

# odkaz

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Quarterly of Department of History of Antitotalitarian Culture

Dear Readers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are entering the second year of the ODKAZ bulletin existence.

Like last year, we would like to devote most of each issue to one jubilarian whose round anniversary is commemorated at the time of the respective quarterly release. The rest of the bulletin will introduce our department's collection items and bring information about the latest events in (not only) our museum.

This year's first issue is devoted to the "exceptional foreigner" who devoted a considerable part of his life to Czechoslovakia and help to people in need.

Roger Scruton first arrived in Prague in September 1979, partly by chance. As often happens, this "chance" brought about a significant turning point in his life. He decided to help independent intellectual and, more broadly, cultural life, first in Prague and then also in Brno. The following articles will show that Sir Roger did not only develop theories about help but immediately put all theory into practise as soon as he could. And that is also the reason why he left such a strong trace in our cultural history. Thanks to his help, systematic knowledge transfer took place at secret seminars in private homes, independent film production awareness developed, the Brno samizdat received advanced technology not available in the country at that time, and post-revolution higher education was built (especially at law faculties). In the context of all that, Roger Scruton tried to understand Czechs for whom he "lost his heart", learned Czech, immersed himself into studies of Czech history, music, and literature. Without expecting any satisfaction. He was not thinking of himself but rather of those he was helping. Only after the velvet revolution did Scruton receive official recognition. The last, and at the same time the most distinctive, was

the in memoriam grant of honorary citizenship of the City of Brno. May this issue of the Odkaz Bulletin be a symbolic thank you for all that Sir Roger has given us.

Petra Pichlová

## A Short Memory of an Incredible Meeting

The meeting happened in autumn 1979 and had three instalments.

### Instalment 1. Julius Tomin's flat

At that time, the secret private seminar in the flat of Julius Tomin featured a second guest from Great Britain, philosopher Roger Scruton. As he himself admitted, he didn't really feel like that. He did not expect a lot of the small group of listeners, people of different ages and professions, interested in philosophy. But Kathleen Wilkes insisted. She was the first representative of Western universities who responded to Julius Tomin's call for maintaining a dialogue with philosophers immured behind the iron curtain and expelled from academic grounds due to their criticism of the Russian invasion to Czechoslovakia in 1968. I think that Roger, like her, was deeply moved by the perception of philosophy not as an academic discipline but as an essential need for liberal thought, looking for the truth as an instrument of resistance vis-à-vis the omnipresent lie and fear of persecution penetrating the public space.

### Instalment 2. Prague

After the evening lecture, J. Tomin asked me and Tomáš Liška to reward the special guest with a tour around Prague, which the philosopher was visiting for the first time. My objection that as a country girl I can easily get lost in the mazy backstreets of Prague, was not accepted. Luckily, Tomáš was a Prague native and so I, much like Roger, could enjoy the excitement of the beauty of Prague, which Scruton, as an architecture connoisseur and author of the book on *Art and Architecture*, knew how to appreciate. And that was not an end to that all, Roger appeared to like the great figures of Czech classical music, Smetana, Dvořák, and, most of all, Janáček, to my great pleasure, as I am native from Janáček's region. When we parted by the Střelecký Island, our visitor appeared satisfied. He even sent a written acknowledgement with an attached invitation for me to visit London. I vividly recall the wave of laughter that this good-natured invitation arose among people who had their passports confiscated, or who

were informed that their travel abroad was not in the interest of the socialist Czechoslovak state.

### Instalment 3. London

But as the invitation contained my name in particular, I mentioned that at a visit to my parents, who offered me their permission to draw foreign currency, granted but not used for their holiday journey to Yugoslavia. My attempt to request pounds instead of denars was successful due to an oversight of the North Moravian "police authorities". And so at the time when Secret Police caused that I was expelled from university because of the secret seminars, North Moravian authorities issued for me a permit to travel, the so called "exit endorsement", without which even the passport was a worthless document. In London, Roger invited me for dinner cooked by himself, and for a tea before I left. Then he seriously asked me whether I ever thought of staying in England. I replied truthfully that no, I did not. Even after seeing Oxford and Cambridge, visited with Kathleen Wilkes, which left a deep impression in me as monumental educational and cultural pillars. I really did not think about that. I replied that I thought I would become one of those desperately homesick exiles and that I believed that my staying at home would make more sense to my life because of the bigger chance to contribute to the help to my country. And that I considered important what I had found in the underground university seminars and that I could participate in the existence and survival of the small islands of freedom, human dignity, and respect.

