Panel 1: Freedom and its Enemies: The Perspective of Human Experience

Oldřich Černý: Good morning. I would like to welcome you on behalf of the organising institutions, namely Forum 2000, the Dagmar and Václav Havel Foundation VIZE 97 and the Václav Havel Library. We are glad that there are so many of you here and because the less time we have, the more valued our guests are, I will pass the floor over to Martin Putna. Thank you.

Martin C. Putna: Good morning. It is 14 November 2009 and thus it is nearly 20 years exactly since 20 November 1989, when here, in the great hall of the Faculty of Arts, the revolution started at the Faculty of Arts, with one of the main hotbeds of the student revolution being formed here in November and when it was, if I remember correctly, almost as chaotic here as it is now. In fact, I think that it was much more so because it was not clear what was going to happen and on the first and second days, people were still saying that the tanks might be coming and that we should clear the building and so forth. Those kinds of things were happening.

It was clear for us, at that time twenty years ago, what freedom was and who its enemies were, who "they" were. It was the regime, as we simplified and abbreviated it at the time, the Bolsheviks. We are here after twenty years and we are here so that we can put forward this question once again. One very short solution to this question of who are the enemies of freedom for the Czech lands certainly presents itself to us; we could certainly say that it is Russian revisionism and its activists here. And then we could go home.

But of course, it will not be that simple and specifically, in order that we do not speak so simply, we have invited the guests of our first panel, who will present a perspective that is not only political, unequivocally and superficially political, but also a perspective that goes one level beyond that. That is why this panel has been titled, "*The Perspective of Human Experience"*. Because we are on academic soil here, maybe we should be more specific; that it is a philosophical and an anthropological perspective and a perspective of the related fields. I think that most of you here know what we are talking about.

That is why Jan Sokol was invited to this panel, whom I do not have to introduce too much to the academic community. I will just mention that he is a disciple, a follower of Jan Patočka and one of the main representatives of philosophical anthropology in this country, as well as the founder of the Faculty of Humanities. Václav Havel also needs no introduction but I will nevertheless mention, of all his many roles, his role as author of a work that is considered throughout the world a truly philosophical work, a work reflecting the human experience of freedom, his *Letters to Olga*. Of course, Petr Pithart also needs no introduction. Politician, political scientist and historian and of all his works I will mention only the latest, *Eighty-nine*.

And of course, Jan Urban also needs no introduction because Jan Urban has been travelling around the world for twenty years now and commenting on events everywhere where human freedom is suppressed and trampled upon in various ways. And of course, André Glucksmann needs no introduction either because André Glucksmann, the French philosopher, was one of those who was already saying in the '60s, and notably in the '60s when most of the Western intellectual community was still gung ho about Marxism, "Careful, careful, this modern totalitarianism, this Stalinism, Maoism and all of these things come out of Marxism." I'm Martin Putna; I was here twenty years ago and I will ask Jan Sokol for some opening words.

Jan Sokol: Good morning and welcome to everyone and above all I want to thank you for this unbelievable honour and distinction. I treasure it highly. As my friend Putna has already said, each of us could today

name various enemies of freedom, point our fingers at them and call them names. But the organisers invited us here to the Faculty of Arts and gave the word to, if you will, a philosopher. According to Hegel, the task of philosophy is to understand what is. So I want to attempt that, at least from one point of view. So let us proceed. At issue here is civic and political freedom, not the freedom, as Jan Werich once called it, at home under the covers or even freedom inside one's own soul, the feeling of freedom. We are here to deal with freedom in public and in public spaces.

Freedom is a very nice thing, a wonderful thing. How could anyone be against it? That is the question I would like to consider. What do the enemies of freedom want or what do they not want? But we should start in a different way; who are the enemies of freedom? Who wants freedom and why? Freedom is of interest primarily to those people who are being barred from something. So say a young lad wants to come home late and he says to himself, "I want this freedom." And we can all agree on that, in fact. I want freedom, you want freedom, he wants freedom, we want freedom, you all want freedom and only they do not want it. And why do they not want it?

