

CZECH-IRISH CULTURAL RELATIONS
1950-2000

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The nature of the relations between Czechoslovakia and Ireland after 1950 was almost entirely predetermined by the political and cultural situation in Czechoslovakia caused by the communist takeover in February 1948. The country found itself in tough uncultured bondage to the Soviet Union, which did not hesitate to make use of its political dominance and of the initial gratitude to the liberators of May 1945 in dictating rules and norms that were characterized by a depravity beyond the imagination of many a minion of the Soviet regime among Czechoslovak communists. The putsch of 1948 was orchestrated by people who believed that the end justifies the means, and was permitted to happen by a multitude of others whose fear from the Nazi Protectorate combined with a desperate naivety that made them believe that any future was inevitably going to be better and brighter after fascism has been defeated. Instead, an atmosphere was swiftly created in the early 1950s in which any spontaneous contact with countries of the Western bloc could become the source of grave personal difficulties and could even result in imprisonment. Contact with foreign countries was consequently suppressed both in an official manner – the right to travel was granted only to a select few and the supply of foreign books was dramatically limited – and in a personal sense as well due to rigorous self-censorship. The resulting climate was that of a hitherto unparalleled cultural waste land. Miracles would occasionally happen; however, the few events that did occur and that were often paid for dearly can hardly be regarded as normal interaction. This gruesome void obtained in more or less immutable fashion up till 1989, the year of the political revolution that brought the Czechoslovak Republic back into Europe. Nevertheless, it was mostly not possible to follow up on earlier activities and links at that point any more: international relations had to be built entirely anew.

A Diplomat in Dublin

The first representative of the Czechoslovak state in the Free State of Ireland after the war was Karel Košťál, whose position throughout the war was strictly speaking that of a private diplomat. After his re-inclusion in the diplomatic corps in Ireland, Košťál was succeeded in 1947 by Major Pavel Růžička (1887-1961) who had achieved significant status in Ireland in the late 1930s, and whose success in terms of cultural and economic relations was exceptional, given his Protestant origins and his anti-German leanings. Růžička's appointment was attended by delays and considerable pressure from the Communist Party against the decision, since Růžička and his wife had expressed their disagreement with communist politics in Czechoslovakia on several public occasions. Moreover, the communists disliked the fact that Růžička was a confidant of the U.S. ambassador to Czechoslovakia who would consistently verify with the Major any information on the situation in Czechoslovakia that the communists and their well-wishers tried to insinuate on him.¹ The Catholic party, represented by the Minister of Postal Service František Hála, also had misgivings, criticizing the posting of a non-Catholic at the Dublin Embassy. In the end, Růžička's appointment had to be forcefully backed up by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Masaryk, who refused any such objections, stating that Růžička's contacts in Ireland were irreplaceable.²

Růžička was to live up to Masaryk's expectations. After the coup of February 1948, he called a press conference at which he resolutely condemned the events in his native country. The communists had tried to woo him back to Prague under the pretext of having him sign his pension assessment, and now attempted to remove him from the office, at which Růžička commenced an occupation of the Embassy. The Irish backed him up in the negotiations concerning his proposed removal, designating him as indispensable; moreover, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs announced that a replacement for Růžička will not be accepted. After Růžička's moveable and immoveable assets were sequestered in Prague, he confiscated the antique furniture at the Embassy.³ Moreover, he made efficient steps for the support

¹ Archiv bezpečnostních složek (Security Forces Archive), Collection T/MV (Taktické svazky Ministerstva vnitra), File 153 or File 28781.

² Cf. Jan Masaryk's letter to František Hála, 25 April 1947, Národní archiv – Chodovec (National Archive at Chodovec), Collection Londýnský archiv 1939-1945, No. 142. See also "Veto proti obsazení Dublinu" [Veto against the Appointment at Dublin], *Souvislosti* 19.3 (2008): 144-45.

³ Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí (AMZV; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive), Pavel Růžička's personal file.

of political refugees from Czechoslovakia. For instance, as Josef Josten recalls Růžička sent the Embassy's stamp to London, which was then used in the passports of newly arrived expatriates in order to facilitate their international mobility.⁴ The communist authorities made an attempt to send liquidators of the mission to the island but Ireland ostentatiously did not allow their entry due to the scandalous expulsion of the papal nuncio from Czechoslovakia.⁵ Czech-Irish relations in the early 1950s thus in terms of diplomacy soon became limited to embarrassing scrambles concerning confiscated furniture at the Embassy, with the Czechoslovaks insisting on getting hold of the items in order to save their face. This was not to be however, as the Irish diplomats consistently sabotaged the effort. The Czechoslovak communists finally closed down the mission to Ireland, relegating any affairs concerning Ireland to London. Růžička packed up selected documents and sent the archive of the Embassy to London; incidentally, his act resulted in the eventual preservation of the materials.⁶

Růžička registered with the Council of Free Czechoslovakia, resident in Washington, D.C., by forwarding a list of Czechoslovak citizens determined to work against the communists. Nevertheless, he could hardly expect large-scale financial support for an unspecified struggle against communism from the government in Ireland, a country that was not particularly prosperous at the time. Primarily, he had to resolve his own financial situation. This was achieved due to the culinary skills of his wife Svatava, who established in the kitchen of their home a small shop to produce continental delicatessen, which she supplied to the favourite venue, Magill's of Dublin. The Růžičkas were remembered through this new venture and managed to obtain the means for the subscription to Czechoslovak exile periodicals – which they were frequent contributors to – and for the support of Czechoslovak refugees in internment camps in Germany and Austria. Their effort is documented in detail in Růžička's correspondence with Přemysl Pitter, an evangelical, pacifist and famous Czechoslovak teacher who was forced into exile in Germany after February 1948, where he was taking care of internees from Czechoslovakia.⁷ As a faithful Evangelical, Růžička regularly frequented the Presbyterian

⁴ Josef Josten (signed J.J.), "Odešel diplomat" [The Passing away of a Diplomat], *Čechoslovák* 13.36 (29 September 1961): 1-2, 4.

⁵ National Archives of Ireland, Files PRES 1/P, 3179, DFA 318/33, Part 1A, DFA 318/50.

⁶ AMZV, Collection Zastupitelský úřad Dublin 1929-1950. See the archival aid Lea Tlustá, *ZÚ Dublin 1929-1950* (Praha: AFMZV, 1981).

⁷ Pedagogické muzeum J.A. Komenského (The Comenius Pedagogical Museum), Přemysl Pitter Collection, Correspondence Received, Box 40. See also Pavel Kosatík, *Sám proti zlu* [Alone against Evil] (Praha and Litomyšl: Paseka 2009) 263.

chapel at 18A Adelaide Road, where he collected funds that he forwarded to Přemysl Pitter for the German internment camps. That is also where his collection of Irish literature in English had gone, with most volumes having been signed by their authors: the books were sent to the camps in order to aid the refugees in learning English. Entirely preoccupied as he was by work for Czechoslovak émigrés, who were unable as yet to imagine how long the journey back home might take, Růžička did not resign from Czech-Irish relations either. Růžička continued to be perceived as a member of the Dublin diplomatic corps in a certain sense: he visited cultural events in Dublin, particularly music concerts, and maintained friendly relations with Irish writers and politicians. He was a regular recipient of Éamon de Valera's Christmas greetings. Every Christmas, the Růžičkas hosted Edward Taaffe (1898-1967),⁸ a former Czechoslovak citizen of Irish origin. Taaffe was the descendant of a prominent Irish aristocratic family, grandson of a powerful prime minister of Austro-Hungary, and former owner of the Nalžovy (Ger. Elischau) Castle, which featured in its vicinity a replica of the Taaffes' castle in Ireland. Taaffe assisted the Růžičkas in their communication with their families behind the "Iron Curtain" by having them use his name and address for correspondence between Ireland and Czechoslovakia.⁹ Major Růžička's widow Svatava survived her husband by twenty years and became an important point of contact for Czech exiles after 1968, providing much-needed support.¹⁰

A Translator in London

After the interruption of Czechoslovak-Irish diplomatic relations, the international and cultural agenda that concerned Ireland was taken over by the cultural attaché at the London Embassy, Aloys Skoumal (1904-1988). Given Skoumal's views, his Catholic faith, and generally his taste in culture, the fact that he remained in his posting may appear as near miraculous.¹¹ It was

⁸ Pedagogické muzeum J.A. Komenského (The Comenius Pedagogical Museum), Přemysl Pitter Collection, Box 40. See also "Obituary: The Count Taaffe," *The Irish Times* 5 July 1967: 4.

⁹ Interview with Radim Donát, a relative of Mrs Svatava Růžičková (née Donátová). Edward Taaffe married an Irishwoman, Grace McLaughlin, prior to his departure from Czechoslovakia in 1931.

¹⁰ Karel Bacik, "Mrs Svatava Ruzickova," *The Irish Times* 21 March 1983: 13.

¹¹ AMZV, Collection ZÚ Londýn, Box 2. See also Martina Halamová-Jiroušková, "Aloys Skoumal a Anglie" [Aloys Skoumal and England], *Aloys Skoumal (1904-1988). V průsečíku cest české kultury 20. století* [Aloys Skoumal (1904-1988). At the Intersection of Paths

chiefly due to the Czechoslovak intelligence – naturally as directed by Soviet intelligence – using the Embassy of Czechoslovakia in London as an important residency for Britain, and in fact the entire Commonwealth. That is why no major changes were made in the minor and middle clerical ranks at this particular embassy, leaving in their posts those who inspired confidence and had important contacts, since emotional ties that had developed in the preceding years were desirable to maintain. The apparent constancy of the mission was to lull the British into trusting the Czechoslovak Embassy which in terms of espionage was to replace the Embassy of the Soviet Union, towards the staff of which there was extreme vigilance. None of this involved Skoumal, however. His continuance in the office was most likely backed up at the same time by a powerful supporter, cartoonist and translator Adolf Hoffmeister (1902-1973) of the Ministry of Information, who had originally recommended Skoumal for the job.¹² Regardless of the strong ties with the Catholic publisher Josef Florian of Stará Říše from his youth, Skoumal was thus able to carry on with his interest in British and Irish writing without any significant disruption; these literatures were to become the focal point of his subsequent work as translator.¹³ After his return from London, he used his knowledge particularly in a number of seminal translations of Irish authors, such as the selected works of Jonathan Swift (*Výbor z díla*, 1953) or his later translations of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1983), *Dubliners* (1988), and the monumental *Ulysses* (1976).¹⁴ Skoumal moreover edited a representative collection of short stories by more recent Irish authors, which appeared as *Ni králi, ni císaři* (Neither to King, Nor to Emperor, 1965). His avowed intention in the volume was to alter the “undiscovered” impression that the island gave to the likes of Karel Čapek earlier.¹⁵ The anthology

of 20th-century Czech Culture] (České Budějovice: Jihočeská univerzita – Historický ústav, 2004) 52-63.