After my return home I received a personal letter from him, followed by a visit and the beginning of a relationship that was strong not only for the two of us but also for the secret police, for whom it was a perfect reason for Roger's frequent visits to Czechoslovakia.

In the course of the years 1980 and 1981 Roger Scruton arrived for a couple of days every two or three months. In his free time, he walked around Prague and visited its surroundings by train. He loved Moravian wine, venison, Gervais and Cuban cigars. He liked the undulated Czech landscape interlaced with villages and embroidered with Baroque church domes. He imagined with nostalgia how charming the

countryside must have been before the big and expansive socialist fields began biting into it. A visit to Hukvaldy, Janáček's birthplace, was his most cherished experience. On that occasion, we drove across Moravia to Brno in the car borrowed from my parents.

Roger was very attentive and tried to help as much as he could. He brought in books not only for me and J. Tomin, but also for others in Prague, and later in Brno, where he also lectured. I helped him with communication and interpreting when needed. At that time he did not speak Czech yet. I was also the contact person for other lecturers who he or Kathleen managed to persuade to arrive in Czechoslovakia.

However, the extending number of Western lecturers soon invited an attempt of the Secret Police to break up J. Tomin's seminar. Police raids and our 48-hour detention in prison cells in Bartolomějská street repeated. Zdena Tomínová, then a speaker of Charta 77, was once brutally beaten on a way home in the evening. The Tomin family decided to emigrate to Great Britain. Students from his group and the expanding cross-border cooperation were bravely taken over by Ivan Dejmal and, later, Ladislav Hejdlánek, who added the students to their existing groups.

At that time we were afraid that any of Roger's visit to Czechoslovakia might be his last and he might never be able to visit the country again. His idea that he might extend the usual weekend and secure our relationship and his arrivals by our wedding at the town hall appeared to be naïve. The regime required a lot of permits by various institutions from me. For me every return from the airport was a valley of tears and for him a relief that he got out without arrest and that he would hopefully soon be able to return.

Meanwhile, the activities of R. Scruton and K. Wilkes gained respect and recognition in Great Britain. The fact that academic philosophers stepped out of their libraries to positively affect education in a socialist country brought us an offer of scholarships. Jan Bednář and Tomáš Liška left to study at Oxford University. I was also admitted as student of German and philosophy. But then the heaviest blow came from the Secret Police. In September, while I was writing my first essay for my tutor about Rilke's *Duin Elegies*, I was called by the Secret Police who told me that they would per-

mit my study abroad, marriage with a foreigner and moving to Britain, but that they would require my cooperation. The idea of a legal departure with the possibility to visit my aging parents collapsed like a house of cards. I refused, telling them that in such case I would rather stay home. My parents had already lost their son sentenced to two years in prison for emigration and the hope they would see him again was nearly lost after the ten years that passed since.

I said good-bye to Roger using the same words as once in London. I believed I would be more useful in my home country, then left by a lot of rare and irreplaceable people due to Secret Police despotism and vexation. These people already left behind painful empty places, like the Tomin apartment, where we once visited to collect a couple of forgotten things.

I wished Roger to find his family, home, and background. I hoped that he would soon find his Sophia and that as a conservative philosopher he would quickly find success and respect in the times of Margaret Thatcher. This indeed happened, luckily. Only many, many years later than I had expected then.

Roger continued his work with the fantastic Barbara Day speaking fluent Czech.

I was lucky too. At that time Jan Payne asked me to become his wife, and I knew we would manage life in the then Czechoslovakia together. Later, and until the velvet revolution, we also hosted one of the Underground University seminars in our flat, thus contributing to the much needed development of liberal education, so generously contributed to by Roger Scruton, Kathleen Wilkes and the Jan Hus Educational Foundation which they founded.