John Locke noted that our counterparts perceive my freedom, or our freedom, meaning the extent of what I can do, the extent of my possibilities that I want to expand, our surroundings, as my or our power. Max Weber defines power as the possibility of carrying out one's will, potentially even against the will of others, and that is exactly what one person's freedom looks like in the eyes of the other who stands against them. What to me seems like the expansion of my freedom, to others looks like the expansion of my power. And because freedoms in society are often only standing against each other, those others need not be entirely overjoyed at the expansion of my power. As long as we're standing together against one common enemy, who is somehow polarising our wills, turning them in the same direction, we can be as one and stand in solidarity. But what about when that enemy evaporates, disappears?

Twenty years ago, we all wanted freedom and the beautiful thing about the Polish *Solidarity* movement or *Charter 77* was that people did not want it just for themselves. But what many people at the time did not notice, somehow did not notice, is that freedom means power and in modern society, that necessarily means not just freedom for me, for us but also for the others. And so I would say in short; we rejoiced in our own freedom but got frightened by the freedom of others.

The first serious test of the true open-mindedness of Czech society at that time was the amnesty. We want freedom but not for them. Let them stay in the slammer. It started to dawn on society as a whole that my freedom might be great but unfortunately, it also means their freedom. And that means a bare chance to assert oneself, for better or worse. And in my opinion, that was a big disappointment. In fact, I would even say that that was the start of what was later famously called the "bad mood". So what follows from that is that the only ones who can remain friends of freedom are those who are not afraid of freedom, meaning the power of the others.

Understandably, whoever reads the papers or watches the news has ten reasons a day to be frightened by their freedom, by the power of others, and to start to wish that someone would cut back on them, even if it means that my own freedoms would be pruned as well. And yet there are people who want freedom and not just for themselves. Why do they want it then, why are they friends of freedom? I have puzzled over this question for a long time and then I found a rather nicely formulated answer from an author from whom one would not expect it, one who does not figure among freedom theorists. When Thomas Aquinas dealt with society and with justice, he pulled, all of a sudden, the following sentence out of his sleeve, like an axiom really: "Good spreads by itself more than evil." Period. No substantiation, no argumentation and that sentence is used as an argument in the whole discussion on society and justice. It seems to me that this is an ingenious expression of the point being made here. Of course, the fact that good spreads by itself more than evil cannot be proven. Nor can it be measured. But whoever is not convinced of this cannot remain a friend of freedom for all.

We could find dozens of examples. I will mention only Robespierre and Danton. They were frightened of freedom and entered the history books not as liberators but as bloody dictators. Naturally, neither Hitler nor the Communists believed that good could spread more than evil and in their societies; they even cultivated a fear of the enemy within and without. They came to power because people of every sort were afraid of the freedom of others and so they preferred to give it up of their own accord, just so that it would also be limited for others.

Of course, not everyone needs freedom. Artists need it, scientists need it, believers need it, entrepreneurs need it but take care, fraudsters and gangsters also need it too. No society can tolerate this freedom, the freedom of a free fox in a free henhouse, as the French say. For people to be able to come to terms with freedom, for them to put up with it and to endure it, they need the support and the protection of good and effectively enforced rules.

Inexperienced people do not like rules because it seems, to them, that rules limit their freedom. But in society, well thought-out rules, if you will, also limit the whims of the others and thus make it so that their freedom, too, is bearable for all. Unfortunately, I have to drive on the right on the highway. But if "gangster freedom" were the rule of the road and I could not rely on everyone else to drive on the right as well, then only a tank driver could risk driving there. At the end of the day, in a society without rules, the only free person is he who shoots first. And is that really freedom?

Good and effective rules, then, not only limit freedom but also conversely make it possible and form the basis of it. And so to summarise; a kind of preliminary answer. First of all, friends of freedom are, and can only be, those who want freedom for others, too and who attempt to make freedom acceptable by introducing and implementing good rules and institutions; so that people are not afraid and need not be afraid. And the enemies of freedom, since I'm using that term, are those who spread fear of enemies, who create enemies within and without, who frighten us with them and then generously offer to protect us from them.