¹² Literární archiv Památníku národního písemnictví (LA PNP; The Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature), Aloys Skoumal Collection, Box 16.

¹³ Dagmar Blümllová, *Aloys Skoumal – Ironik v české pasti* [Aloys Skoumal – An Ironist in a Czech Trap] (České Budějovice: Jihočeská univerzita, 2009) 87-112, 421-30.

¹⁴ Skoumal's translation of *Ulysses* appeared as a limited edition that was not distributed in the customary fashion into bookshops, remaining unavailable for a long time, while at the same time being highly priced at the black market. Curiously enough, the book had found its way onto many an apparatchik's bookshelf, as communist functionaries would have purchased it due to its being a showcase of “capitalist decadence”, or even more likely due to its reputation as “pornographic”.

¹⁵ See Aloys Skoumal, “Objevování Irska” [Discovering Ireland], *Nové knihy* 44 (28 October 1965): 1; Aloys Skoumal, “Irsko v mém srdci” [Ireland in My Heart], *Za novou četbou* 5 (1965): 15.

was sent to numerous libraries and associations in Ireland on its publication, based on extensive consultations that the translator was given by Irish colleagues.¹⁶

Skoumal eventually became a member of the International Association for the Study of Anglo-Irish Literature (IASAIL) and participated in the International James Joyce Symposia in Dublin in 1969 and 1977.¹⁷ In spite of the lack of books from abroad in socialist Czechoslovakia, he managed to obtain a number of volumes required for his translations by means of various exchanges. He was assisted by Rudolf Šturm, an émigré to the United States, for instance, who exchanged Joycean publications with him for dictionaries published in Czechoslovakia; the gentlemanly exchange rate established by Šturm was based on the number of pages rather than on the price of the books, as Skoumal had originally proposed.¹⁸ There are indications that Skoumal also used his occasional trips to France for the study of Joycean. Notwithstanding his relentless effort to promote Irish subjects, many of his planned activities were never allowed to take place. For instance, his papers include a contract for dozens of dictionary entries concerning Irish literature that he was to produce for the Encyclopaedic Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences; however, the project was abandoned by the Academy.¹⁹

Refugees Old and New

The Czechoslovak community – or rather diaspora – in Ireland included a number of prominent members after the communist coup and in the early 1950s; with a few exceptions, these people are not particularly well known any more. They were primarily immigrants from before World War II who settled in Ireland and remained living there, since for one reason or another, going back to Czechoslovakia was not plausible. For example, German geophysicist and astronomer of Jewish origin, professor Leo Wenzel Pollak (1888-1964) had been living in Dublin from the outbreak of the war: he had been dismissed from his post of chairman of the Geophysical Institute of the Prague German

¹⁶ Alan R. Eager and Desmond Clarke of the Royal Dublin Society clarified unfamiliar concepts and expressions, and supplied biographical notes for the individual authors. Cf. LA PNP, Aloys Skoumal Collection, Boxes 9, 10, 11. See also the announcement of the publication in *The Irish Times*, “Irish Stories Out in Czech,” 15 February 1966: 7.

¹⁷ For Skoumal’s Joycean papers, see LA PNP, Aloys Skoumal Collection, Boxes 2, 3, 5, 12, 20, 29-31.

¹⁸ LA PNP, Aloys Skoumal Collection, Box 2.

¹⁹ LA PNP, Aloys Skoumal Collection, Box 1.

University, had to flee from Prague because of the Nazis, and found a job at a Dublin astronomical institute.²⁰ As much as he may have been a regular visitor at events hosted by Karel Košťál in Dublin in the war years, it is very likely that his relations with other Czechoslovaks were rather circumspect following the expulsion of the Germans from Czechoslovakia after the war.

Frank S. Drechsler (1923-1990) also arrived in Ireland shortly before the war, his family having sent him and his brother to his uncle who owned a factory in Castlebar. After his graduation from University College Dublin, he joined the Czechoslovak Army in exile. When the war was over, Drechsler left for Czechoslovakia, got baptized and returned to Ireland in order to marry the woman that he fell in love with during his studies. He became a recognized expert in metallurgy and following a research stay in the U.S., lectured in the Business School at Trinity College Dublin and served as editor of *Irish Engineering*.²¹ After the 1989 revolution in Czechoslovakia, he was among the founders of The Irish Czech and Slovak Society in Dublin, passing away shortly after.

The future chemist Herbert Morawetz (*1915) fled from Czechoslovakia via Poland, France and Britain shortly before the outbreak of World War II, and arrived in Northern Ireland. His father had sent him as an apprentice to Lavens Mackie's factory in Belfast some years earlier; he had returned later in order to find a job for his younger brother. Morawetz eventually managed to obtain an air ticket to Canada with the help of the Mackie family, where he set up a new career, gradually becoming a prominent U.S. chemical engineer. His bond with Ireland was extended by his marriage to Cathleen Synge, the daughter of an important Irish mathematician and a relative of the playwright John Millington Synge.²²

Another group includes those who left Czechoslovakia after the war, be it before the 1948 putsch by the Communist Party or after it. Perhaps the most significant figure of this wave of immigration was diplomat and historian Zdeněk Ehler (1908-1972), former secretary of Minister of Foreign Affairs Kamil Krofta and an ardent Catholic. Ehler was appointed Professor at University College Dublin, where he lectured in modern history and

²⁰ *Kulturní adresář ČSR* [Czechoslovak Cultural Directory], ed. Antonín Dolenský (Praha: Josef Zeibrdlich, 1934) 347; *Ottův slovník naučný nové doby* [Otto's Modern Encyclopaedia], Vol. IV (Praha: Novina, 1937) 1228. See also *Dějiny Univerzity Karlovy* [A History of Charles University] Vol. IV (1918-1990) (Praha Karolinum, 1998) 205, 590.

²¹ Anon., "Frank S. Drechsler Appointed to T.C.D.," *Irish Independent* 22 October 1964: 7.

²² Herbert Morawetz, *Mých devadesát let*, trans. H. and L. Synek [My Ninety Years] (Praha: Academia, 2008) 54-57, 82-83, 139-40, 155-56, 300.

international law. He was a specialist in totalitarian regimes of Central and Eastern Europe and often gave public lectures within a variety of Catholic associations about the systems of and legal abuses in these regimes. Moreover, he worked as Professor of Slavonic studies at Lund University in Sweden, and served as the Dublin correspondent of *Le Monde* and the exile periodical *Nový život* (New Life) which was based in Rome. His contributions focused on Central and Eastern Europe featured also in Irish dailies and magazines, signed with a variation of his name, Sydney Z. Ehler.²³

Dancer Helen Lewis (née Katz, 1916-2009) also left Czechoslovakia after the war. She was a survivor of the Terezín, Auschwitz and Stutthof concentration camps and settled in Belfast where she was a co-founder of the Belfast Modern Dance Group. In her later years, she wrote a memoir for the sake of her children, which was published as *Time to Speak* (1992) and translated into Czech in 1999 (*Přišel čas promluvit*). English literature scholar and translator Bohuslava Bradbrook (née Nečasová, *1922) escaped from Czechoslovakia in the early 1950s as well, making Ireland an early refuge outside the Continent: in 1953, she worked as a teacher at Drogheda Grammar School.²⁴ A Czechoslovak Hungarian from Košice, Zoltán Zinn-Collis (*1939) came to Ireland as a child, having been saved during the Red Cross mission to Bergen-Belsen by famous Irish paediatrician Robert Collis, who later became his adoptive father.²⁵ Zinn-Collis also wrote a memoir eventually, co-authored by Alicia McAuley and entitled *Final Witness* (2006, in Czech as *Přežil jsem peklo Bergen-Belsen*, 2010).

A completely forgotten figure is the former communist journalist and Spanish International Brigade member Stephen W. Pollak (*1913) who had followed his Irish wife from Czechoslovakia before the communist violence

²³ A brief biography appears in Jožka Pejskar, *Poslední pocta – Památník na zemřelé československé exulanty v letech 1948-1981* [Last Tribute: A Memorial to Deceased Czechoslovak Émigrés of 1948-1981], Vol. I (Zurich: Konfrontation AG/SA, 1982) 106. See also Ehler's articles "Drama Ends in Crypt of a Prague Church," *Irish Independent* 13 June 1957: 3; "The Czech Collapse," *The Irish Times* 14 March 1958: 7; "The Sage of Prague," *The Irish Times* 18 March 1961: 11; "Scapegoat of Stature," *Irish Independent* 28 June 1969: 6; "The Tragedy of Czechoslovakia under Communist Rule," *The Capuchin Annual* 1969: 297-321.

²⁴ Bohuslava Bradbrooková, *Británie – můj osud* [Britain – My Fate] (Praha: ARSCI, 2011) 96-106. See also Bradbrook's short story published under the pen-name Jana Franková, "Knír maršála Wellingtona, aneb vzpomínky na Irsko" [Marshal Wellington's Moustache, or, Memories of Ireland], *Sklizeň* 9/10 (November-December 1960): 3-9.