I met Roger once again in 2012, after receiving his letter with a request for a meeting and for forgiving. I had no idea what it was supposed to be about. It turned out that, even after all these years, he was tormented by remorse for not being able to free me from the clutches of the regime, and decided for processing his experiences here in the form of a novel. The main characters were freely inspired by his memories. He therefore raised a gentlemanly appeal for my permit to publish his book called Notes from Underground.

Of course I agreed and assured him that there was nothing to forgive.

It was an incredible meeting. And it was indeed made special by the lasting friendship and mutual understanding after the long years of separation, except for our differing views of the European Union. But I hope I managed to explain him why in the face of Russia and China we needed to join forces to defend the cultural space so dear to both of us.

Lenka Payne



Roger Scruton (photo by Petr Baran)



One of the first lectures by Charles Taylor in early June 1979 took place in the open air, in a quarry near the Karlštejn castle. The student audience includes Lenka Dvořáková (in the middle)

**Lenka Payne** (1958) was born in Ostrava, grew up in Havířov and attended grammar school in Orlová. She was expelled from studies at the Faculty of Civil Engineering of the Czech University of Technology in Prague in 1979 for organising and attending secret private seminars. Later, she graduated from the Faculty of Evangelic Theology, Charles University, Prague. Until 2021 she worked as hospital chaplain in Bulovka University Hospital and in the Strasbourg hospice at Prague-Bohnice. At present she is a hospital clergywoman in the Motol University Hospital.

## **I am a Witness of That Moment**

Roger Scruton discovered Brno in 1981. I am a living witness of that moment. But not only a witness. For the following nine years we closely cooperated in favour of independent culture in Brno.

How did that happen?

In December 1976 I returned from a five-year imprisonment. I signed Charta 77 and founded a samizdat publishing house together with my future wife. In 1979 Prague saw the first secret seminars with British academicians held in private homes. A year later, Roger Scruton became one of the founders of the British Jan Hus Educational Foundation, followed by French and other foundations of the same name and orientation.

However, the communist state, by definition, felt threatened by any organised activity outside its permission. From the communist point of view, an analysis of Platon philosophy in a private house was nothing less than an illegal gathering requiring dispersion by a police raid.

When we met for the first time, Scruton offered me lectures by foreign academicians in Brno. I first asked for keeping all relations secret as the simplest means of assuring the longest possible continuation of the activities.

At one of our next meetings I proposed seminars without the presence of Charta 77 signatories in Brno who would attract attention of the Secret Police. The academicians were to arrive as tourists prohibited to say who sent them. Then I proposed hosts to Roger Scruton. I did not look for someone for one or two seminars but for families willing to transform their lives in this way for many years. I received an offer from Petr Oslzlý, dramaturge of the Goose on the String Theatre and future rector of the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts, and Milan Jelínek, a linguist and future rector of Masaryk University. The former venue was to be used for Brits, the latter for Frenchmen.

In the seminars for which they provided their homes they managed to create an atmosphere of intellectual adventure rather than of fear of the police. Later, these seminars were also held in the flats of their friends – the Pospíšil and Blažek families. Miroslav Pospíšil, the interpreter of the British seminars, took the guests to the English Club where they played

the role of native speakers, addressing hundreds of listeners. Petr Oslzlý invited the guests to his theatre to meet non-conforming Czech artists and musicians.

Between the years 1984 and 1989, the Brno network was visited by more than 50 guests from Britain, France, and Germany. It is also worth mentioning that the seminars were also visited by the prohibited poet Jan Skácel, the future rector of Silesian University in Opava Martin Černohorský, or the future rector of Masaryk University Petr Fiala.

But in Brno, the idea was not confined to holding seminars for non-conforming citizens. Another idea was to make use of the technological lead of the West for development of independent culture. I asked for audio cassettes for dissemination of music by prohibited bands or lectures on Czech literature by the then prohibited author Milan Uhde. I asked for video recorders for private cinemas that would show western films. I asked for computers and printers for samizdat workshops. I asked for a video camera for recording unofficial exhibitions by Brno artists and for making uncensored documentaries shot by cameraman Aleš Záboj.

We received all that, thanks to Roger Scruton's support. The computers lacked a text editor with Czech diacritics. Foreign experts failed to develop one. I knew that the British seminars were attended by a man from the Institute of Computer Science. So I addressed him. Jiří Zlatuška, future rector of Masaryk University, developed the editor, usable not only for Czech, but also for Polish and Hungarian.

