

The problem with all this is that it undermines the valuable contributions to music education that were achieved in both Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Music education in the former Czechoslovakia was of a high quality because individual instruction in singing and instrumental work was the norm for those students who passed regular examinations. These state-run schools also provided students with experience in choirs and orchestras from an early age.

Third, the increase in autonomy for teachers has not resulted in greater freedom in inquiry for students. In mathematics, teachers can now choose those proofs and examples from their texts that are best suited to the needs and development of their own students. In principle, this provides an opportunity to encourage students to search for the underlying reasons for the proofs and algorithms that they are working on rather than simply pursuing them mechanically. Teachers could also enable students to debate with each other over the evidence that had been uncovered during this process. Unfortunately, this concrete opportunity for enhancing the kind of freedom in inquiry that mathematics could enhance is being squandered for the most part (Botlik, 1991-92). This is because Czech teachers are not used to integrating the kind of abstract knowledge embodied in mathematics with the concrete experience of their students in ways that would enhance their understanding. This gap between the ideals of educational freedom and the lack of free inquiry in schools constitutes an ongoing tension.

Fourth, despite these shortcomings, both teachers acknowledged that the greatest educational change that had occurred since 1989 had been the introduction of a certain pluralism in the school system. In general, this meant that there was no longer only one official ideology to be upheld in schools. Concretely, this meant that there was greater scope for playing and singing church music without the kinds of problems that this had engendered in the past (e.g., the music teacher had once been questioned by her director when the choir was practising "Dvorak's Duets" that contain the words "Goodbye to God"). Teachers in general are relieved that they no longer have to comply with the

dictates of Soviet Marxism in their classes (Czech Association of Mathematicians and Physics Teachers, 1991-92).

Fifth, teachers now face a rather different problem, however, one that stands in stark contrast to the necessity of transmitting the ideology of Soviet Marxism. There is now an almost total lack of guidance on the part of the government on how teachers should use their new-found freedom in the classroom. How, for example, should teachers enhance the capacity of their students to think critically and independently, whether in mathematics, physics, music, or any of the other disciplines? How should they inspire their students on a personal level? And how are they to balance the demands of technical education with those of the humanities in the way that Havel suggests? No answers are forthcoming. Indeed, there have been four different Ministers of Education since 1989, each with a quite different approach to the current problems of education. Without guidance, Czech teachers lack the necessary experience to exert their authority in the classroom in ways that are consistent with student autonomy and freedom of expression. As a result, they tend to resort to the well-tried aims and methods of the past. These, however, are not always appropriate for education in a democratic society. As a result, there is an inconsistency between theory and practice in education, another ongoing tension that shows no signs of being resolved in a non-antagonistic way. Indeed, the teacher educators that we spoke to go further and state that schools are still largely authoritarian in both their structure and practice and tend to undermine the aims of education for a democratic society. We consider their views in the next section of the paper.

Sixth, one reason for this tension between freedom and authority in the classroom mentioned by both teachers is the emphasis now placed on the importance of the market. Freedom is identified almost completely with the activities of the market and this undermines the potential for other kinds of freedom to flourish on a personal, cultural, or intellectual level. Students in state schools become "clients" or "customers" whose market needs must be addressed, while schools themselves develop these same clients for future "competition in the global marketplace" where corporations, the real "downstream clients," will employ them. Not surprisingly, private fee-paying schools, emphasising vocational training and market-related skills, thrive in this new educational marketplace (Havlik, 1992). The trend to privatize music education by raising fees, has made it impossible for certain students to continue their studies.³

Seventh, this move to assimilate education to the market has been criticized by a growing number of intellectuals, educationalists, teachers, and students. Among these has been Vaclav Havel himself (1990). More recently, however, Havel has argued for "the renewal of the market economy" which, he believes, will enhance "respect for work . . . diligence and skill . . . (and) the self-esteem of all workers" (1992b, p.108). While Havel may want to achieve a balance between the demands of capital and the need for a more humane society, teachers faced with the growing commercialization of the school system raise doubts about the ways in which this is being achieved.