Hegel once wrote that in civil society, there is no place for heroes, for great heroes. But who knows? Maybe freedom does not need heroes but it does quite necessarily need brave people who, despite all of the horrors that they see every day on the news or around them, stubbornly believe and insist that good spreads by itself more than evil. And that is what you, dear Václav, demonstrated then and why we were drawn to you and why we hold you in such esteem. Thank you.

Martin C. Putna: So then thank you for these philosopher's opening words, which drew applause, and we can assume that it was for both the text, the speaker and also for the addressee. But at the same time, it would be good if this text not only drew applause but also thoughts and questions and that is why our panellists are here. So please, the floor is yours, who wants to be the first to react to the words spoken here, to any part of them? Or to add your own concept? Jan Urban. He told me: "Pass over the floor," he whispered to me here.

Jan Urban: Uncontrolled freedom in practice; just a few points. Freedom is a function of identity, not a condition thereof. Identity is either constructed negatively against someone or positively for something. The latter is significantly harder to create and it is the former that needs enemies because it cannot exist without them. If my life is constructed against a figure or against the embodiment of something, then I have to spend my whole life in hatred and on the defensive, often very aggressively.

If I am for something and working towards something, I can have enemies and it stems from their will, not mine. Historically, the Czech context has unfortunately required the former. Even today, identity, as we know from Karl Jaspers, is a task and not a condition. Being Czech, being German, being American; this is a task. It is not just the result of combining two biological elements. Until we can understand this, we will continue to need enemies. Adam Michnik, who is sitting in the front row here, once wrote that "in time, slaves freed from without will just freely choose another Czar". And that is what the problem of freedom and its enemies is about. Thank you for inviting me.

André Glucksmann: Thank you and I apologise for us French. I do know a few words of English but I am losing them already. These apologetics of freedom have kind of perplexed me because I think that freedom is not a value but a base; freedom is the basis for values. The German philosopher Schelling stated that, "freedom is the most heavenly, or the most exalted of that which is heavenly, and at the same time it is the deepest of all chasms".

The Velvet Revolution in 1989, and all of the events that shook Central Europe at that time, was truly for freedom but at the same time, a feeling of anxiety stemmed from that freedom, because there was a choice to be made. A choice that was open for the whole region between, let us say, Havel and*Charter 77* and on the other side Milošević and today we could even say Putin, as well.

As soon as citizens are freed, they become capable of the worst and also the best. This, of course, does not by any means reduce the significance of those geopolitical changes, which continue to shake Europe even today, which started in the Stalin-Allee in Berlin in 1953 and which still continue today because there are still countries like Ukraine or Georgia. We have to say to ourselves that really, this revolution was something incredible. Why, in just half a century, Europe managed to achieve freedom for, let us say, more than one third of its territory and even more inhabitants, without weapons, without fanatic ideologies, whether religious or secular. But it is a miracle that many unknown people had to work on for those fifty years.

What was the ideology of this revolution? Of course, this revolution was pushing for independence, for dignity, for freedom; but in fact, it was the culmination of all the wars for liberation, all the wars against colonialism, whether they took place in Africa, South America, Asia or on other continents. What is the difference then? This revolution was fought not only for freedom but also for the truth. For this revolution aspired to escape the most colossal lie of the twentieth century; the lie that preached peace but made war, that preached fraternity but meant the most radical oppression. A lie that preached justice but at the same time created the Gulags.

And so this necessity to fight for the truth becomes a spiritual and a philosophical revolution. It is very simple and in fact I can say it conclusively. What is freedom, really, without truth? Freedom without truth is actually a kind of anarchy, where there is no constraint for what is good, no constraint for what is bad, for what is right and for what is wrong. In the end, this kind of freedom without truth leads to nihilism.