British computers and the editor with Czech diacritics transformed Czechoslovak samizdat.

The Prameny edition translated and published social science writings of non-Marxist orientation. The first titles were typed on a typewriter, with carbon paper copies. The editions of translations of Karl Popper and Raymond Aron already looked very different.

Scruton's *Dictionary of Political Thought*, translated by Petr Pithart, was even prepared for print in columns and typeset on a laser printer. Please remember that this was late 1980s when most Czechoslovak citizens did not even see a picture of a computer.

Technologies were also in the forefront of domestic cinemas. The activities were not confined to film shows of

*Doctor Zhivago* or *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Dubbing workshops were established. Ways were sought for using computers to make film subtitles so that the films could be disseminated like samizdat books.

The contrast of the technological backwardness of the communist Czechoslovakia and the technological progress of the Brno non-conforming zone had a funny finish. When in February 1990 I asked in a large state-owned printing house in Prague whether they could print books from computer floppy disks, I received the following answer: "No sir, we cannot do that." I could not believe we were so far with our technological progress.

Jiří Müller



A meeting of the Jan Hus Educational Foundation. From the left: Petr Zeman, Barbara Day, Jiří Müller, Vladimír Jochmann, Roger Scruton and Ján Čarnogurský

**Jiří Müller** (1943) was one of the main leaders of the student opposition movement, with Lubomír Holeček, during his university time. He was expelled from university twice and was only allowed to graduate in 1990. In the period 1971–1976 he was imprisoned for subverting the republic. Immediately after return from prison he became the very first signatory of Charta 77 from Brno. He opened a samizdat publishing house together with his future wife Bronislava. He began to cooperate with Roger Scruton in 1981. He organised secret home seminars with Roger's help. After 1989 he became an active member of the Civic Forum, managed the Institute for the Protection of the Constitution and Democracy, and worked as parliamentarian. Later he was engaged in non-profit organisations (as member of Boards of Trustees of Charta 77 Foundation, the Jan Hus Educational Foundation, SOS Villages for Children, Masaryk University and ADRA foundations). He has worked for the Jan Hus Educational Foundation since.

## Memories of Roger Scruton

I have already written and said many times that the possibility to organise underground university seminars in our flat was a life's gift for me. But I could have never been endowed by Jiří Müller with this gift if it were not for his contacts with Roger Scruton and Scruton's urge to help liberal thinking in the "normalised" Czechoslovakia. I described our first meeting in detail in the *Kontexty* revue three years ago. It was in London in May 1985. Our next meeting only happened – Roger was refused the visa by the totalitarian authorities and I had my passport confiscated by them – after the Velvet Revolution.

Then we began to meet more often and our meetings were always inspiring, for Roger knew how to clearly – and provocatively – formulate his thoughts. In the British artistic environment his thinking was indeed provocative in a different way, which I would like to illustrate by the following lines.

In early 1990, in Glasgow, an art conference titled *New Beginnings* was held in the context of the European City of Culture programme. I was invited to sit in the main panel. The participants included about a hundred radical British artists and cultural activists. I flew to Glasgow with a change in London and Roger Scruton invited me for a day in his home on the way there. I flew in the afternoon so that I managed to visit a remarkable performance of *Figaro's Divorce* by Ödön von Horváth on the alternative scene of the Gate Theatre in Notting Hill where Roger lived then. Not only that he discussed the performance and the theatre with me in detail before dinner – also attended by Barbara Day and Jessica Gwynne – but after that, late into the night, he played to me on the piano, which was the heart of his study, melodies from the opera he was composing at that time. It was an unforgettable evening for me, although the main theme was art and not politics, as could be expected at that time.

On the following day, at the conference, which I wanted to open it by a topical speech about how art connected people of different political orientations – knowing that most people in the auditorium were left oriented – I started with the following words: "Last evening, my friend Roger

Scruton...". I could not continue for the incredible mummery that followed. People in the auditorium shouted that Scruton was enemy and Thatcher's supporter, angrily gesticulated and even appeared to be preparing to insult me. The president finally got the situation under control and I could deliver my contribution about the past and present situation of Czech culture in my country, and about how Roger Scruton together with the Jan Hus Educational Foundation helped liberal education in Czechoslovakia as well as our independent artistic activities. The Scruton theme then dominated not only the subsequent discussion but all my friendly talks with British colleagues whose artistic orientation was close to mine, but with whose left, Marxist oriented thinking I could not identify myself, during the following three days.