²⁵ Robert Collis, *To Be a Pilgrim* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1975) 101-23. See also the mention in a book by Collis's famous patient – Christy Brown, *My Left Foot*, in Czech as *Moje levá noha*, trans. Doris Grozdanovičová (Praha: Zvon, 1993) 146.

started to affect the ranks of its perpetrators. He described his escape and awakening from the communist dream in a volume entitled *Strange Land behind Me* (1951). A link with Ireland may be found also with the prominent Czech émigré Pavel Tigrid (1917-2003), chief editor of the significant exile periodical *Svědectví*, who became a correspondent of *The Irish Times* after 1948.²⁶ After the war, the Czechoslovak community was reinforced by glassmakers Karel Bačík (1910-1991), who was also an excellent pianist and spoke up to six languages,²⁷ and Miroslav Havel (1922-2008) who succeeded together in resuscitating the Waterford Crystal glassworks and created a new design for it, becoming thus an icon of Irish arts and crafts.²⁸ Finally, noteworthy figures of the Czechoslovak diaspora in Ireland included pre-war immigrants who arrived in Ireland in order to build and manage sugar factories which were being built from the 1920s to the 1930s. Prominent among them was Alfréd Navrátil (1895-1990), director of the sugar factory in Mallow, who had taken up Irish citizenship still before World War II and bought a farm in Ballinacurra, Co. Cork. As it will become apparent in what follows, the descendants of some of the refugees or immigrants to Ireland rose to prominence and often achieved distinction in culture or politics.

Czech Reminiscences

Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and early 1960s moreover featured internal immigration. This concerned people who were closely connected with the times before the communist coup and who stood a minimal chance of coexistence with the communist authorities and their cultural emissaries, even should they be willing to compromise. Consul Karel Košťál (*1893) may be taken as an example: while diplomat Pavel Růžička survived the Nazi Protectorate in Prague only to end up in exile in Dublin after February 1948, Košťál – who succeeded him in his posting as Consul in 1937 – was pensioned off after 1948, becoming merely a private person.²⁹ He had naturally made numerous friends and acquaintances during his time in Ireland and very likely remained in

²⁶ “Czech Irish Links,” *Irish Czech and Slovak Society Newsletter* 1 (1994): 3.

²⁷ Catherine Cox, “Charles Bačík,” *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Vol. 1 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy 2009) 210-11. See also the obituary, Bernard J. FitzPatrick (signed B.J.F.), “(Dr) Charles (Karel) Bačík,” *The Irish Times* 17 September 1991: 11.

²⁸ Tina Hunt, Audrey Whitty, “The Industrial Design of Waterford Glass, 1947-c. 1965,” *Glassmaking in Ireland: From the Medieval to the Contemporary* (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2010) 215-28.

²⁹ AMZV, Collection Zastupitelský úřad Dublin 1929-1950. For his wartime activities in Dublin, see Jan Němeček, *Soumrak a úsvit československé diplomacie* [The Twilight and the Dawn of Czechoslovak Diplomacy] (Praha: Academia, 2008) 107-14.

contact with them whenever it was possible. However, his international correspondence was stifled throughout the fifties, as trumped-up charges of espionage that were based on relations with foreigners were frighteningly frequent.³⁰ The situation became somewhat more relaxed in the sixties. Notwithstanding the lack of information on Košťál's life after 1948, what can be firmly established is the circle of Irish visitors who were headed for his flat in Czechoslovakia from the mid-sixties up to the seventies, when he most likely passed away. This is due to the individual visits being recorded in the Visitors' Book of the Dublin Consulate which Košťál retained from the time of his posting and subsequently used at home in Prague. The names featured in the book include Gaelic revivalist Oscar mac Uilis (1903-1969), who worked for the Department of Education, served as international secretary of Pan-Celtic Congresses and was a Breton specialist: he visited the former Dublin Consul in 1964.³¹ Among legible signatures are also those of the celebrated documentary film maker Liam O'Leary (1910-1997), who visited in 1973,³² the distinguished historian and conservationist Kevin B. Nowlan of University College Dublin (dated 1970), and William J. Harper of RTE (dated 1973).³³

The champions of Ireland in the Czechoslovak cultural environment included the celebrated Anglicist and Slavonic literary scholar Otakar Vočadlo (1895-1974), who was a former pupil of the Celtic scholar Josef Baudiš in Bratislava. Vočadlo first wrote about Irish culture still at the time of the first Czechoslovak Republic,³⁴ having been introduced to matters Irish in his hometown of Klatovy by his first teacher of English, who happened to be from Ireland.³⁵ Professor Vočadlo was known to the general public largely

³⁰ See Irish memories of Karel Košťál from the early fifties: Kees van Hoek, "The Way of the World," *The Irish Times* 25 May 1950: 6; Robert Maire Smyllie (signed Nichevo), "An Irishman's Diary," *The Irish Times* 24 December 1953: 7.

³¹ See the obituary, B. Mac G. P., "Oscar Mac Cárthaigh Uilis," *The Irish Press* 21 February 1969: 7. The nature of mac Uilis's interest in Czech culture is not particularly clear; what may be established is that a number of years earlier, he translated the Czech national anthem into Irish. Cf. "Is ann atá m'áitream is mo baile féin?," Jaromír Václav Šmejkal, *Píseň písní národu českého* [The Song of Songs of the Czech Nation] (Praha: A. Neubert, 1935) 261.

³² See the memory of the Czech diplomat that is part of the reminiscences concerning the early years of the Irish Film Society in Liam O'Leary, "Potemkin and Afterwards," *The Irish Times* 18 November 1986: 12.

³³ AMZV, Collection Návštěvní kniha ZÚ Dublin 1937-1947.

³⁴ Otakar Vočadlo (signed V-o), "Irská literatura (anglo-irská)" [Irish Literature (Anglo-Irish)], *Ottův slovník naučný nové doby* [Otto's Modern Encyclopaedia], Vol. II (Praha: J. Otto, 1933) 1508-9.

³⁵ See letter from Ludmila Vočadlová to Bohuslava Bradbrook of 12 April 1975, cited in Bohuslava Bradbrooková, *Británie – můj osud* [Britain – My Fate] (Praha: ARSCI, 2011) 321.

as a friend of Karel Čapek, who he came to accompany on his visit to Britain. In the U.K., Vočadlo taught popular courses of the Czech language, which were attended by several Irish students.³⁶ Vočadlo's approach to Ireland was relatively sober and verged on the sceptical in the early years of his career.³⁷ However, he seems to have become fully dedicated to Irish culture towards the end of his life, which is testified not only by his notes for a lecture on Celtic motifs in Czech literature delivered to the Czech Modern Language Association (Kruh moderních filologů) in 1973, as preserved among his papers,³⁸ but primarily by his articles on Czech-Irish subjects, such as the writings of Julius Zeyer.³⁹ Vočadlo's papers moreover include letters from Manx revivalist Mona Douglas, with whom he was making arrangements for a Manx-language publication of his study on Celtic motifs in Czech literature. However, it is most likely that only Vočadlo's notes for the essay remain of the project due to his approaching death. It also seems that Vočadlo's first extended visit to Ireland did not take place until 1964, which was the occasion that he met Frank O'Connor.⁴⁰

Despite the bleakness of the period, Czech-Irish relations did not consist merely of reminiscences and looking back into the past. The 1960s in Czechoslovakia brought along the discovery of an Irish author who came to significantly influence Czech culture: Samuel Beckett (1906-1989). Translators of Beckett's prose works and plays included, prominently, poet Jiří Kolář and literary translators Josef Kaušitz and František Vrba, followed by Patrik

³⁶ His students included Fergus Patrick Casey, who translated several short stories by Jan Neruda, Ignát Herrmann and Svatopluk Čech into English. The translations are lodged at the LA PNP, Collection Otakar Vočadlo – Rukopisy cizí.

³⁷ See Otakara Vočadlo's letter to Aloys Skoumal of 6 May 1926, written after Skoumal's return from Ireland. LA PNP, Collection Aloys Skoumal, Box 18.

³⁸ LA PNP, Collection Otakar Vočadlo, Section Poznámky a výpisky, "Poznámky a fragment práce týkající se díla Karla Havlíčka Borovského a jeho vztahu k Irsku (31 listů)" [Notes and a fragment of an essay on the subject of Karel Havlíček Borovský and his relation to Ireland (31 sheets)], "Poznámky, výpisky a fragmenty prací o irské literatuře (190 listů)" [Notes, excerpts, and fragments of essays on Irish literature (190 sheets)], "Poznámky k tématu keltských motivů v díle Julia Zeyera (25 listů)" [Notes on the subject of Celtic motifs in the work of Julius Zeyer (25 sheets)].

³⁹ See, e.g., Otakar Vočadlo, "Zeyerovy keltské motivy" [Zeyer's Celtic Motifs], *Lidová demokracie* 8 May 1971: 5.

⁴⁰ LA PNP, Collection Otakar Vočadlo, Section Zápísníky, "Zápisník s adresami a poznámkami převážně z doby pobytu ve Velké Británii a v Irsku v roce 1964" [Notebook with addresses and notes largely from the time of the 1964 stay in the United Kingdom and Ireland]. See also Vočadlo's postcard to Skoumal of 15 October 1965, LA PNP, Collection Aloys Skoumal, Box 18.

Ouředník, Tomáš Hrách, and others. Beckett's drama had substantial influence on the work of playwright Václav Havel (1936-2011). Moreover, the playwrights eventually came to dedicate a play to each other: Beckett's *Catastrophe* was written in 1982 in support of Havel who was imprisoned for his dissident activities at the time; Havel responded in 1984 by the one-act *Mistake*, and the authors exchanged letters on the occasion.⁴¹

Irish Transformations

As part of the search for new markets for Czechoslovak products, intensive negotiations were in progress from the early 1960s concerning the establishment of a Czechoslovak trade mission in Dublin, whose task would be to facilitate the exchange of Czechoslovak industrial produce for Irish raw materials and food products, particularly fish.⁴² The mission was established in 1964 and became the first trade mission of a communist country in Ireland, as the Irish press have stressed. The first representative of the mission was Miroslav Hudec, whose main assignment was to organize the visit of Irish entrepreneurs to the Brno Trade Fair. The same year saw the launch of a travel agency which soon brought some of the more affluent Irish to the tourist destinations of Czechoslovakia.⁴³ Irish business leaders with an interest in Czechoslovakia prominently included Barry Hardy, a Canadian national who initiated the foundation of the first Irish-Czech Society in the late 1960s. The Society swiftly brought together members of the Trade Mission, Irish entrepreneurs, and Czechoslovaks with a permanent or temporary residence in Dublin.