Nihilism exists in two forms. On the one hand, it is the form that exists outside the boundaries of Europe, that is to say, the European Union. It is the nihilism that comes from the feeling that if I have power, then I am right. And it is the power and truth of active warriors; it is the truth and power of children who are armed and fighting in various wars in Africa. It is also the nihilism of the Russian state; the Chechens could tell us something about it. But these are also the forms of nihilism that show themselves on the individual level in the *Al-Qaida* suicide attackers who willingly turn themselves into a human bomb.

The second form of nihilism is nearer to us; the passive nihilism that declares something like, nothing is true, that one can say anything, do anything or also not say anything, not do anything, no matter what happens. And today's crisis is also proof of this attitude because we believed and argued that a crisis could not be possible. And the result of that has been, actually, the biggest crisis since the 1930s.

Therefore, I maintain that the greatest accomplishment of this dissident revolution was that it joined together freedom and truth. This task never ends and we must continue to address it because we are all, actually, in danger of this kind of passive, nihilistic attitude. Because it is nothing other than with this passive nihilism that, without blinking, we are capable of accepting 200,000 dead in Chechnya, for a nation with maybe a million people. When we can watch tanks repeating what they once did in Prague, when they drove into the streets of Tbilisi. So a dissident mentality and the protection of the connection between freedom and truth is actually something that will always be necessary.

When I say truth, I do not mean some kind of fantastic or theological truth, the kind that Russians profess when they say "pravda". But how best to translate its true meaning? I mean the truth that is within the reach for every one of us; one need only use one's sense, common sense, good sense and then it is the kind of truth, I do not know how else to call it. “Istina*”,* rather.

Petr Pithart: Esteemed colleagues! Those people twenty years ago, those people in your place twenty years ago thought that things were simpler than they really were. They had the feeling that they knew who the enemies of freedom were. I hope that today, you already know that it's more complicated than that. I warned them then. Kind of an atypical role, for a revolutionary to be cooling heads. Maybe the 5th day after November 17, I wrote a letter to circulate to the students, it was called, *What Should Be Giving Us a Headache* and in it, I told them, it is not them, they are not the problem, we ourselves are going to be the problem. I think that it is being confirmed and today I would like to say a few words about how previously, it really was easier to point out the enemies of freedom, as a tyrant or as the ones who prepared the tyranny as ideologists.

Today, it is more about the fact that people are willing to give up freedom voluntarily, of their own accord. So I think that the most dangerous enemy of freedom is becoming the degeneration of freedom, its decadent form; what Durkheim called *anomie* at the end of the 19th century, the falling apart of order and law. It appears that it is a side effect of modernisation and globalisation. While it is not yet an apocalypse, the process leading to the calling into question of order and law itself is an enormous threat to freedom.

It manifests itself in a growing criminality; in the fact that the police systematically turn their back on certain types of crime or on certain precincts; in the fact that the practices of the Mafia are less and less punishable. We are speaking of the unenforceability of constantly changing law, in a maze of institutions. People experience such a state to their detriment, as something that disorients them and makes them unsure. In an unsure world of vague, even vanished boundaries, in a world without points of orientation, people lose the ability, even the will, to decide between different possibilities, which is the basis of freedom.

Freedom is then useless to people. It loses its point and it is very easy to mobilise such people, damaged by these side-effects of modernisation and globalisation, against some kind of enemy; if there is the promise of an easier to understand world that provides more and more stable crutches. So in my opinion, the greatest danger to freedom today is not presented by the creators of incendiary ideas, the ideologues as we knew them. They offered a utopian illusion of freedom, absolute freedom in connection to some kind of revolution, a final battle.

But the ones who are dangerous today are those who always mean well with people and in place of freedom essentially offer people human warmness, a feeling of belonging, mutual trust, cohesiveness, solidarity, the promise of a life among one's own in as homogeneous a society as possible. They offer people the opportunity to go somewhere, to something, to belong to someone. They offer them a replacement for their lost identity. To their city, like football fans, to their region, like the made-up Padania; or Québec, to a nation that wants to be a state, like the Basques or Scots; to a minority that wants to join their parent country, like some Hungarians; or to a nation, in the tribal-ethnic sense, that should be pure, homogenous, like those who want the Czech lands to belong only to the Czechs.