I recollected this experience from Glasgow thirteen years later, on 14 May 2004, when Roger Scruton delivered a lecture in front of several hundred excited listeners in the Aula of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, and again recently, when I regularly and with passion return to the translation of his highly informed book titled *Fools, Frauds and Firebrands: Thinkers of the New Left*.

Petr Oslzlý



Petr Oslzlý in a dialogue with Roger Scruton on his summer visit to England in 1992

**Petr Oslzlý** (1945), for political reasons forced to study mechanical engineering, devoted his whole life to theatre – as dramaturge, script writer and actor, mainly connected with the Goose on the String Theatre. In the latter half of 1980s the household of Eva and Petr Oslzlýs was a place of home seminars with British lecturers. In 1989 he became a founding member of the Civic Forum, afterwards working as an assistant and advisor (for cultural issues) to President Václav Havel. He was rector of the Janáček Academy of Performing Arts in Brno in the period of 2018 to 2022.

## **My work with Roger Scruton**

It was a privilege and a joy to work with Roger Scruton in what were often intense situations in the five years leading up to Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution at the end of 1989, and then another ten years during the period of rebuilding democracy. Even after that, Roger wanted to hold on to his connections with the country and we continued to exchange news and work together on projects such as the British Ambassador's celebration in the anniversary year of 2019.

It is difficult to know where to begin in writing about Roger, as he was the initiator of so many things – if something he felt was needed did not exist (a journal, an organisation), he would invent it. (Likewise, if he felt it was no longer needed, he would want to close it down.) My earliest encounter with him was in June 1985 when I first attended a meeting of the Trustees of the Jan Hus Educational Foundation. I found myself that day among people I had always wanted to meet, and was excited by the work they were doing; however, I did not yet know that it was the foundation's first meeting since Roger's expulsion from Czechoslovakia. When he described the circumstances of his meeting in Brno with Jiří and Broňa Müller a few days earlier, its interruption by the uniformed police, the race back to their home ahead of the police, and his detention, interrogation and expulsion, I knew that I would devote myself to this cause at all costs.

Years later, I discovered from the security archive that even after Roger's expulsion from Czechoslovakia the Communist authorities did not lose interest in him, and even in London their secret police followed him to his flat in Notting Hill Gate. Meanwhile, a flaw in the administrative process of one of the foundation's sponsors enabled them to access Roger's letters to that donor. Fortunately, he had always been aware of this risk and was careful about what he wrote, even to America.

My work place for the JHEF was initially Roger's office in Birkbeck College of the University of London – a small room at the top of a Georgian terraced house. This was feasible because in autumn 1985 Roger was on sabbatical from Birkbeck and teaching in the United States. The first task he gave me was to read through his files of the past five years

on activity of the JHEF. His filing method was, I discovered, extremely efficient. Every document that arrived related to the JHEF was hole-punched and threaded into the current cardboard-backed file. When this was full another file was started. This way, if one had some idea of when a particular event had taken place, it did not involve too much ingenuity to track down the relevant correspondence. This chronological system still worked even decades later.

His method of delegation was equally simple. We would sit with the sizable amount of correspondence since our last meeting in a pile by Roger's side. He would take the items one by one and discuss what should be done with them, until they formed a pile on my side, which suited us both. He did this with such humour and imagination that I felt invigorated rather than overwhelmed. In this way I learnt very much not only about the work we were doing, but about why we were doing it. One priority I shall always remember, was that we should provide our colleagues with what they wanted rather than what we thought they ought to have. And while Roger was meticulous in his adherence to security, his attitude towards bureaucracy was light-hearted: "The Charity Commissioners need to know the names, addresses, telephone numbers and dates of birth of all our trustees. They do not need to know your sex, ethnic origin, favourite pop group or attitude to Princess Diana, so count yourself lucky and send the information as soon as possible, please...", he wrote to trustees in the 1990s. This light-heartedness also manifested itself when a visitor arrived, whether a colleague from Germany, a sponsor's representative from the USA, or a visitor from Czechoslovakia (though in the 1980s these were rare). However, he was unable to suffer the long-winded and self-important visitor, and on occasion would let slip signs of his impatience.