Under Hardy's chairmanship, The Irish-Czech Society soon became involved in cultural events. An example is provided by the Dublin screening of Jan Špáta's (1932-2006) documentary about Ireland. Entitled *Země sv. Patricka* (The Land of St Patrick, 1967), the film was commissioned by the German

⁴¹ For details and an extended quotation from Havel's letter, see James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame. The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996) 676-81. The plays were published in Czech for the first time in samizdat as Samuel Beckett, "Katastrofa. Václavu Havlovi," trans. Karel Kraus, *Kritický sborník* 4.2 (1984): 16-20, and Václav Havel, "Chyba," *Kritický sborník* 4.3 (1984): 16-21.

⁴² See the anonymous news items "Czechs May Establish Trade Mission Here," *The Irish Times* 9 March 1964: 1; "First Communist Trade Mission to Open Here Soon," *The Irish Times* 7 November 1964: 7; "Czechoslovak Delegation Here To-day," *The Irish Times* 25 November 1964: 11.

⁴³ Anon., "Czech Tourist Bureau Opens in Dublin," *The Irish Times* 19 June 1964: 5.

businessman and Hibernophile Arnold Hintz.⁴⁴ It is widely believed in the Czech lands that this excellent documentary had had a warm reception even in Ireland itself; however, this was not exactly the case, since the enthusiasm was mixed in Ireland with embarrassment and objections.⁴⁵ Immediately after the Dublin screening, an official in charge of promoting tourism in the West of Ireland is alleged to have stated that although he was aesthetically pleased, the nature of his office makes him assert that Ireland does not wish to present this kind of a picture of itself to the world. When the film was shown on RTÉ television, viewers were equally critical of Špáta's choice of the least hospitable region of Ireland, i.e., the empty bogland of Connemara, and of his predominant focus on old people and the life in monasteries, instead of taking note of the industrial growth of the country or the promising young generation. Exaggerated as some of these responses may appear, Špáta was clearly dealing in Ireland with his favourite subjects again, creating thus a poetic image of a poor and religious land that may not have been to the liking of either the poor or the religious people.

Nevertheless, August 1968 was already drawing near. After the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the troops of the Warsaw Pact, the agenda of The Irish-Czech Society was suddenly entirely different: it organized protest marches against the occupation of the country and attempts to boycott any cultural events in Dublin that were related in any way to the Soviet Union. The Czech Trade Mission, whose officials took regular part in the protests and which was closely related to the Irish-Czech Society, remained pragmatically unaltered by the communists up till the beginning of the so-called normalization. Yet, Miroslav Hudec was still substituted by Jaroslav Kopecký, a new functionary from Prague.⁴⁶ The subsequent status of the Mission was never the same as in its early years, and it had to face several public accusations of alleged sales of weaponry to the IRA. Representatives of the Mission fervently opposed any such charges and no evidence was ever produced of the transactions.⁴⁷ Notwithstanding that, it is regarded as an accepted fact that Czechoslovakia

⁴⁴ Martin Štoll, *Jan Špáta* (Praha: Nakladatelství Malá Skála, 2007) 91-92.

⁴⁵ Jean Sheridan, "Czech Film on Role of Church," *Irish Press* 17 September 1968: 223; Jean Sheridan, "Enthusiasm for Czech Film," *Irish Press* 20 September 1968: 3. Compare with the discussion of TV viewers' letters in Ken Gray, "Television. Czech Point," *The Irish Times* 21 November 1968: 14.

⁴⁶ "Leader of Czech Mission Defended," *Irish Independent* 22 April 1970: 1.

⁴⁷ Anon., "Activities of Czech Mission Questioned," *The Irish Times* 1 May 1970: 8.; Anon., "Arms Link Denied by Czech Trade Head," *The Irish Times* 20 October 1971: 5; William J. Wilson, "Trade Mission," *The Irish Times* 25 October 1971: 11; Anon., "Czech Mission in Dublin Denies Littlejohn Claim," *The Irish Times* 5 April 1974: 16.

supplied the IRA with the then undetectable explosive called Semtex through the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, in whose country numerous IRA fighters were being trained.

Czech Substitutions

The political changes in Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1968 brought along a general resuscitation of civic society: people who may have been circumspect or apathetic earlier now set on to the development of international relations, believing that the communist system was capable of reform. At last they were allowed to travel across the borders of the heavily guarded outpost of the communist bloc and renew or develop withered contacts in Western Europe and elsewhere in the world. The effort was manifest also in the preparations for the foundation of a Czechoslovak-Irish Society in Prague, as a new branch of the Czechoslovak Association for International Relations. The Society was finally established in the spring of 1969, soon recruiting up to one hundred members from a variety of walks of life and with a wide scale of cultural interests. As in the inter-war years, the original impulse came from the Ministry of Foreign Trade and was associated with the foundation of the Czechoslovak Trade Mission in Dublin; it was for this reason that the first chairperson of the Society was Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade, Václav Červený (*1905).⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the purpose of the Society was not merely to aid commerce: its cultural section was presided over by historian Josef Polišenský (1915-2001), whose research interests were in British and Irish affairs, while his immediate motivation in joining the society lay in his effort to unravel the remarkable story of Irish soldiers in the armies of the Thirty Years' War. Polišenský was interested, for instance, in the Irish soldiers who fought in the Austrian army, particularly in the Irish murderers of Wallenstein who settled in Bohemia on the estates that had been confiscated to the leaders of the Czech uprising. Apart from that, he also wrote about the more recent history of Ireland.⁴⁹ The office of his deputy was entrusted to Aloys Skoumal, who embodied Czech interest in matters Irish up until the late 1980s. Prominent members included physician Ludvík Schmid, whose focus was on Czech-Irish relations in the 17th and 18th

⁴⁸ See *Zpravodaj Československo-irské společnosti* 1 (1969) lodged at LA PNP, Collection Aloys Skoumal, Box 54.

⁴⁹ Josef Polišenský, "Češi a Irové v minulosti a současnosti" [The Czechs and the Irish in the Past and in the Present], *Lidová demokracie* 1 May 1969: 2; "Ani císař, ani král aneb Irské povstání v roce 1916" [Neither Emperor, Nor King, or, The Irish Rising of 1916], *Dějiny a současnost* 8.8 (1966): 30-34.

century, or conductor Albert Rosen, both of whom will be discussed individually later. Moreover, it has been established that Cardinal František Tomášek (1899-1992) was also a member, and paid a visit to Ireland in the year of the foundation of the Society.⁵⁰

Some of those who were interested in Irish culture and managed to visit the island stayed to live there after the 1968 occupation of Czechoslovakia. Most of them permanently integrated into Irish culture and social life. Young medical doctor Petr Škrabánek (1940-1994) came to Ireland as early as 1967 for an internship at the Galway Regional Hospital. He may have been leaving Czechoslovakia with a growing interest in James Joyce; he came back as an avid enthusiast in anything Irish after four weeks. When he was returning to Ireland in 1968 in order to further his research at the Richmond Hospital in Dublin, he would have hardly imagined that the country was going to become his other home. He was joined by his wife, linguist Věra Čapková (*1937), during the summer holiday. She was a member of Václav Machek's team working on the *Etymological Dictionary of the Czech Language* (1971) at the time, and intended to establish links with local Celtic studies scholars whose expertise could be used in the creation of this crucial work of etymology. On the day when Soviet troops entered Czechoslovakia, the couple were holidaying in the North-West of Ireland; the initial shock was followed by a thorough assessment of the situation, which resulted in their decision not to return to their occupied homeland and rather stay in Ireland.

Petr Škrabánek found refuge first at the laboratory of the Medical Research Council, and later worked in a department of internal medicine of the Jervis Street Hospital, the Endocrine Oncology Unit in the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, and finally became a lecturer at and eventually Fellow of Trinity College Dublin. After difficult beginnings, he achieved an enviable reputation in Ireland and the U.K. not only as a medical doctor and researcher, regularly contributing to the prestigious journal *The Lancet*,⁵¹ but also as a scholar specializing in Joyce's most complex work, *Finnegans Wake*. The *Wake* was his passionate hobby, with Škrabánek publishing a number of articles on the subject. The most interesting of these in the present context are his lists of words

⁵⁰ Anon., "St. Patrick's Day Celebration in Prague," *Irish Independent* 14 March 1969: 8; Wesley Boyd, "Spring Returns for the Czechoslovak Church," *The Irish Times* 20 May 1968: 7. See also photo "Prague Bishop to Visit Dublin," *The Irish Times* 2 January 1969: 8.

⁵¹ Robin Fox, "Petr Skrabanek and *The Lancet*," *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* 49.6 (1996): 607-8.

of Slavonic origins that are used in Joyce's monumental opus.⁵² Moreover, Škrabánek translated Vladislav Vančura's masterful novella *Rozmarné léto* (Summer of Caprice).⁵³ Together with his medical colleagues, he participated in the public debates on family planning in Ireland, and dedicated numerous popular publications to fighting residual superstitions in patients and doctors.⁵⁴ The prolific life of the extraordinary scholar was cut short by an untimely death.⁵⁵ His wife, who is incidentally a relation of translator A.L. Stříž of Stará Říše, swiftly established herself as lecturer in the Department of Linguistics at University College Dublin due to her extensive knowledge of languages. Both participated in the intellectual life of the country and have made many contributions to Czech-Irish relations during the hard times of normalization and after the fall of communism.