All these people are willing to pay for this belonging not only with a cut to their material well-being but also with restrictions to their own freedom and security. Yes, security too. Homogenous societies tend to be aggressive, both internally and externally, to those who are different. And people therefore come to terms with the fact that they will be living with enemies, both within and without. They give up their freedom and security to authoritarian leaders voluntarily because in a world of collapsed order and uncertain law, freedom without orientational boundaries is pointless. They do not know how to use it to choose, to decide.

People happily give up freedom on a whim to anyone who offers them a more organised, friendly and understandable world. What can we do about this? On the one hand, we must build up credible institutions against these millions of people who will voluntarily give up on freedom that is otherwise within reach and on the other hand, we must strengthen and deepen civil society as much as possible. Law has to be more stable, more clearly organised and more comprehensible. We should give up on implementing more and more detailed regulations and instead, we should know how to express fundamental principles of good and how to clearly define evil. That is what I wanted to tell you.

Martin C. Putna: Mr. President, I have saved you for last on purpose because you always say: "I'll mostly just listen."

Václav Havel: Usually, I mostly just listen but now I am forced to speak. A few, possibly disconnected, comments. Perhaps some of you have noticed that one exclamation has been reaping laughter for many years now. After November 17 at a big rally on Wenceslas Square, I felt that at the end of a speech or appearance of mine there should be something poetic. And so I said: "Truth and love must prevail over lies and hatred." I have been reaping laughter for twenty years for that one poetic exclamation.

I would like to return to it, though, because it relates to the topic that we have opened here. In this era of immense advancements in communication, we are overloaded with information. Billions of pieces of information are flying around the globe like viruses; they are contagious from anyone to anyone and I would like to repeat what Josef Šafařík once said: That there is quite a large difference between information and truth. And how is truth different from information? It is different in the fact that it is not anonymous, that it does not come flying in like an elusive virus but rather, someone is vouching for it. That personal responsibility seems to me to be an absolutely essential component of truth. And the exclamation in question, by virtue of the fact that love was also mentioned there, in a way it points a finger at this phenomenon of personal responsibility, something very human and in its own way dangerous, risky, which is vouching for that truth.

And another kind of component of that truth, in my opinion and in my experience, a kind of essential component of that truth that is often forgotten about, is perspective. I think that when someone takes themselves too seriously, they start to become suspicious and start going down a slippery slope. On that slope are various stations, like self-indulgence, fanaticism, obsession but also things like caution and so on and so on. None of that belongs to truth. What belongs to truth is that responsible person. And I am personally pleased that that exclamation that I thought up in a second, they were already pushing me onto

the balcony and I was still thinking about that exclamation at the end of the speech, I think I can be glad that that exclamation still annoys some people.

Since I have the floor, I guess I could have one more remark related to the topic of freedom. I experienced several releases from prison and I have observed this phenomenon with many friends. I have dealt with the phenomenon of post-prison psychosis almost scientifically. And in prison, especially when someone is there for a long time, then they get used to certain things. For example, to the fact that they do not decide about anything. From morning until evening, everything is decided by someone else, which in a way is comfortable, and even if someone does not exactly like it, he nevertheless gets used to it and he just lives in the world that offers, or rather forces, a completely precise daily regiment on him. You are constantly living inside a collective, you are never alone; which at first grates on you, then eventually you get used to it.

So, all of a sudden, you are ejected from prison. And you discover that you constantly have to decide about something. And in the morning, when your alarm goes off at seven, you think about whether or not to sleep for another fifteen minutes and then you decide to get cracking so you can get something done. But right away, you have to decide whether to put on grey pants or black pants. Then you have to decide whether to take the tram or the car or walk or take the metro. And then you start to get a headache. And now imagine that twenty-four hours a day, or let us say at least twenty hours a day, you are thrust into this incessant need to decide and to choose among various alternatives.