He was loyal and generous to his friends, supporting them in times of trouble. I remember that when a colleague was diagnosed with AIDS, Roger immediately offered him the use of his own central London flat, so he could be close to the best medical treatment. I experienced his generosity, too – when he was awarded damages in his libel case against *The Observer*, he shared the windfall among his friends and colleagues, even with me, although the episode had taken

place before I came on the scene. He was very inclusive; I met a variety of remarkable people in his flat whom I would never have encountered anywhere else. When he moved to the countryside, I thought he would miss being at the heart of things in London, but over the next years I realised that he made wherever he was the heart of things.

His (often critical) affection for Czechoslovakia was already well-established by the time that I knew him, and was warmly reciprocated, starting with samizdat translations of his works, through invitations to speak at underground seminars, to all the many invitations to lecture after 1989, his honorary doctorate from Masaryk university, First of June Prize from the City of Plzeň, Medal of Merit presented by President Havel, Silver Medal of the Senate presented by Petr Pithart, and Honorary Citizenship of Brno. There was unanimous and public support for him from his Czech and Slovak colleagues when a New Statesman journalist told lies about him and damaged his reputation. He also inspired the future Prime Minister of Slovakia, Ján Čarnogurský. When, still in the years of totalitarianism, I told Čarnogurský that he and Roger were the same age, he exclaimed: "So young? I thought that a man so wise who had done so much must be very old!"

In spite of his immense intellect, we were on the same wave length when it came to the work of the JHEF. He could be irreverent, but he never lost sight of what the foundation was working for and why it was important. He was never carried away by false rhetoric, and was never too self-important to undertake some of the lowliest tasks. Sometimes now I come across a letter or an email from him, and I see how seriously he took my questions, though he may have addressed them flippantly. I miss those exchanges terribly now – in the two decades after the publication of *The Velvet Philosophers* I would continue to email him with news of our friends in the Czech Republic and he always responded with some illuminating comment.

Barbara Day



Barbara Day receives Czech Republic State Honours from President Václav Havel, Oxford, October 1998

**Barbara Day** (1944) is a theatre historian, translator, writer, and teacher of British origin, permanently residing in Prague since 1989. She graduated from Manchester University in theatre science and began to study Czech theatrical art in 1960s. In 1985, she organised a festival of Czech culture called Czechfest in Bristol. Thanks to her interest in Czech theatre she met Petr Oslzlý, who recommended her to Jessica Gwynne as secretary of the Jan Hus Educational Foundation in 1985. She organised secret home seminars in Prague and in Brno. She was granted the Order of the British Empire of the "Member" rank and a distinction by President Václav Havel. In January 2023 the Institute for Studies of Totalitarian Regimes granted her a Prize for Extraordinary Contribution to Modern History Reflection.

## **Cultural Mission of Roger Scruton**

For the whole time I knew Roger Scruton he never ceased to amaze me with his ability to very quickly penetrate to the core of any problem which he developed interest in, then profoundly study it from all sides, take hold of it and finally – and that was his greatest merit – to act on it with all his heart and soul. And this was also the case of the private home seminars in Czechoslovakia.

I met Roger Scruton in person in late 1980s and we began intense cooperation when the regime changed. During Christmas 1989 our British friends celebrated believing that the goal of their efforts was achieved and their work was ending. We did not agree. Our idea was to use the lecturers at the home seminars under the new situation to help restore and reform humanities and social science at our universities.

Roger's response to our requirement for Foundation work continuation was quick and decisive – as usual. As soon as in January 1990 he was back in Brno to lecture for the academic staff of the Faculty of Arts, as could be expected, but he also delivered a lecture in front of an assembly of judges of the Regional Court, which was entirely unexpected (and probably even shocking for most of the present jurists). To enable cooperation under the new conditions and to be able to organise a new, bigger volume of work, we established the Czechoslovak Jan Hus Educational Foundation with its headquarters in Brno. As the man under the burden of its management I was enjoying priceless support from two people, Barbara Day, the manager of the British Jan Hus Educational Foundation, and Roger Scruton. Roger, then professor of aesthetics at Birkbeck College, drew a sabbatical and devoted one whole year to work for Czechoslovakia. In addition to organisational work and a huge amount of time and energy put into fundraising and search for experts to help our academic sites, Roger above all acted as my/our advisor and mentor in the creation of our Higher Education Support Programme.