A recent debate about this very issue among teachers and professors was largely critical of market-oriented educational policy. One Czech professor of mathematics urged that "there is no way to turn schools into some kind of service industry, since their aim is to educate character as well as intellect" (Zelinka, 1991-92, p.33). Here we find support for the notion that the moral dimension of education cannot be reduced to the operations of the market.⁴ Put differently, the development of moral character is often at odds with the kinds of demands placed on the individual by the market. If schools were to abandon the possibility of moral education at the very time that there is greater scope for freedom of expression in the Czech Republic, this would constitute a diminution of education and the human spirit. The Czech Association of Mathematicians and Teachers of Physics recognizes this paradox and goes further by stating that "we do not consider the discussion of the utilization of the free market economy model in our new educational system as viable" (Czech Association of Mathematicians and Teachers of Physics, 1991-92, p.6). Indeed, they preface the article outlining their conception of Czech education with the following dictum:

OUR WISH FOR THE YEAR 1992

In the year of the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America and the 400th anniversary of the birth of Comenius we should not try to discover America but try to discover Jan Amos Comenius in our education. (Czech Association of Mathematicians and Teachers of Physics, 1991-92, p.3)

This is both a recognition of the limitations of the market (America) and an expression of determination that educators should rediscover the hidden continent of Czech thought that is their heritage (Comenius).

The quotation leads us into the next subsection of the paper on the need for a Pan-European perspective on Czech education.

PAN-EUROPEAN?

One way of resolving the problems of freedom and authority in education proposed by both teachers was the development of a stronger sense of Czech identity in schools. Only by becoming familiar with the democratic tradition to which they belong can teachers and students understand what it means to be Czech in the context of the modern world. A fundamental aspect of the Czech tradition has been the struggle for individual and collective freedom, whether in the form of religious liberty (Jan Hus), political freedom (Mazaryk, Dubcek, Havel), artistic freedom (Baar, Kafka, Havel, Kundera), or a general freedom of expression made possible by education (Comenius). By and large, this tradition was buried by Soviet Marxism.

The relevance of Comenius' educational thought to current educational change in the Czech Republic is clear. Comenius emphasizes the process of growth that constitutes human learning. This process is an ongoing one, since education is continuous and lifelong. In principle, everyone can appreciate and participate in the general culture of humankind. The appropriate kind of pedagogy for enhancing such growth is one that provides opportunity for students to express themselves in free and open ways. It also furthers students' understanding by giving them opportunities to explore the world for themselves in active ways (Comenius, ((1657)1972, 71-79).

Comenius' insights support the idea that Czech schools today should provide students with opportunities for just the kind of free and open inquiry that both the teachers and teacher educators in our study suggest. His ideas underline the need to institute both democratic forms of education and adult education so that all citizens can participate in the cultural life of their society. To this extent, current educational practice should draw upon past educational theory in order to effect change. Were these ideas now revived in schools, teachers, students, and professors could mine this indigenous underground source of liberty, tolerance, and equality in the resolution of educational problems. For example, students might then enjoy a certain intellectual freedom that enabled them to study with as wide a variety of teachers and professors as possible. The aim would be to allow students to weigh the arguments of each teacher/professor, remain open to conflicting evidence, and draw their own conclusions in an

independent and critical manner (Havel, 1992b; Woodhouse, 1990; Metzger, 1978).

The Czech musical tradition could be mined for its considerable resources and integrated into the music curriculum. In singing, for example, the traditional Czech approach known as the *Pivoda* is considered old-fashioned and has been replaced by *Bel Canto*. There is no reason why *Pivoda* could not now be reinstated, since its declarative style typifies the rejuvenation of Czech music in the nineteenth century. In general, this tradition could become a foundational part of the music curriculum, developing a sense of pride among students in the music of their own nation. At the same time, teachers and students should be open to the value of other schools of music, taking the best from each as they develop an inclusive understanding and musical competence. Knowledge of the Czech tradition does not entail exclusive reliance on it, simply a recognition of its importance in the ongoing development of the Czech identity (Wilson, 1992, p.63).

These two examples serve to illustrate the need felt by both teachers for an educational philosophy founded on conceptions of freedom drawn from the Czech past. Now that they and other teachers are no longer bound by the structures of Soviet Marxism, liberty could flourish in their classrooms. Moreover, Czechs themselves could contribute to the dialogue about human freedom just as they had been doing for centuries. At the same time, both teachers recognize that an educational philosophy capable of sustaining the Czech identity must draw upon traditions of knowledge and freedom that are universal (Czech Association of Mathematicians and Teachers of Physics, 1991-92, p.5). The Czech experience shares many characteristics with that of other peoples in Europe and beyond who have struggled to establish their own practices of freedom and democracy (Havel, 1992b, pp.113-5). In other words, a dual process is now possible, which encourages both a greater awareness of Czech traditions and an openness to the world beyond. If both of these were understood and respected, a balance could be achieved that would enhance the democratic possibilities of Czech educational institutions.