I observed that it has two or maybe three characteristic elements, this post-prison psychosis. The most drastic manifestation is a terrible yearning to go back to prison, for it to be how we are used to it being and not to have to make all those decisions. I observed many prisoners who, for years on end, dreamed of the day that they would get out who went right back two days later. Subconsciously, the desire to just have peace again was ticking inside them, to be rid of the constant need to decide about something.

Another interesting thing is life in a collective. I observed it even in myself; that I could not handle being alone. When it loomed up that I was going to be alone, at home say, then I would call a friend and ask if they wanted to come over for a visit. It is another thing you get used to, being among people. And solitude is suddenly appalling. It seems to you like something irrational and this all relates to freedom and I did it many times, that I likened this post-prison state to the state of our society. I think it even explains the strong support that the Communists have, whatever their party is called. Because they offer certainty. And they offer exactly what is in every person – that there is something that keeps him from being at peace, that he constantly has to decide about something. It is an unpleasant state. Freedom is a tough thing, it is complicated and in every person, to some extent or another there, is a sleeping desire to return to prison, metaphorically speaking. Just the desire to make one's life easier by simply not having quite so much freedom.

That is one of the things, not the only one, that I use to explain the support for the Communists because that is exactly what they offer, look at their slogans: "Focus on work", for example, a very typical slogan of theirs. The alternative: "You will have peace. We will decide for you and tell you how things should be, we know everything, we understand the world and therefore you don't need to stick your nose into anything." And it is a very enticing offer.

I guess I should, because...What is that? Aha, Petr is advising me to proclaim something. "Long live Pithart!" Of the various things that I have noted during the preceding presentations, I would like to mention just one more topic. In the play *Ubu Roi* by Alfred Jarry, there is a sentence where King Ubu says, "I'll execute two writers and two hundred more will write what I want."

And it seems to me that that is rather fitting for one large geographical entity in our vicinity. Because, there, a very strange, sophisticated way of rather general manipulation has sprung up, displaying all the outward signs of democracy. There are elections, there is a parliament, government is answerable to parliament, naturally there is freedom of the press, or freedom of expression of course, only just precisely to the extent that it cannot endanger the powers-that-be. And when some oligarch or other happens to revolt against this manipulation and does not have a subordinate relationship toward the power centre or starts to become liberated somehow, then they ship him off to Siberia, like Khodorkovsky. And so he is the writer that was executed by King Ubu, so that the other two hundred would go on to write whatever King Ubu wanted.

And it seems to me that it is a topic that is coming back to us, which we should remember, and which shows that the era of dictatorships and totalitarian systems has not ended at all. Maybe it did end in its classical form as we know it from the twentieth century, but new, far more sophisticated ways of controlling society are being born and it demands vigilance, caution, wariness, study and perspective. If I had to finish with a bombastic exclamation, then I would say, "People, be vigilant!"

Martin C. Putna: Of course, it would be possible either to add many things to this speech in order to explain it or not to add anything at all. I will only add one quotation from Václav Havel, when he was speaking about perspective, about the carefulness toward self-indulgence. I recall a quotation from his speech about Franz Kafka in 1990: "Being in power makes me permanently suspicious of myself." And I would ask my colleagues, if they will, briefly please, to react to something that we heard here. Jan Urban has volunteered.

Jan Urban: Just an illustration of the last passage in Václav Havel's speech. Over twenty years ago some of us Czechoslovak dissidents started working with Alexandr Podrabinek, one of the most fearless independent journalists in what was then the Soviet Union and a political prisoner. In 2009, Saša Podrabinek had to go underground. He had to go into hiding because he had angered the Putinist youth organisation *Nashi*, which started threatening to physically dispose of him. End of illustration. So, "Saša, hang in there!"

Martin C. Putna: It appears that we really will not be able to avoid returning to that one large geographical entity. And I would also note that André Glucksmann, too, actually used the distinction that exists in Russian between "pravda" and "istina", meaning between the superficial truth of a piece of information and "istina" as the deep identity. And the same with freedom because there is freedom ("svoboda") and liberty ("volnost"). "Volnost" is the kind of, "I am doing what I want" and "svoboda" is the awareness of responsibility.