We held long discussions about how to preserve, in addition to higher education institutes preparing their students for their future jobs, the traditional university education bringing up real scholars, the learned elite. I wanted to know

how to sustain such education, and how to rise interest of young people in such education. To continue with the home seminar, was Roger Scruton's surprising answer. Or develop it further and transform it to a small private university. The seminar indeed was a small university, wasn't it. Education in humanities does not necessarily need buildings, lecture rooms, study rooms, technical background, huge libraries, and generous state subsidies. The only things that are needed are devoted teachers and students craving for knowledge, a few dozen books that have stood the test of time, and a pleasant place where you can work undisturbed. And maybe a glass of good wine. When my surprise calmed down, I realised that Roger was probably right. Didn't I experience the same myself! My philology studies at J. E. Purkyně University years ago were – at best – my preparation for a job. Only by visiting our home seminar, regardless its limitations and imperfections, given by the difficult conditions, I was lucky enough to touch real education. I witnessed formation of a brotherhood, a collegium, a community of us, its attendees, where we – together and mutually and with the help of our teachers from abroad – studied and explored philosophy, politics, ethics, sociology, aesthetics, theology, history, anthropology, environmental science, as well as literature, music, art, architecture, theatre... in full harmony with the conviction infused in the entire work of Roger Scruton, which was that knowledge was intermediated not only by science, philosophy and theology, but also by culture and art.

I had to disappoint Roger. We did not establish the private institute – mainly because our seminar quickly dissolved. Its members returned to universities, to professions they had to leave under the communist regime, or took up new functions and positions. And so the Jan Hus Foundation “just” started the ten-year programme of support for innovation and reform of the existing university sites.

Miroslav Pospíšil



Roger Scruton and Miroslav Pospíšil, 1990

**Miroslav Pospíšil** (1951) graduated from Faculty of Arts, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University (today Masaryk University) in Brno, in English and German studies. After a short episode at his Alma Mater he left to teach English at the State Language School. He was the master interpreter of the home seminars with British lecturers. He returned to the Faculty of his student years in late eighties to become member of the Faculty of Arts strike committee and then of the Civic Forum. In 1989–1991 he held the post of Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Arts. He was a co-founder and the first manager of the Jan Hus Educational Foundation. He is one of the leading Czech specialists in non-profit sector management.

## **On the Occasion of the Late Roger Scruton's 80th Birthday Anniversary**

On the way to the historic town of Malmesbury, close to the place where Park's Lane and Noah's Ark intersect at right angles, there is a modest parish called Gardston. Shortly after high noon, the sun lurking behind the church tower slowly begins to shine on the tombstone of Sir Roger Scruton, who is buried in the small local cemetery. The cemetery is aptly within about fifty-minute walking distance from Scruton's home, the Sundry Hill Farm, where he lived until his death with his wife Sophia, daughter Lucy and son Sam. The British philosopher would celebrate his eightieth birthday this year.

Scruton is today mostly spoken of as a philosopher, writer, and political thinker. However, if you look at his life through a magnifying glass you will immediately notice a couple of peculiarities. First of all, the life of the British philosopher was considerably more varied when compared to most contemporary thinkers. Second, Scruton's activities did not end by formulating an idea, he nearly always immediately put the idea to practice as well. His interest in musicology resulted in composition of three operas. His interest in beauty in architecture led to a large-scale popularisation activity for BBC and work in the governmental architectural committee producing practical legislative proposals. His interest in environment protection made him buy and manage the above mentioned farm, which was his home for the last about thirty years of his life.