Unfortunately, both teachers were aware that this potential was not being realized. Schools are now mired somewhere between the practices of the *ancien régime* and those of a market economy. This inertia prevents students from learning because there is little room for questioning, thinking critically, or relating what is learned to their own concrete experience (Whitehead, (1929)1957). As long as schools are stuck in this groove, they will fail to enliven the curiosity,

imagination, or intellectual fervour of the young.

CHANGES IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

THE PEDAGOGICAL FACULTY

Both teacher educators taught in the Pedagogical Faculty of the newly created University of Western Bohemia in Plzen. The university is one of several regional universities created after the revolution in 1989 in order to increase access to higher education without at the same time lowering standards. Our aim was to find out what changes had occurred in teacher education and how they viewed such changes.

THE CONTEXT OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Under the previous regime teacher education, like schooling itself, was guided by the ideology of Soviet Marxism. This meant that great emphasis was placed on the disciplines to be taught in schools rather than on pedagogy (the theory of teaching). Indeed, pedagogy was underdeveloped as a theoretical enterprise, largely because the authorities believed that Soviet Marxism could resolve any problem of a technical, social, or educational nature (Havel, 1992a). This meant that the pedagogy that was taught was geared towards a school system that was authoritarian and relied on memorization and rote learning. To this extent, pedagogy was highly abstract and quite removed from the cut and thrust of any debate that might take place in more democratic classrooms (Czech Association of Mathematicians and Teachers of Physics, 1991-92).

The two teacher educators with whom we spoke expressed a strong desire to rectify this situation by enabling their students to feel comfortable with a variety of pedagogical theories. Moreover, they saw this aspect of teacher education as part of the overall process of social reconstruction. They pointed out, however, that there had actually been a reduction in the number of courses in pedagogy taught in teacher education programs since 1989. The reasons they gave for this paradoxical development were as follows:

- 1) A general distrust for all courses in pedagogy because of the way they were taught and used under the previous regime;
- 2) A related desire to encourage independent learning rather than the rote learning still practiced in many Czech schools today. In

other words, if pedagogy means that student teachers should comply with the realities of today's schools, it would be better for future teachers to do without it; and

- 3) A belief that in Western Europe knowledge of one's discipline is more important than pedagogy or practice teaching. This belief may be true of France but not of Britain (Mialaret, 1990).

What emerges from this list of reasons is a skepticism on the part of Czech educational authorities today (university presidents, deans, as well as students themselves) towards pedagogy as a worthwhile discipline in teacher education. Clearly, this makes the task of teacher educators a very difficult one.

Fortunately, there is another social movement that provides some sustenance for teacher education. This comprises the rediscovery of humanism. In looking to the West, Czechs are coming to understand the importance of the humanism that is embedded in their own tradition. Comenius and others provide a potential intellectual source for a more open kind of education and for a pedagogy that could justify it. Moreover, by understanding the links between their own tradition of humanism and the European tradition in general, Czechs can now reappropriate a Pan European vision that has remained hidden for more than fifty years. At the same time, the two teacher educators tempered their optimism by telling us of two conflicting interpretations of humanism that were current in educational circles. The first conceived of humanism as a form of individualism, according to which schools should simply train students for jobs in the marketplace. We have already alluded to this view in previous sections. The second they referred to as "universalism" or "deep humanism", namely a belief in schools as institutions that should enhance the intellectual, aesthetic, moral, emotional, and spiritual growth of students. This is very much the position of Vaclav Havel and others. The two teacher educators saw this second view as the only genuine form of humanism and spoke of several Waldorf and Montessori schools in Plzen and Prague that espouse it. At the same time, they recognized that these were alternative schools and, in this sense, atypical.