So if any of our panellists still want to react to the other panellists? If not, then we will turn the floor over to the audience, meaning your questions. I will ask you for two things. Please be very brief. I have pestered our panellists, too, to be brief, so I am asking you as well. And the second request; really, please. There are obviously many important intellectual minds here but I would really ask for the floor to be given, because we are on academic soil here and this event is meant primarily for students, primarily to current students. I beg you really to let it be so. So questions from the forum, please.

Audience: Hello, Kopecká speaking. I would like to ask, there are a lot of us here and I am struck by a comparison to a frog that is been thrown into boiling water or water that is slowly being brought to a boil. I have been watching the situation around Czech public media for two years and it seems to me, I do not know how far it has to go before people realise that freedom of speech is in danger again; that public media are being pruned back in terms of giving space to oppositional voices, including precisely concerning that very large entity in our neighbourhood. What do you think about it? Right now, people are happy that they can buy what they want but they do not realise at all that our freedom is so dear and that it is starting to be cut back again. Thank you.

Martin C. Putna: Who wants to respond?

Jan Urban: It seems that I am the one here for impoliteness. Freedom of speech is a question of who we are. It is whether we want to go back to prison or if we want to shout, like we did nine years ago during the Czech Television strike, or whether it does not matter that the water keeps getting hotter. However, in this age of the Internet, I do not know any way to stop any free soul from seeking out other amicable souls and expressing the truth. Again, it is a question of the identity of who we are. If I am afraid and I keep the truth in a drawer, then sorry, but I deserve prison. The opportunities today are incomparably different than they were twenty years ago and the fact that bravery and a bit of civic courage are needed, well, come on, that was always the case.

Petr Pithart: At its next meeting, the Senate will take up a bill drawn up in the Senate for the third time, a bill to get rid of public media concession fees; very attractive. It would mean that public media would be paid from the state budget. I fear the worst. I have the feeling that many of my colleagues have not understood in the least what it is all about. The bill still has substantial support; appeal to your MPs and Senators and tell them what you think about it.

Jan Sokol: I think that this is very important because the truth that was being spoken about here, it is formed in society as rules. Say this principle of financing the budget of public media obviously means that the media will be put under the jurisdiction of parliament. Parliament will decide how much money they get. And I was horrified when one of the newspapers even went out and did a survey of readers, if they were for or against. And now, 70% of people support not having to pay these concession fees. The fact that that is the case does not surprise me but that the newspaper itself presents it like that, so that there's another argument for getting rid of them, I think that is a very serious thing.

Martin C. Putna: And I will just add, when Petr Pithart said, "Appeal to your MPs and Senators", there was this kind of, "Hahaha, as if that will help!" sentiment. It reminded me of an experience three days ago in New York where there was a demonstration, the topic of which was altogether secondary, but it was clear how Americans are used to demonstrating. If they have an issue, the group works something out, they meet, they agree on Facebook and the main thing they say, the main instrument they use is, "Keep nagging until a decision is made, badger your MPs and Senators, call them, don't give them a moment's peace, fill their answering machines with messages about our opinions." And the people shouted: "Yeah, let's do it." And they did. That is how it was in New York in Union Square.

Another question? Yes, please.

Question is inaudible.

Martin C. Putna: Tough question.

Jan Sokol: Yes, that is a serious matter. I have the impression that whatever school forces itself upon people always turns ugly in the eyes of the children; that is a known fact. I would be very careful even to hold up something like 17 November too much as a specific event and to try to explain what it was all about. And I think that what it was all about then can also be updated to the present and then, at least in my experiences with high school students, where I often go, it seems, it seems to me that this can be done. It cannot just be laying a wreath and clapping.

Jan Urban: It is two different things. One is the customary addiction in the Czech Republic to anniversaries, which often hide the much more fundamental issues. Anniversaries are symbols of certain values, of some kind of effort. And we, instead of constantly talking about those values and arguing about them and looking for some kind of consensus on what we want and who we are, just celebrate the anniversary.

Martin C. Putna: Last question then. Just speak up a little, please.