He showed the same approach in relation to his aversion to totalitarian regimes suppressing all personal freedoms you can think of and holding the citizens in permanent fear. Scruton's struggle against these regimes culminated by the establishment of the Jan Hus Educational Foundation, an organisation providing young students access to education and culture made inaccessible to them by the regime they lived under, from 1980 to the fall of the communist regime. In the liberal 1990s, Scruton, through this organisation and otherwise, significantly contributed to the restoration and restructuring of the Czech higher education in humanities.

I am currently doing doctoral research into these activities of his in Czechoslovakia in 1980's. Last year I was given several opportunities to study his private archives. When going

through his documents, more than once I had to stop and think to realise that Roger Scruton was no longer among us. Because for me, he is still alive and with us here. He lives through his books. He lives through the several generations of his students whom he, with the help of a number of other brave individuals, provided the opportunity to learn and acquire education in the hard times.

Roger Scruton can still inspire us today by his permanent inquisitiveness, desire for knowledge and passion for discussion. I honour his memory.

Martin Fiala



(photo by Martin Fiala)

**Martin Fiala** (1993), a doctoral student at the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, focuses his research interest on the life and work of Sir Roger Scruton, especially on his activities in the “normalised” Czechoslovakia.

## Jiří Gruša and Moravian Museum

The House of Jiří Gruša in Hudcova street in Brno is named after an outstanding personality of Czech cultural and political life. Jiří Gruša (Pardubice, 10 November 1938 – Bad Oeynhausen, 28 October 2011), a poet, writer, translator and diplomat, personally decided to donate his materials to the Moravian Museum in Brno, despite the fact that most of his life story was set in other cities, mainly Pardubice, Prague, Bonn and Vienna. However, he kept bilateral contacts with the Brno cultural scene and as Ambassador asserted establishment of closer relations between cities and regions, first between Brno and Bonn, and later between South Moravia and Lower Austria. For these merits he received the City of Brno Award for International Cooperation in memoriam in 2011.

Jiří Gruša graduated from the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, in philosophy and history. He began his career as editor of literary journals, e.g. *Tvář* (Face), *Sešity* (Textbooks), *Nové knihy* (New books), *Zítřek* (Tomorrow), where he published his works provoking the period's censorship. His novel titled *Dotazník aneb modlitba za jedno město a přítele* (A questionnaire or a prayer for one city and one friend) was published in a samizdat edition, Petlice, in 1976, which on 30 May 1978 became an excuse in face of the public for the author's arrest. He was released on 31 July 1978.

In 1980 Gruša received an invitation by MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, U.S.A., to a year's stay, in the course of which he was deprived of his Czechoslovak citizenship. After return from the U.S.A. he settled in Bonn, where he mainly wrote in the period 1983–1989.

After the Velvet Revolution, President Václav Havel appointed him Ambassador in the Federal Republic of Germany, where he stayed until June 1997.

In the period 1998–2004 he became Ambassador again, this time in Austria. As President of the International Pen Club, Jiří Gruša received several awards, including Honorary Doctoral Degree of European University in 2006, and regular membership in the European Academy of Science a year later. In 2005 he was appointed director of the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna. He held both posts until 2009, when he returned to writing.

Jiří Gruša left behind a large library, a number of manuscripts and other materials of literary and diplomatic nature, collections of photographs, received and sent correspondence and video and audio recordings. -rdh-



Jiří Gruša working (photo by Ivan Kyncl)



Jiří Gruša in front of the Embassy of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic (photo by Hans Windeck, Photoagentur)

## Web News

As the content of our collections grows, our web site list of personalities whose materials (of professional and personal nature) are deposited at our ODKAZ department keeps extending too. We have currently published more personality profiles (including photographs of samples from our collections), including profiles of Michael Dus, Božena Komárková, Milena Šimsová and Jan Trefulka. The column *Ze života oddělení* (From the life of the department) includes our memories of Joachim Bruss, translator and interpreter at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Prague, part of whose inheritance was included in the collections of the Moravian Museum last year. Bruss was, among other things, a close collaborator to Jiří Gruša. Thanks to that both estates offer a lot of mutually complementary texts and documents.

Publication activities form an integral part of the work of museum collection managers and because their volume has been growing over time, all references to individual articles, published exhibition catalogues and books have been concentrated in one place for better accessibility. You can find their list, arranged in a chronological order, in the *Publikace* (Publications) tab you will see newly added to the web site. -rdh-



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