Women are full participants in the current debate about humanism at all levels of society, especially in education. The two teacher educators saw their contribution as one of articulating aspects of their own experience that could make schools more caring places. On the basis of research that one of the teacher educators had carried out, they saw women's potential for changing the educational system as

considerable. In Plzen, for example, women comprise 90% of all teachers but only 50% of principals. While this indicates systemic discrimination against women at the level of administration, it also indicates their considerable strength in the teaching profession as a whole. If this strength were harnessed in constructive, humane ways, women teachers could bring about deep structured reforms of benefit to all students and teachers. This, at least, was the hope of the two teacher educators with whom we spoke.

CHANGES IN THE CURRICULUM OF TEACHER EDUCATION

First, some statistics. The Department of Pedagogy in which the two educational psychologists are housed has only seven faculty members. However, in the Pedagogical Faculty as a whole, there are 179 faculty members and 1,400 students enrolled in the 1992/93 academic year. As already mentioned, students take most of their courses in the disciplines that they will teach in schools (e.g., mathematics and physics, fine arts and music, history and geography, etc.) Courses in pedagogy account for about 20% of students' current course load.⁵

Second, in elementary education there are two streams:

Elementary Stream #1

This is designed for those who will teach what we call Grades 1-4. This is a four year program in which they take the following courses in pedagogy:

Year One:

'Introduction to Pedagogy', a lecture and seminar course two hours a week that includes History of Pedagogy, Comparative Pedagogy, and Generic Pedagogy. Students spend an entire week in schools observing classroom practice.

Year Two:

'Pedagogy for Teachers', a lecture and seminar course two or three hours a week that includes Theories of Development (e.g. through Drama), Generic Didactics, and Diagnostic Pedagogy. Students spend one hour every 2 weeks observing classroom practice.

Year Three:

'Special Pedagogy', a lecture and seminar course two hours a week. Students are divided into groups of three, placed under

teacher supervision, and teach for about 10 hours each.

Year Four:

'Special Pedagogy' (three hours a week for 5 weeks), 'Microteaching' (three hours a week for 5 weeks), and 'Social Pedagogy' (three hours a week for 5 weeks) There is no student teaching.

Students graduate from this program by writing a State Examination in Pedagogy and Psychology.

Elementary Stream #2

This is designed for those who will teach elementary education grades 5-8 (what is called Basic Education) and secondary education grades 9-12 (in Gymnasium, Technical, or Family School (specializing in Home Economics)). This is a five year program that has just been introduced:

Year One:

No Pedagogy Courses or Student Teaching.

Year Two:

'Introduction to Pedagogy', a lecture and seminar course two hours a week. There is no student teaching.

Year Three:

'Pedagogy for Teachers', lecture and seminar course 2 hrs a week. Students are divided into groups of three, teaching 10 hours over 2 weeks.

Year Four:

'Special Pedagogy', a one hour seminar a week. Students teach in schools for 10 hours over 3 weeks.

Year Five:

No Pedagogy Courses. A one month practicum teaching 2 weeks in grades 5-8 and 8-12.

Students in this program also graduate by means of State Examinations in pedagogy and psychology. In 1991/2 the Senate made a decision to allow students to present themselves voluntarily for the exam because of uncertainty over whether or not they were sufficiently qualified.

There is a third stream designed specially for those who will teach in secondary schools (grades 11-12). They attend the Philosophy Faculty at Charles University in Prague where they specialize in philosophy, as well as in the natural sciences, agriculture, chemistry, engineering, and technology which they will teach in schools. They receive no courses in pedagogy but a general education in a variety of

disciplines, including philosophy.

REFLECTIONS ON THE CURRICULUM IN TEACHER EDUCATION

In general, the priority given to academic courses over those in pedagogy is striking, particularly for elementary teachers in grades 5 to 8, and for the secondary teachers at Charles University. There is a lack of balance here that does little to address the issue of educating well-rounded, humane individuals for life in a democratic society (Havel, 1992b), let alone for educating well-rounded teachers capable of pursuing the art of pedagogy (Whitehead, (1925)1953).

Moreover, there is a lack of balance among the different programs in their approach to pedagogy. For example, pedagogy is more strongly represented in the program for elementary teachers in grades 1 to 4 than it is in any of the others. Students in this program not only take more courses but their concentration in pedagogy focuses on younger children and their development. In other words, what they learn is directly relevant to their future teaching practice. As the two teacher educators pointed out, the courses in this program are structured in a logical fashion, leading from a general course in 'introduction to pedagogy' through 'pedagogy for teachers' to 'special pedagogy' and finally to a course in 'social pedagogy'. Moreover, their courses in the foundations area include history, sociology, and comparative education (but no philosophy of education).