Following 1968, Ireland became the home of concert pianist and astronomer Jan Čáp (*1946), who started teaching the piano at the Cork School of Music in 1975, where he is now the director of the piano performance department. He frequently foregrounds Czech compositions in his repertoire.⁵⁶ Northern Ireland became the place of residence for ethnographer and anthropologist Jarka Stuchlíková (*1939) after her return from Chile. She became a correspondent of prominent Czech dailies and magazines such as *Lidové noviny*, *Mladá fronta*, *Svobodné slovo* or *Respekt* after 1989, sending in reports from the yet unsettled part of the island. The year 1968 is moreover notably associated with photographer Josef Koudelka

⁵² Škrabánek's collected articles on *The Wake* appeared as *Night Joyce of a Thousand Tiers. Studies in Finnegans Wake*, ed. Louis Armand and Ondřej Pilný (Praha: Litteraria Pragensia, 2002).

⁵³ The translation remains unpublished; its manuscript is in the possession of Škrabánek's family.

⁵⁴ See Petr Škrabánek and James McCormick, *Follies and Fallacies in Medicine* (Glasgow: Tarragon Press, 1992), translated into Czech by Miroslav Holub as Petr Škrabánek a James McCormick, *Pošetilství a omyly v medicíně* (Praha: NLN, 1995); Petr Škrabánek, *The Death of Humane Medicine and the Rise of Coercive Healthism* (London: Social Affairs Unit, 1994); and a representative selection of essays and articles Petr Škrabánek, *False Premises, False Promises* (Whithorn: The Skrabanek Foundation / Tarragon Press, 2000).

⁵⁵ Cf. the obituaries James Le Fanu (unsigned), "Professor Petr Skrabanek," *The Times* 27 June 1994: 17; James S. McCormick (signed: J. S. Mc.), "Professor Petr Skrabanek," *The Irish Times* 6 July 1994: 11; Tom O'Dowd, "Prof. Petr Skrabanek," *Irish Medical Times* 1 July 1994. 2. See also Cathy Hayes and Patricia M. Byrne, "Petr Škrabánek," *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Vol. 8 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2009): 991-93.

⁵⁶ The acclaim of his work has been very broad. See, e.g., Mary Mac Goris, "In Splendid Surroundings," *Irish Independent* 13 April 1983: 6.

(*1938), who left his homeland that year after having made a famous series of photos of the invasion by the Warsaw Pact. A member of the celebrated Magnum Photos agency, Koudelka was one of the artists who documented everyday life and street fights in Northern Ireland in the 1970s.⁵⁷

The Normalization Era

Regular cultural activities in Czechoslovakia were maintained only with strenuous effort and at conscious personal sacrifices after the Soviet occupation. What is more, a total regulation of cultural and political life was introduced as early as 1970. Censorship was resuscitated again, rigorous monitoring and surveillance of artists and cultural officers was renewed, while those who refused to withdraw their views expressed at the time of freedom were removed from their jobs. Notwithstanding the establishment of two Czech-Irish associations, in Dublin and in Prague respectively, the time of the “Prague Spring” was too short either for the renewal of regular diplomatic relations between the countries.

The only survivor of the occupation of Czechoslovakia in terms of official links was the Trade Mission in Dublin, since it was profitable to maintain even for the new regime led by Gustáv Husák due to its facilitation of the exchange of goods. The translation of Irish literature became limited again to the works of reliable “progressive”, or at least politically innocuous authors, such as Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, Sean O’Casey or Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. Many of the translations of these authors were besides not destined to appear in book form: for instance, plays were published in limited mimeographed editions of the Dilia theatre agency. Waters were stagnant indeed and the occurrence of contemporary writing was scarce; still, even these publications were extremely significant in the cultural uniformity of “normalized” Czechoslovakia, as together with books by other approved Irish authors they provided sustenance to Czech readers, whose hunger for any published Western literature was insatiable (arguably verging on the lack of critical distance).

A remarkable researcher in Czech-Irish relations who increased his activities in this era, despite all the obstacles, was medical doctor Ludvík Schmid (1910-1992). His consistent focus from the late 1960s up until the early 1990s was on Irish emigrants to Central Europe and their lives in Bohemia. Because of his professional background, he was interested primarily

⁵⁷ *Magnum Ireland*, ed. Brigitte Lardinois and Val Williams (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005) 86-89.

in doctors; his articles and essays on the subject include, most importantly, a study on Irish doctors in Bohemia (1968), and on Irish and Scottish emigration to Central Europe (1988). Several of his pioneering works were translated into English and appeared in Irish journals.⁵⁸

It was not until the late 1980s that new translations or stagings of works by Samuel Beckett started to appear, due to the thawing, or rather the incipient collapse of the communist regime. Particularly as regards Beckett, this was a comeback of fame from the 1960s that was by no means welcome by the authorities. A vital anthology of British and Irish poetry appeared in the year of the turning point for Czechoslovakia and all of Eastern Europe which was struggling to break free from under the communist yoke. The volume was edited by translator Zdeněk Hron and entitled *Ostrovny plovoucí k severu* (Northbound Islands, 1989). It featured the work of Seamus Heaney (whose poetry had been promoted by Hron through his translations since the beginning of the eighties), Michael Longley, Derek Mahon and Medbh McGuckian. The reverberations that followed the visits of some of the poets featured in the anthology at the time of its preparation stands in remarkable contrast with the visit of prominent Irish communist Michael O'Riordan to Czechoslovakia in the early 1980s; his visit remained entirely unnoticed by the Czechoslovak public.⁵⁹ Relatively early to appear were also retellings of Irish mythology and folklore by Vladimír Hulpach (*1935) entitled *Ossianův návrat* (Ossian's Return, 1985) and *Kočí král* (Cat King, 1989) by poet and translator Pavel Šrut (*1940).

Considerable popularity in Ireland was achieved in the 1980s and 1990s by Czech medical doctor and poet Miroslav Holub (1923-1998). This was largely the result of the promotion of his work by poet Dennis O'Driscoll (*1954), who was also Holub's translator into English.⁶⁰ Holub's poetry was eventually championed in Ireland by numerous others and the Czech poet became a respected source of inspiration by his imagery that is often couched in medical language and metaphors. Contemporary comparisons of the work of Irish

⁵⁸ Ludvík Schmid, "Irish Doctors in Bohemia," *Irish Journal of Medical Science* 1 (1968): 497-504; Ludvík Schmid, "Robert Smith Mac Gavan of Balroe, Commander of the Invalids' House in Prague," *The Irish Sword* 14 (1981): 256-57.

⁵⁹ See the propagandist article "To hlavní v irské otázce. Rozhovor s generálním tajemníkem KS Irska Michaelem O'Riordanem" [The Heart of the Irish Question. An Interview with Secretary General of the CP of Ireland, Michael O'Riordan], trans. Věra Veverková, *Tvorba* 4 (27 January 1982): 6.

⁶⁰ Dennis O'Driscoll, "Miroslav Holub," Dennis O'Driscoll, *Troubled Thoughts, Majestic Dreams. Selected Prose Writings* (Oldcastle: Gallery Press, 2001) 326-35. See also O'Driscoll's poem dedicated to the memory of Miroslav Holub, "Newgrange," *Weather Permitting* (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1999) 35-36.

poets with Holub abound especially in reviews, while references to Holub's poetry have been surprisingly frequent in Ireland.⁶¹

It is noteworthy that courses of Old Irish were offered at Charles University in Prague in the 1980s, taught by Professor of Linguistics and literary historian Pavel Trost (1907-1987). What is of note as well, however, is that the courses actually almost never took place at the university, since student numbers were not sufficient. Notwithstanding that, Trost frequently offered individual tuition at his home.⁶²

Towards the Turning Point

Interest in Ireland and the Irish language did not occur at universities only, but also in the studies of people who were sidelined by the communists. One of the Hibernofiles who were deprived of any opportunity to publish was translator Zdeněk Urbánek (1917-2008), a close friend of the foremost dissident of his time, playwright Václav Havel. Urbánek translated Joyce's *Dubliners* in 1959, and participated in the second International James Joyce Symposium in Dublin in 1969, giving a paper on the play *Exiles*.⁶³ The next time he was to see his beloved island was two long decades later, when he triumphantly returned to Ireland in 1990 as part of the entourage of the new Czechoslovak president, Václav Havel. Urbánek subsequently visited in 1993 and 1998. He struck up a long-lasting friendship with the novelist John Banville (*1945), and with his compatriot, the Dublin medical doctor and Joycean scholar Petr Škrabánek⁶⁴ who, as it turned out, had discovered *Finnegans Wake* through excerpts published in a literary magazine in Urbánek's

⁶¹ [Eavan Boland], "Poetry in the Radical Sense," *The Irish Times* 1 November 1984; Jocelyn Braddell, "Miroslav Holub," *The Irish Times* 19 November 1984: 11; Kevin T. McEneaney, "Recent Poetry," *The Irish Press* 5 January 1985: 7; Peter Sirr, "Bards of the South," *The Irish Times* 26 October 1985: 12; Liam Ryan, "Irish Poets," *The Irish Times* 22 February 1986: 13. See also later reflections on Holub's visits to Ireland: Anon., "Reggae Poet for Galway Festival," *Connacht Sentinel* 20 March 1990: 3; Hugh McFadden, "Two Famous Writers to Read Here This Weekend," *The Irish Press* 15 October 1993: 13; [Katie Donovan], "Czech Poet with Two Faces," *The Irish Times* 3 April 1990: 12; Elizabeth McAvoy, "Miroslav Holub," *The Irish Times* 12 April 1990: 9; Katie Donovan, "Miroslav Holub," *The Irish Times* 25 April 1990: 11; Mary O'Malley, "Poetry Knows the Value of Gods," *The Irish Times* 21 July 1998: 12.

⁶² Interviews with Štěpán Kosík and Věra Čapková.

⁶³ Mary Mac Goris, "In Search of the Elusive Mr. Joyce," *Irish Independent* 11 June 1969: 13.

⁶⁴ Zdeněk Urbánek, *Stránky z deníků* [Pages from Diaries] (Brno: Atlantis, 2003) 66-70, 93-94, 162-63, 213-14, 330-33.

translation.⁶⁵ Banville, who set his novel *Kepler* (1981) in Prague, got enamoured of the Czech capital⁶⁶ and became a personal friend of Urbánek's family: for example, he dedicated his 2003 novel about the city, *Prague Pictures*, to Urbánek's daughter Jindřiška Dušková (highly criticized as the book may have eventually become).