Audience: Irena Kalhousová. I have a question for Mr Václav Havel, whether he thinks that it is too bad that there was no kind of Nuremberg trial for communism, because it is really horribly difficult to talk about communism when we actually have them in Parliament and it is something that is totally, openly accepted. Thank you.

Václav Havel: Here in this country, if I am not mistaken, about seven million people went through the Communist Party since 1948. This society presumably did not want to go further in condemning communism than it did. If it had, it would have done so. It would be a problem, technically speaking, because laws cannot be applied retroactively. Because judges were vetted many times, especially in the era of normalisation. Who would have judged it? It would have been a series of "not guilty" verdicts, in all likelihood. I do not know, but in any...

Audience: There was not enough rope.

Martin C. Putna: That comment was from Jiřina Šiklová, who even twenty years ago when the revolution was taking place here kept pushing her way to the microphone and shouting something. I interrupted you...

Václav Havel: I would just like to add a light-hearted comment, or maybe it is not so light-hearted really. In the prison where we were, there were three of us political prisoners there, in Heřmanice in Ostrava. Jiří Dienstbier, Václav Benda and my humble self. And all the prisoners considered us the future rulers of the country, which of course we laughed at, because it seemed completely absurd and laughable to us. So when a debate broke out about it once in the smoking section, we gave in to the idea and so half joking, we said what should happen once we came into power and Vašek Benda said, "Well, you'll be President but leave us two days first." Well, it was a joke, of course. But I want to say that really, the causes are probably deeper and societal. You cannot dump it all on one person, whether it is me or the MPs of what was then the Federal Assembly or anyone else. I guess society did not want it, it was not ready for it. We can think about it and write whole books about why it was that way. The answer will not be simple. But let us let Petr say what he thinks about it.

Petr Pithart: Twice, there was mention, not of the Nuremberg tribunals, but of a kind of Russell Tribunal. At the Czech National Council, MPs squabbled about it for several days; how everyone pictured it happening, whether something like that would be possible. And those were radical MPs and actually, in the end, they came to the conclusion that Václav Havel enunciated here a moment ago. In the end, it ended up that we are just not up to the task; that neither society nor they themselves had what it took to organise something like that, for it to not turn out a fiasco, for it not to turn against them, that society is just not up to it. I really tried to describe these considerations about punishing people with maximum openness and sincerity in my latest book, *Eighty-nine*. There are many pages about it there and you can agree with it or not. I do not know if something else, completely different, could be thought up in that regard, something new; because those ideas were not taboo but in the legislature those who had initiated it simply gave up on it in the end.

Jan Sokol: It is necessary to realise that compared to the situation of the Nuremberg trials, there was one very important element missing; an occupying army. German society did not carry out the Nuremberg trials, the occupying army did. This one time, still at the end of ’89, I had a kind of walk-on role for this man-on-the-street show. And they asked me, "What are we missing the most now?" I said, "We are missing an occupying army." Kind of a provocation, but...

Martin C. Putna: What kind of army would you imagine?

Jan Sokol: Well, one colleague, when we were debating it in parliament, said that it could be the Red Cross and the Austrian fire-fighters, for example.

Jan Urban: I have studied post-conflict societies of the past twenty years and I have discovered that regardless of culture, religion, ethnicity or geographical location, every post-conflict society has the greatest yearning to acquire a feeling of justice. We all put it ahead of economic reform, at the beginning. It is not about punishment, it is about truth; the truth about what happened. And a revolution that is not capable of redefining the terms "good" and "evil" and is not capable of giving a name to what happened, fails. And I personally take that as the greatest failure of November 1989.

Martin C. Putna: And I will add one sentence to that: "It ain't over yet". And with this sentence, I will take the liberty of ending our panel discussion and of thanking our panellists and thanking you too, the audience and please be here in the hall again at 11:35. And those of you who did not get a chance to comment, I will remind you that there is a second panel and then the afternoon chat with Madeleine Albright, which will actually be mostly devoted to open discussion with the audience. So there will certainly still be time for all issues. Thank you.