By way of contrast, students in the program for elementary teachers from grades 5 to 8 have no pedagogy courses in their first and last years, no courses in social pedagogy or microteaching whatsoever, and one less course in special pedagogy. Moreover, the content of these courses is oriented to one age category only and hence is far less flexible. The two teacher educators saw the divisions among the three kinds of teacher education as arbitrary and serving primarily bureaucratic purposes. They could find no good pedagogical reason for dividing elementary education into two parts. Ongoing changes to the program for elementary teachers in grades 5 to 8 had been disruptive and largely formal in nature. Indeed, this division in the training of such teachers contributed to a continuing fragmentation of schools and the curriculum that has been criticized by both teachers and teacher educators. They also found the education of secondary school teachers anomalous because of its total lack of courses in pedagogy.

While finding there to be many faults with the present curriculum and structures of teacher education, due partly to the problems

inherited from the previous regime, the two teacher educators were skeptical of finding immediate solutions to these problems in the educational theory and practice of Western Europe or North America. Both of them expressed concern, for example, about the tendency of university administrators to try to adopt the course credit system without proper consideration of its desirability in the Czech context. They saw such reforms, which had been recommended by senior administrators at the University of Western Bohemia, as simple-minded devices to imitate the American university system. In light of the fact that the course credit system had been tried unsuccessfully in the Pedagogical Faculty at the University of Usti n/Labem and rejected because of administrative problems and resistance by both faculty and students, they considered it to be quite inappropriate. This was just one of several examples where Czech educational administrators had been carried away by their enthusiasm for Western ideas and practices as though these could work immediate miracles.

Like the teachers we interviewed, the teacher educators were concerned lest the present situation produce a knee-jerk dependency upon Western educational theory and practice without due consideration of its validity for the Czech system. Only if continuous discussion, reflection, and criticism were encouraged among faculty, students, teachers, and administrators could reforms to teacher education be successful. This was the sobering message that we derived from our conversation, namely that at present such a liberal and democratic approach is sadly lacking.

CONCLUSION

We began this paper with a quotation from Vaclav Havel's *Summer Meditations* about the need for a new kind of education in the Czech Republic that cultivates free and independent thinkers by means of inspirational teaching, and that finds a balance between technical and humanistic interests (1992b, 117). Havel's conceptions guided our inquiry into the views of teachers and teacher educators about the educational changes currently taking place in the Czech Republic. We wished to learn about the values underlying these changes and the ways in which change was being resisted by both individuals and the educational system itself. We also brought with us a set of assumptions about institutional and individual change, the character of the *ancien régime*, and the ways in which present educational realities reflect and differ from what preceded them. On the basis of our conversations we

wish to draw two conclusions.

THE NATURE OF CULTURAL DEPENDENCY

Czechs are discovering what others have discovered before them, namely that the advent of political independence does not mean an end to cultural or economic dependency (Woodhouse, 1985). Indeed, it may mean the opposite. This was graphically illustrated to us by the fact that of thirty four feature films being shown in Prague during June/July, 1992, 31 were from the United States (*The Prague Post*, June 30-July 6, 1992, p.14). This almost total domination of popular cinema was only relieved by one British and two Czech films; the last two being on life in the Czech army and in an insane asylum, respectively!⁶

It is probably unfair to make generalizations from this one instance. However, if this level of penetration of popular Czech culture by Hollywood is typical then it is reasonable to infer that American cultural domination is rampant (Schiller, 1990). Our casual observation of Czech television over a period of three weeks supports this suggestion. American and German programs, in particular, are popular with Czechs because they are indicative of successful consumer societies that they wish to emulate.

While the Czech desire to become full-fledged members of Western capitalist society is understandable, it may make the educational task of reviving a sense of being Pan-European somewhat difficult. On the other hand, as Czechs push for membership and equality within the European Union, they may recognize the commonalities between themselves and other members and demand an improvement in the quality of their cultural and educational institutions (Czech Association of Mathematicians and Teachers of Physics, 1991-92, p.5).

A BALANCED EDUCATION?

Are Havel's noble ideals about education being realized? On the basis of what we found, our initial reply would have to be that they are not.