Some commentators claim that with the publication of Charter 77, Czechoslovakia entered the map of Europe again. The people who were instrumental in the achievement paid a high price for their activity, however, losing their jobs and having to suffer material shortage. Spiritual and financial support from compatriots abroad, banished dissidents and Western intellectuals was necessary and was very useful. Among the couriers who brought money and printed materials was the Irish philosopher and writer Richard Kearney (*1954), who had a budding interest in the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka. Kearney visited Czechoslovakia with his wife on their honeymoon, and handed over cherished new volumes and financial assistance for persecuted families to Czech dissidents. In Prague he met translators Jindřich Pokorný and František Laichter, and philosopher Julius Tomin and his wife.⁶⁷ Tomin consequently visited Dublin in his exile in 1981 and gave a lecture at University College Dublin.⁶⁸

A new enthusiast for Irish culture emerged outside the official cultural scene in Prague towards the end of the 1980s. His articles, reviews and essays on Irish literature appeared in the samizdat journal *Kritický sborník* between 1987 and 1989, signed by initials.⁶⁹ This hidden author was philologist Štěpán

⁶⁵ Zdeněk Urbánek, "A dále tedy. Překladatelovy hodiny s Joycem" [To Go On Then. A Translator's Hours with Joyce] *Světová literatura* 1 (1966): 199-202.

⁶⁶ John Banville, "In the Magic Heart of Old Europe," *The Irish Times* 22 April 1995: 9.

⁶⁷ Richard Kearney, "'Církev v Irsku v minulosti byla a dosud je zneužívána jako nálepka separatismu a diskriminace,' ptala se Jaroslava Janderová" ["The Church in Ireland has been misused as a label for separatism and discrimination.' Interview with Jaroslava Janderová], *Český týdeník* 147 (31 May-3 June 1996): 12. See also "Filosofie umění a politiky. Rozhovor s Herbertem Marcusem. Úvod a otázky připravil Richard Kearney" [Philosophy of Art and Politics. An Interview with Herbert Marcuse. Introduced by Richard Kearney], n. trans., *Vokno* 14 (1988): 111-21 or Kearney's article "Poetics and the Right to Resist: Patočka's Testimony," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 2.1 (1994): 31-44, and Kearney's interview with Václav Havel, "'Unity in diversity' – Key to Conflict from Prague to Belfast," *The Irish Times* 16 April 1992: 8.

⁶⁸ See Richard Kearney's interview with Julius Tomin, "A Philosopher Committed to Changing the World," *The Irish Times* 25 April 1981: 5.

⁶⁹ Texts by Štěpán Kosík signed by the initials -jj- were the following: "James Joyce – spiritus omnimeditans," *Kritický sborník* 9.2 (1987): 73-75; "Dubliňané – třetí český

Kosík (*1955), son of philosopher Karel Kosík and literary critic Růžena Grebeníčková; he began with an interest in James Joyce but proceeded to learn the basics of Old Irish. With the help of friends and their associates abroad, Kosík managed to travel to Ireland in a complicated way at the end of the eighties, where he attended a Celtic studies summer school at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. He followed up on the course after 1989, having been awarded a scholarship by University College Dublin, which supported his stay in Dublin and the attendance at lectures for several months. At the beginning of the 1990s, he went on to publish numerous articles and essays in the literary journals *Literární noviny* and *Souvislosti*. Working as an editor, he managed to influence editorial policy as regards items of Irish interest, or append the edition of a significant volume and improve the value of the translation by meticulous editorial work. Such was the case of, for instance, the Czech version of *The Course of Irish History* by T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (*Dějiny Irska*, 1996), which succeeded in finally replacing the earlier Marxist history of Ireland that had been the only one available.⁷⁰ The most significant work by Štěpán Kosík undeniably is an online database of Old Irish texts, their critical editions and a listing of manuscript variations entitled *Scéla*, which has been the recipient of considerable praise internationally.⁷¹

What was of great significance for the subsequent development of Czech-Irish relations and for the study of Irish culture in Bohemia was Štěpán Kosík's meeting with Breandán Ó hEithir (1930-1991) and his son Brian Ó hEithir (*1963) in Dublin in the late 1980s. Because of their meeting, Ó hEithir junior decided to go to Prague and spend some time there, intending to work for several months as an English teacher. He thus became a principal informer on the atmosphere in Czechoslovakia, whose observations were reflected in his father's columns. When the revolution of November 1989 started, he was one of the few Irish who were directly present at the collapse of communist power in Central and Eastern Europe. His information was relatively accurate and was being passed on swiftly through personal links to Ireland, prior to Czechoslovakia becoming flooded by international journalists. Notwithstanding that, the presence

překlad" [*Dubliners* – The Third Czech Translation], *Kritický sborník* 8.3 (1988): 16-21; "Ke Skoumalovu překladu *Odyssey*" [Notes on Skoumal's Translation of *Ulysses*], *Kritický sborník* 9.1 (1989): 81-83; "James Joyce v Rusku" [James Joyce in Russia], *Kritický sborník* 9.2 (1989): 87-89; "Flann O'Brien – nepřehlédnutelný autor" [Flann O'Brien – An Unmissable Author], *Kritický sborník* 9.3 (1989): 39-44.

⁷⁰ Thomas Alfred Jackson, *Dějiny Irska* [*Ireland Her Own*], trans. Ladislav Hoch (Praha: Svoboda, 1951).

⁷¹ *Scéla – Hommage á Maol Mílscothach*, <http://volny.cz/enelen/>.

of Brian Ó hEithir was not merely due to coincidence: his father, who was an Irish-language writer and translator born on the Aran Islands, had already had an interest in Czech culture, as evidenced in his *Irish Times* columns.⁷² This was primarily the result of his discovery of *The Good Soldier Švejk*, which he read in a new English translation by Cecil Parrot, the U.K. Ambassador at Prague in 1960-1966.⁷³ Ó hEithir eventually translated part of Hašek's novel into Irish; the translation was broadcast on Irish-language radio during the first years of Czechoslovak freedom in 1990 and 1991.⁷⁴ What role the Irish author would have played in Czech-Irish relations if he lived longer remains a matter for speculation; however, what can be established is that the revolution of 1989 increased his curiosity about Czech culture.⁷⁵ Ó hEithir was not in fact the only Irish-language commentator to report on the events in Czechoslovakia before or after the fall of the Iron Curtain: Czech topics appeared also in the regular Irish-language column in *The Irish Times* that was written by the author of an Irish-language textbook Risteárd Ó Glaisne (*1927),⁷⁶ poets Seán Ó Riordáin (1916-1977)⁷⁷ and Liam Ó Muirthile (*1950),⁷⁸ or the Senator-to-be Rónán Mullen (*1970).⁷⁹

⁷² A brief bibliography is available in Liam Mac Con Iomaire, "Breandán Ó hEithir," *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Vol. 7 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy 2009), 548-49. See also the biography Liam Mac Con Iomaire, *Breandán Ó hEithir – iomramh aonair* (Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 2000). Breandán Ó hEithir wrote the following articles of relevance before the 1989 revolution: "Biseach na hAoine," *The Irish Times* 15 July 1983: 8; "Yalta, Dresden, Torun," *The Irish Times* 12 February 1985: 10; "Anois teacht na réabhlóide," *The Irish Times* 1 May 1987: 12; "Eití Boga agus eití crua," *The Irish Times* 20 March 1987: 12; "Athrú mór ar siúl," *The Irish Times* 16 February 1989: 12.

⁷³ Breandán Ó hEithir, "Irishing the Two Ends of a Stick," *The Irish Times* 13 March 1986: 12; Breandán Ó hEithir, "Scalann an ghrian ar Pháras," *The Irish Times* 18 February 1988: 14.

⁷⁴ Breandán Ó hEithir, "An dea-shaighdiuir Sveijk," *The Irish Times* 24 January 1974: 12. Cf. "Breandán Ó hEithir," interview and translation by Štěpán Kosík, *Literární noviny* 1.37 (13 December 1990): 13.

⁷⁵ Breandán Ó hEithir, "Níl aon fhonn díoltais ann!," *Comhar* 49.2 (1990): 8-9.

⁷⁶ Risteárd Ó Glaisne, "Tionscnamh fur," *The Irish Times* 21 February 1956: 6.

⁷⁷ Seán Ó Riordáin, "Foirneart," *The Irish Times* 14 August 1971: 10; Seán Ó Riordáin, "Scoil Gheimhhrídh," *The Irish Times* 8 February 1975: 12.

⁷⁸ Liam Ó Muirthile, "An féidir daoine a chealú?" *The Irish Times* 7 December 1989: 16; Liam Ó Muirthile, "Litir ó na manaigh," *The Irish Times* 12 April 1990: 10; Liam Ó Muirthile, "Hippies in Iarthar Chorcaí," *The Irish Times* 18 July 1991: 10.

⁷⁹ Rónán Mullen, "Beo beathach bocht," *The Irish Times* 24 August 1993: 9.

Czech Initiatives

One of the first signs of the renewal of Czech-Irish relations after 1989 was the emergence of courses of Irish literature and the Irish language at Charles University in Prague. At the very beginning, in 1990-1991, Brian Ó hÉithir opened a course of modern Irish at the Department of English and American Studies; he eventually settled in Prague, marrying Dana Jelínková, who translated into Czech *A Pocket History of Ireland* (Kapesní dějiny Irska, 1995) by his father. The first Irish literature courses were taught by Englishman Bryn Haworth (*1960) in 1992-1995. Since 1995, Irish literature has been taught by Ondřej Pilný (*1970), Clare Wallace (*1970), poet Justin Quinn (*1968) and Australian theorist, Joycean scholar and poet Louis Armand (*1972, earlier as Lawrence James). Irish Studies was inaugurated as a separate MA track in the curriculum of English and American Studies in 2000, while a Centre for Irish Studies was founded in 2001, being now one of the constituent parts of the Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures. Irish studies in the Czech Republic have enjoyed consistent financial support of the Irish Government since 1996. An annual week-long intensive course of Irish literature and studies for students of Czech universities has been organized by the Centre for Irish Studies in cooperation with the English department of Palacký University in Olomouc ever since 1996. Every year, several guest lectures by Irish and international Irish studies scholars or readings by Irish poets are hosted in Prague.

