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***Samizdat* and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe**

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'The inner strength of a nation consists in its cultural development, its energy and zeal, its morality and good conduct. He who concerns himself with the enlargement of these qualities contributes most to future freedom. Let each of us do this at home and in our surroundings; no power can hinder us in doing this.'—Tomaš G. Masaryk, *Karel Havlíček*.

'The humanistic ideal requires us – ever, in everything and everywhere – systematically to resist evil and the inhumanity of society, both our own and foreign, and of its organs – cultural, political, national and church – all of them. Humanity is not a matter of sentiment, but of work, and again of work.'—Tomaš G. Masaryk, *Česká otázka*.

Those men form a moral government if they maintain in a subjugated nation a government over itself; if they repeat day and night, that the nation has in its own breast the will to act which nothing is able to suppress, that it need not descend to relying on foreign help, but can rely on its own strength alone; if they awaken in the nation, through its own act of generation, a feeling of strength and of its own divinity.'—Bronisław F. Trentowski, cited by Karel Havlíček, Masaryk, *Havlíček*.

Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	viii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
PART I SAMIZDAT IN THE USSR, CHINA AND CENTRAL EUROPE	
1 <i>Samizdat</i> : A Return to the Pre-Gutenberg Era?	3
2 Independent Communications in Central Europe	19
PART II INDEPENDENT TENDENCIES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA	
3 Dissent and Charter 77	43
4 Other Independent Currents	73
5 Independent Historiography Reborn	99
6 Parallel Politics	123
Part III INDEPENDENT SOCIETY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE	
7 A Second Society: A Theoretical Framework	157
8 A Second Polity: Contrasting Patterns of Reality	177
9 Towards an Independent Society?	219
<i>Notes and References</i>	239
<i>Index</i>	284

List of Tables

4.1	Participation in independent activity in Czechoslovakia	94
4.2	Self-identification of Czechoslovak opinion poll respondents	95
4.3	Czechoslovak attitudes to other nations	96
5.1	Czechoslovak historical journals and <i>sborníky</i> in <i>samizdat</i>	110

Preface

Independent activity by individuals and groups within the 'totalitarian' societies of Central and Eastern Europe is a fascinating phenomenon, exciting the imagination and calling for study. These activities are said to constitute in modest form an 'independent society', or, in other words, a 'second culture', or an alternative or parallel community, and are regarded by some as constituting the embryonic elements of a 'civil society'. This was conceived as sharply distinguished from the 'first' or 'official' society, the party and the state, which sought to establish or retain total control of society as a whole. In writing this book my purpose was to analyse this phenomenon more deeply, to compare and contrast its scope and character in each of the countries of the region, and to estimate the degree to which it could properly be conceived of as a genuine independent society and as a precursor of a future civil society.

As I write these lines, extraordinary things are happening in the Soviet Union and in some parts of Central and Eastern Europe which may radically transform the social and political scene and place my study in a somewhat different light. During the time of the preparation of this book independent activities were severely condemned and persecuted with an intensity varying according to the country. Except for Poland, during Solidarity, and even afterwards, there seemed little prospect of the emergence in the near future of anything resembling a fully independent or civil society. The 'official' and 'unofficial' spheres seemed to be sharply divided one from the other, with little or no contact between life in each one. Only in Poland was the independent realm alive and vibrant, and the official structures permeated by freer tendencies, with frequent cross-cutting and interacting among the two spheres. Elsewhere the picture was much more black and white, with grey areas forming the exceptions.

At the present time, both in the Soviet Union and in several countries of Central Europe, there are more and more signs of autonomous actions within the official party and state institutions and there has been a veritable outburst of new forms of unofficial activity. The fusion of independent activities within and outside official life has led to a greater blurring of the line dividing the two cultures and the two societies. As a result the independent society, where it exists, *may* become even more independent and have a

greater impact on the realm of authority. The first or official society *may* become more tolerant of its rivals and more receptive to their pressures. The second part of my title may become less appropriate as the independent society fuses more and more with the official and the whole of society increasingly escapes the thrall of the state. Even short of a pluralist or civil society this would mark a major shift in state-society relationships. All of this may, of course, prove to be wishful thinking. New repression may set the clock back and render the vestiges of an independent society less significant in the short run but still potentially important for the future.

In writing this book I was indebted, of course, to all the brave souls who provided me with its subject-matter and inspired me by their activities in culture, scholarship and politics. They served as a fount of information, and their writings, in *samizdat*, the principal documentary sources. Many of them, especially in Czechoslovakia, but also in other countries of the area, I came to know personally and to admire greatly. The book is dedicated to a few Czechs and Slovaks whose ideas have been of special value and whose friendship I have renewed, with my wife, Sally, during many trips, including the most recent ones in 1984 and 1987. Some of them joined with us in the latter year in celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of our first visit to Czechoslovakia and of our wedding in the Old Town Hall in Prague. I am thankful, too, to those Czechs, Hungarians and Poles who responded to my *anketa* (inquiry) on an independent society. I was also inspired by the writings of Thomas G. Masaryk, 'the perpetual dissenter' of the pre-1914 years, who has become an ever greater inspiration to many modern-day Czech and Slovak dissidents.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Dr Vilém Prečan, Czech historian, director of the Documentation Centre for the Promotion of Independent Czechoslovak Literature in Scheinfeld, West Germany. He has become a principal intermediary between the independent spirits at home and their friends and supporters abroad and has built up a most complete archive of *samizdat* materials. Thanks should also go to others who receive, distribute and translate these materials – Ivan Medek in Vienna, the Palach Press in London, and Radio Free Europe in Munich. I am grateful to the editors for permission to publish, in revised or partial form, articles which previously appeared in *Cross Currents* (Ann Arbor, Michigan), *Problems of Communism* (Washington, DC), *Canadian Slavonic Papers* (Toronto) and *International Journal of Politics* (White Plains, New York).

There are many other persons to whom I am obliged for contributing

Preface

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Toronto, Canada

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