All four educationalists were unanimous in their view that the school system is predominantly authoritarian, thereby excluding both the development of free and independent thinkers and the kind of inspirational teaching that Havel has in mind. This authoritarianism is also reflected in the lack of autonomy afforded universities by government, the absence of academic freedom among faculty members to express dissenting views, and the autocratic manner in which both

professors and administrators treat students (Redding, 1995). As for a balance between the technical and the humanistic, both the mathematics teacher and his association suggest strongly that mathematics is diminishing in importance but that humanism is not thereby gaining. Both are becoming subordinate to the market. The music teacher gave us a similar picture with regard to the movement to privatize music education, lower its standards, yet make it inaccessible to many students. As market principles invade schools and universities, such privatization is likely to exclude increasing numbers of potential students in other subject matters, making Havel's vision of the humane teacher even more of a rarity. Finally, the picture given to us of the current curriculum in teacher education at the University of Western Bohemia is that there is a growing imbalance between pedagogical and academic subjects. Rather than embracing the opportunity to mine the depths of indigenous and foreign pedagogical theory and practice, the Pedagogical Faculty is currently limiting the already diminutive scope of its offerings in pedagogy. This suggests an increasing specialization in teacher education that once again precludes the kind of balanced education envisaged by Havel.

Any shortcomings in achieving such change should be viewed in a global context. Western countries like Canada also have great difficulties in realizing the kind of liberal education that Havel desires. School, college, and university systems are too often mired in just the kind of specialization that he criticizes. Although philosophers and others have pointed this out for some time, little has been done to rectify the situation (Whitehead (1925)1953). Moreover, we in the West have not suffered the kinds of cultural, economic, and political privation that Czechs and Slovaks experienced for fifty years. We can only marvel at their resilience, bravery, and remarkable ability to adapt to a rapidly changing world (Richards, 1995).

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ENDNOTES

1. Our emphasis on the various forms of cultural oppression in the former Czechoslovakia does not mean that we overlook the economic determinism, stultifying bureaucracy, totalitarian state structure, and impoverished theory that Soviet Marxism imposed on its own peoples and those of Central and Eastern Europe (Marcuse, 1958). As a matter of fact, these aspects are well described in the works of Havel and Kundera that we cite. At the same time, we realise that many myths still abound about all aspects of life, including academic life, under these regimes. Despite official inflexibility, intellectuals enjoyed periods of relative openness in Hungary, particularly during the 1980's (Habermann, 1993). Of course, this was not the case in Czechoslovakia where repression continued even in November 1989, the month of the revolution.

2. We believe that the articles in this journal by the Czech Association of Mathematicians and Teachers of Physics (Central Committee) manage to give a balanced account of education past and present. They do not refrain from criticising the former Czech educational system as inefficient, ideological, overly theoretical, poorly evaluated, and as having fragmented curricula hastily put together by politically motivated functionaries (1991-92, pp. 5-6). At the same time, they recognise that the system managed to develop proficient graduates in physics, mathematics, and other disciplines. They are similarly sceptical of market-driven reforms, wishing to find a mid-point between structure and autonomy so that well-rounded individuals can develop within a thriving democracy (1991-92, p. 6).

3. In the rest of this sub-section we stray quite far from the expressed views of the two teachers with whom we were discussing. However, since it was they who gave us a copy of the journal *Matematika physica informatica*, saying that it captured their views most accurately, we believe such wandering to be justified. Translations of the text are by Viola Safr.

4. Significantly, Professor Bohdan Zelinka's letter was not published in the *People's Newspaper* where the rest of the debate was printed. However, it is reproduced in *Matematika physica informatica*, pp. 32-33.

5. We maintained the term 'pedagogy' in order to remain as faithful to the Czech concept as possible. While in English the concept pedagogy sounds unfamiliar, it has been resurrected by the work of Paulo Friere and others. Pedagogy refers to the theory of teaching which takes into account the capacities, styles of learning, and critical thought of the child or adult.

6. An unfair comparison with the number of feature films being shown in Paris later in the month of July shows that of eighty-eight feature films, forty-eight were from the United States (*Le Monde*, July 26/27, 1992, p. 16). Again, this shows a considerable level of cultural penetration. However, twenty-six of the remainder were French, a far higher percentage than in Prague. Interestingly, no Czech films were being shown in Paris, nor were any French films screened in Prague.

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