The director of the Centre for Irish Studies is Ondřej Pilný, whose interest in Irish literature developed when he was an exchange student of English and philosophy at Trinity College Dublin in 1992-1993. Together with his colleagues, he edited an anthology of Irish poetry *Vzdálené tony naděje* (*The Distant Music of Hope / Ceol dóchais ó chéin*, 2000), an anthology of Irish short stories *Faráři a fanatici* (*Parish Priests and Fanatics*, 2004) and an annotated selected works by John Millington Synge, *Hrdina západu: dramata a próza* (*The Playboy of the Western World: Plays and Prose*, 2006). His translations include Flann O'Brien's novel *The Third Policeman* (*Třetí strážník*, 1999) and plays by J.M. Synge, Brian Friel, Martin McDonagh, and Enda Walsh. He is the author of a number of articles and essays on Irish writing, including book chapters on Synge and his first Czech translator, Karel Mušek, and the reception of Irish drama in the Czech Republic after 2000.⁸⁰ As co-editor of

⁸⁰ Ondřej Pilný, "'Suitably Relevant' – Irish Drama and Theatre in the Czech Republic 2000-2007," *Literary and Cultural Relations: Ireland, Hungary and Central Eastern Europe*, ed. Mária Kurdi (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2009) 65-84; Ondřej Pilný, "The Translator's Playwright: Karel Mušek and J.M. Synge," *Synge and His Influences*, ed. Patrick

the journal *Litteraria Pragensia*, he was involved in the publication of several issues of the periodical that focused on Irish literature. His colleague Justin Quinn has not only been the organizer of seminal visits to Prague by Irish poets, such as Seamus Heaney, Derek Mahon, Michael Longley, Vona Groarke, Peter McDonald or Alan Gillis, but has also been a relentless promoter of Czech poetry in Ireland and elsewhere in the English-speaking world: he is the translator of verse by Petr Borkovec, Ivan Blatný, J.H. Krchovský, and most recently Bohuslav Reynek. In his own poetry, he frequently reflects the experience of living in the Czech Republic.

The first ever translator from Irish to Czech is the poetry specialist and musician Daniela Furthnerová-Theinová (*1970), who was introduced to the language through her study visits to the West of Ireland. The focus of her work as translator are Irish women poets writing in English or in Irish, such as Vona Groarke, Eavan Boland, Moya Cannon, Medbh McGuckian or Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill. Moreover, she translated from Irish the celebrated novel *Deoraíocht* by Pádraic Ó Conaire (*Vyhnanství*, 2004), which was followed by her translation being serialized by Czech national radio; among her translations from English is Colm Tóibín's recent novel *Brooklyn* (2010). Her master's thesis entitled "The Melancholy of Stones" (1999) consisted in a comparative study of the poetry of Máirtín Ó Direáin and Bohuslav Reynek.⁸¹

Younger scholars who studied in the first courses of Irish literature and culture at Charles University, travelled and did research in Ireland and have maintained their enthusiasm, include musician and translator Radvan Markus (*1979), who now teaches the Irish language at the Centre for Irish Studies and at Palacký University in Olomouc. Apart from his involvement in the Irish music band *Dún an doras*, which was probably the best representative of the genre in the Czech Republic, his greatest achievement in terms of Czech-Irish cultural exchange up to date is the translation of *L'Attaque* (2007), an acclaimed modernist novel written in Irish by Eoghan Ó Tuairisc. He is currently working on a volume of selected stories by Pádraic Ó Conaire, and together with his students he is compiling an anthology of Irish-language short stories in Czech translation.⁸²

Lonergan (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2011) 153-80, 295-99. Cf. also Ondřej Pilný, *Irony and Identity in Modern Irish Drama* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006).

⁸¹ Cf. Daniela Furthnerová, "The Melancholy of Stones: The Poetry of Máirtín Ó Direáin and Bohuslav Reynek," *Litteraria Pragensia* 12.24 (2003): 77-94.

⁸² See also Eibhlín Dhubh Ní Chonaill, "Žalozpěv na Arta Ó Laoghaira (výběr)" [The Lament for Art Ó Laoghaira (extract)], trans. Radvan Markus and Kristina Volná, introduction Radvan Markus, *Plav 1* (2010): 10-13.

Bibliographer and translator Daniel Samek (*1974) has also been involved in significant activities concerning the Czech lands and Ireland. His main area of interest is the culture and writing of medieval Ireland, about which he has published a number of introductory articles and essays, particularly in the journal *Souvislosti* (1999-2008). His achievements prominently include an online bibliography of Czech-Irish relations, which is hosted by the Prague Centre for Irish Studies and is continually updated.⁸³ Among his most significant translation projects are the legal-gnomic collection of triads *Triadické výnosy irské (Trecheng breth Féni, 1999)*, an anthology of medieval Irish quatrains *Kráska i jed (Both Beauty and Poison, 2005)*⁸⁴ and participation in the creation of the volume *Bájně plavby do jiných světů (Legendary Voyages by Sea towards Other Worlds, 2010)*, which presents a representative selection of Irish voyage tales.⁸⁵ For several years now, Samek has been teaching a course about medieval Irish writing for the Centre for Irish Studies. He was also the initiator of the appearance of Giraldus Cambrensis' *Topographia Hibernica (Dějiny a místopis Irska, 1998)*, translated into Czech by Petr Šourek (*1975), who is related to the family that the sister of James Joyce, Eileen, married into.

At the turn of the millennium, doctor Ludvík Schmid has had followers in his research concerning the Irish presence in early modern Bohemia. They are archivist Jan Pařez (*1961) and librarian Hedvika Kuchařová (*1971) who together wrote the monograph *Hyberni v Praze (2001)*, being a detailed history of the Irish Franciscan College of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary in Prague in 1629-1786.⁸⁶ The authors published besides several chapters on the subject in edited collections that have appeared in Ireland. Jan Pařez studied in Ireland in 1998, and like Hedvika Kuchařová works at the historical library of the Strahov Monastery in Prague.

Numerous new translators started focusing on Irish literature in the 1990s and many of them have friends or associates in Ireland. Apart from those already mentioned, they include editor Jan Čáp, poetry translators Tomáš Fürstenzeller, Štěpán Nosek, Marek Toman, Ivana Bozděchová, and others.

Activities outside the capital must definitely not be forgotten in the present survey. The most significant commentators on Irish culture and its links with Czechoslovakia include English and Czech literature scholar Bohuslav Mánek (*1946), who is a professor in the Department of the English Language and

⁸³ *Česko-irské styky. Bibliografie knižní a časopisecká*, <http://ualk.ff.cuni.cz/ibibliography/index.htm>.

⁸⁴ Together with Jaroslav Tulka, who introduced Samek to Celtic culture many years ago.

⁸⁵ Together with Eva Hladká-Kučerňáková, the translator of the Latin *Navigation Brendani* for the volume.

⁸⁶ An English translation of the book is forthcoming in 2012.

Literature at the Faculty of Education of University of Hradec Králové. Besides several translations, he is the author of articles about Irish allusions in the work of prominent Czech revivalist Karel Havlíček Borovský, the Irish heroic lore in the work of Julius Zeyer, or the reception of James Joyce in the Czech lands.⁸⁷ In the area of philology, remarkable effort has been maintained by linguist Václav Blažek (*1959) of Masaryk University in Brno, who has facilitated for his students the opportunity for an intense study of Celtic languages as part of the curriculum of Indo-European linguistics. Moreover, he has been involved with a group of associates in a translation project focused on the Irish epic *Táin bó Cuailnge*. Blažek has also been a principal organizer of the “Celts-Slavica” international conferences that bring together Celticists from Eastern Europe and the West.

The Dublin Association

The early 1990s in Dublin saw the birth of a new Irish Czech and Slovak Society, founded by scientist Frank S. Drechsler, translator Gerald Turner, linguist Věra Čapková, conductor Frederick O’Callaghan and historian Eamonn O’Flaherty. Other prominent members included Věra Tašlová, Vladimír Tomek and Alex Schuster. Probably the best known of the founders’ names is that of Gerald Turner (*1947) who introduced into English numerous Czech fiction writers and authors of non-fiction, publishing the translations that he produced together with his wife Alice (*1947, current n. McElveen) under the penname A.G. Brain. He was a long-time Secretary of the Society, the editor of its *Newsletter* (ca. 1992-2000), and served a term in office as its President. He was a frequent visitor to Czechoslovakia long before 1989, and spent nearly two decades after the revolution dividing his time between Prague and Ireland.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Bohuslav Mánek, “Britská poezie v šedesátých letech. Poezie v Severním Irsku” [British Poetry in the 1960s. Poetry in Northern Ireland], *Světová literatura* 5 (1979): 219-21; “Irská otázka v publicistice a satíře Karla Havlíčka Borovského” [The Irish Question in the Journalism and Satires of Karel Havlíček Borovský], *Literární archiv* 38 (2006): 43-53; “Irská témata v díle Julia Zeyera” [Irish Themes in the Work of Julius Zeyer], *Julius Zeyer, lumírovský básník v duchovním dění Evropy* [Julius Zeyer: A Lumír Poet in the Intellectual Context of Europe], ed. Jiří Kudrnáč et al. (Brno: Host, 2009) 333-42; “The Czech and Slovak Reception of James Joyce,” *The Reception of James Joyce in Europe*, Vol. I, eds. Geert Lernout and Wim Van Mierlo (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004) 187-97.

⁸⁸ See Gerald Turner (signed A.G. Brain), “Czechs Sensed Changing Mood,” *The Irish Times* 25 November 1989: 6, and Turner’s editorials addressed to the membership in *Irish Czech and Slovak Society Newsletter* October 1992: 2; 3 (1994): 2; 2 (1997): 3.

The conductor of the Irish Army No. 1 Band, pacifist Frederick O'Callaghan (*1927) has been a vital member of The Irish Czech and Slovak Society. The chief impetus for his interest in Czech culture came from Czech music, particularly the work of his beloved composer Leoš Janáček. It was because of his music that O'Callaghan even learned the Czech language. He was President of the Society for several years; following his resignation, the activities of the society have been somewhat on the ebb. However, this is also due to the change of generations among the membership, accompanied by the relations between the respective countries having returned to normal in terms of both diplomacy and culture, and also of the economy.⁸⁹

Members of the Dublin Society were mostly taken unawares by the rapid disintegration of the Czechoslovak federation in the early 1990s; however, the events were not particularly comprehensible to many inhabitants of the Czech lands and Slovakia either. Notwithstanding the division of Czechoslovakia, the Society in Dublin continued its existence as both Czech and Slovak. The Slovak section was personified by a great admirer of Alexander Dubček, mathematician Annraoi de Paor (*1939), also known as Henry Power, who worked in the Department of Electrical Engineering at University College Dublin. When Dubček passed away, de Paor decided to translate with the assistance of Katarína Žáková a collection of memories of the "Prague Spring" leader from Slovak into Irish; it appeared as *Dubček – faoi cháil is faoi scáil* (1997). In an odd twist of fate, de Paor never managed to meet Dubček, despite his continued effort ever since August 1976 when he was visiting Slovakia at the invitation of Professor Norbert Fristacký from Bratislava. His next opportunity during a 1987 visit, when the communist regime was already about to fall, brought no success either, since de Paor's Slovak friends were adamant to dissuade him from meeting the banished politician who was under constant surveillance by the secret police, which would possibly have resulted in de Paor's deportation and subsequent problems for them. In the end, de Paor did not succeed in meeting Dubček even on any other later occasion that may have presented itself.⁹⁰

Associates of the Irish Czech and Slovak Society included numerous musicians. Prominent among them was Vienna-born Albert Rosen (1924-1997) who studied at the Prague Conservatory and spent the early years of his

⁸⁹ P.D. O'Donnell, "Leader of the Army's Music," *The Irish Times* 14 January 1988: 12. See also the commentary to the press conference held on the occasion of the visit of Václav Klaus to Ireland: *Irish Czech and Slovak Society Newsletter* 3 (1996): 4.

⁹⁰ Dubček was awarded an honorary doctorate by University College Dublin in 1991. See Annraoi de Paor, "Človek, s ktorým som sa nikdy nestreťol" [The Man I Never Met], lecture delivered for The Irish Czech and Slovak Society, manuscript.

career in Czechoslovakia, where he was much later to conduct several celebrated orchestras. He left the country at the end of the 1960s, was appointed conductor of the RTÉ Symphony Orchestra in Dublin, and conducted much-admired opera productions in North America.⁹¹ Bass singer Jaroslav Horáček, cellist Miroslav Sádlo, and choir master Stanislav Pecháček feature among musicians who have been paying regular visits to Ireland. Ireland has become home to acclaimed harpist Andreja Malíř(ová).⁹²

Descendants

A new chapter of Czech activities in Ireland has been written by the sons and daughters of those who had left their homeland. Their biographies clearly document that families originating in Czechoslovakia have found a stable existence on the island and their members soon came to contribute to Irish culture, economy, or politics. The most famous of the descendants of the Czech “pioneers” in Ireland who still bear their Czech names is indisputably Ivana Bacik (*1968), granddaughter of glassmaker Karel Bačík. Still as a student, she was very active in defending the rights of women: she achieved fame through a well-publicized controversy of the late 1980s, following the appearance in a university periodical of information about advisory centres that offered contacts to British abortion clinics. The act met with radical opposition from pro-life proponents, who arranged for the confiscation of the printed materials and the punishment of the perpetrators. Bacik was among the students who demanded their right to information at the Supreme Court of Ireland. While the court denied their entitlement, the controversy was fundamental for further debates of the issue in Ireland, and exercised influence on the direction of Bacik’s subsequent career: she is now a professor of criminal law and a recognized expert in human rights and feminism. The peak of her political career up to now has been her election as Senator for Trinity College Dublin in 2007.⁹³

⁹¹ Lawrence William White, “Albert Rosen,” *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Vol. 8 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2009) 612-14. Anon., “In Memoriam Albert Rosen,” *Irish Czech and Slovak Society Newsletter* 5 (1997): 5.

⁹² Anon., “Not to Be Missed!! 9th December 1995,” *Irish Czech and Slovak Society Newsletter* 7 (1995).

⁹³ Anon., “A Weary Ivana is Elected Union Boss,” *The Irish Press* 4 March 1989: 6; Anon., “Abortion Row – Students Face Imprisonment,” *The Irish Press* 4 October 1989: 2; Anon., (signed -ab-), “Irishwoman with Czech Ancestors Wants to Parliament,” *Český dialog / Czech Dialogue* 9 (2004): 4. See also Ivana Bacik, “Time to Legislate for

Another prominent descendant of a Czech émigré is the journalist and writer Andy Pollak, former religious affairs and education correspondent of *The Irish Times* (1981-1999). He served as a Belfast reporter of the daily, and together with Ed Moloney wrote a biographical study of the controversial Unionist politician, the Reverend Ian Paisley (1986). Currently he is working as Director of the Centre for Cross Border Studies in Armagh. Apart from articles on Northern Irish issues and on Irish subjects, he wrote several sets of reflections on the activities of Czechoslovaks in Ireland, be it between the world wars, after the communist coup of 1948, or after the August 1968 occupation. He has also focused on the life of the descendants of Czech refugees in Ireland.⁹⁴

Other noteworthy figures include the outstanding barrister Brian F. Havel (*1958), son of glass designer Miroslav Havel, who wrote a book about his father, his origins and his work in Ireland entitled *Maestro of Crystal* (2005). He is currently affiliated with the College of Law at De Paul University in Chicago, where he is Director of the International Aviation Law Institute. Similarly, the career of Allan Navrátil of Ballinacurra, Co. Cork is worth mentioning: a beet farmer and son of sugar factory director Alfréd Navrátil, he also belongs to those who have not forgotten about their Czech ancestry, and has occasionally cooperated with the Irish Czech and Slovak Society, for example by giving a talk on Czechs in Ireland which was initiated by Gerald Turner.⁹⁵

Conclusion

Surveying Czech-Irish relations in the second half of the twentieth century, the initial decades come across mostly as a display of time lost on the Czech part, causing a lack of interest or positive disinclination to engage on the part of the Irish. The tendency towards officially re-iterated stereotypes about the other country has arguably been fairly strong. In Ireland, Czechs were often popularly viewed as communists and infidels, or alternately as Hussites. This

Actual Needs of Irish Women,” *Irish Independent* 11 September 1999: 9. Further information is available on Bacik’s website, www.ivanabacik.com.

⁹⁴ Andy Pollak, “An Irishman’s Diary,” *The Irish Times* 31 October 1995: 13; “Exhibits Reveal Historic Irish Exodus,” *The Irish Times* 24 December 1997: 6; “An Irishman’s Diary,” *The Irish Times* 18 April 2011: 13.

⁹⁵ *The Czechs in Ireland. A Talk Given by Allan Navrátil to Members of The Irish Czech and Slovak Society on Thursday 25th May 1995*. Private edition for members of The Irish Czech and Slovak Society.

sweeping anti-communist generalization remained largely unbroken until as late as August 1968. The popular image held by the Czechoslovaks about the Irish was naturally stereotypical as well: the Irish were simply radical Catholics, superstitious and opposed to contraception and abortion. Many people were moreover unable to differentiate between the events in so-called Ulster, with the communist media constantly highlighting the violence and terrorist attacks, and what was going on in the Republic of Ireland; as a result, most inhabitants of Ireland were considered to be terrorists and Ireland was perceived as a country riven by incessant fighting. In other words, “Ulster” often became synonymous with Ireland. Czechoslovak communist leadership was on the side of Irish nationalists against British imperialism, despite the fact that it did not have diplomatic relations with Ireland. Such stereotypes and paradoxical positions swiftly vanished after 1989 and a busy cultural exchange ensued, often building on foundations that had been set a long time and which were strong enough to survive over the decades.

Exemplary activists in Czechoslovakia included primarily Aloys Skoumal, a translator who visited Ireland as early as 1926 under a strong influence of the publisher Josef Florian, who had been promoting modern Irish literature ever since the beginning of the century. On the Irish side, the activities of numerous Czech émigrés were not inconsiderable; some arrived in Ireland in the mid-1930s, others fled from Hitler in 1939, and still others after the communist coup of 1948 or after the invasion of 1968. The main concern for these migrants in their early years in Ireland lay not in culture, of course, but rather in establishing a new life for themselves and their families. At the same time, it is apparent that particularly the refugees from Czechoslovakia after August 1968 represented a brand new impulse for Czech-Irish relations. Their wave of immigration features outstanding figures, such as prominent medical doctors, linguists, or musicians.

The accuracy of information about Czechoslovakia provided by Irish journalists dramatically increased after the publication of Charter 77: the number of items reprinted from news agencies dropped, some Irish commentators obtained contacts with Czechoslovak dissidents, often via Amnesty International, and this was reflected in turn by the number of visits by Czech exiles to Ireland or even journeys by important Irish figures to Czechoslovakia. Borders displayed a certain degree of permeability towards the end of the 1980s, and opened up altogether following the collapse of the communist regime after futile effort to instigate radical changes within the Party.

The rapid multiplication of activities concerning Czech and Irish culture after the year 2000 indicates that the relations between the respective peoples have reached a natural level of interaction between two European countries.

This also means that due to the sheer number of events, it is virtually impossible to follow the individual links in detail any more. For that matter, even the present report concerning Czech-Irish relations between 1950 and 2000 can make no claims at being exhaustive, given its limited scope. As a first attempt at a comprehensive survey, it is intended to serve as a challenge for further research in this fascinating subject.