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## CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND CHARTER 77

### HON. JAMES J. BLANCHARD

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 1977

Mr. BLANCHARD. Mr. Speaker, several days ago Ms. FENWICK and I wrote to the Czechoslovak ambassador to protest that country's harassment of dissidents who signed the "Charter 77" statement calling for the human rights guaranteed by the Helsinki agreement.

On January 31, 1977, I received a reply from the ambassador, Dr. Jaromir Johanes, enclosing a press release from the Czechoslovak embassy. The release included statements from a number of Czechoslovak citizens denouncing the "Charter 77" statement and referring to it as "slanderous" and "right-wing" in character.

In order that those of my colleagues who are interested in this matter may judge the document for themselves, I am including it in the RECORD.

[From the New York Times, Jan. 27, 1977]  
MANIFESTO CHARGING RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN  
CZECHOSLOVAKIA

(NOTE.—Following is the text of Charter 77, a Czechoslovak human-rights manifesto cited by the State Department yesterday as evidence of rights violations. It was translated by and published in the current issue of *The New Leader*, dated Jan. 31.)

Law No. 120 of the Czechoslovak Collection of Laws, published October 13, 1976, includes the text of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both signed in behalf of our Republic in 1968 and confirmed at the 1975 Helsinki Conference. These pacts went into effect in our country on March 23, 1976; since that date our citizens have had the right, and the State has had the duty, to abide by them.

The freedoms guaranteed to individuals by the two documents are important assets of civilization. They have been the goals of campaigns by many progressive people in the past, and their enactment can significantly contribute to a humane development of our society. We welcome the fact that the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic has agreed to enter into these covenants.

Their publication, however, is at the same time an urgent reminder of the many fundamental human rights that, regrettably, exist in our country only on paper. The right of free expression guaranteed by Article 19 of the first pact, for example, is quite illusory. Tens of thousands of citizens have been prevented from working in their professions for the sole reason that their views differ from the official ones. They have been the frequent targets of various forms of discrimination and chicanery on the part of the authorities or social organization; they have been denied any opportunity to defend them-

selves and are practically the victims of apartheid. Hundreds of thousands of other citizens have been denied the "freedom from fear" cited in the Preamble to the first pact; they live in constant peril of losing their jobs or other benefits if they express their opinions.

#### EDUCATIONAL CURES ARE CITED

Contrary to Article 13 of the second pact, guaranteeing the right to education, many young people are prevented from pursuing higher education because of their views or even because of their parents' views. Countless citizens worry that if they declare their convictions, they themselves or their children will be deprived of an education.

Exercising the right to "seek, receive and impart information regardless of frontiers and of whether it is oral, written or printed," or "imparted through art,"—Point 2, Article 13 of the first pact—can result in persecution not only outside the court but also inside. Frequently this occurs under the pretext of a criminal indictment (as evidenced, among other instances, by the recent trial of young musicians).

Freedom of speech is suppressed by the government's management of all mass media, including the publishing and cultural institutions. No political, philosophical, scientific, or artistic work that deviates in the slightest from the narrow framework of official ideology or esthetics is permitted to be produced. Public criticism of social conditions is prohibited. Public defense against false and defamatory charges by official propaganda organs is impossible, despite the legal protection against attacks on one's reputation and honor unequivocally afforded by Article 17 of the first pact. False accusations cannot be refused, and it is futile to attempt rectification or to seek legal redress. Open discussion of intellectual and cultural matters is out of the question. Many scientific and cultural workers, as well as other citizens, have been discriminated against simply because some years ago they legally published or openly articulated views condemned by the current political power.

Religious freedom, emphatically guaranteed by Article 18 of the first pact, is systematically curbed with a despotic arbitrariness: Limits are imposed on the activities of priests, who are constantly threatened with the revocation of government permission to perform their function; persons who manifest their religious faith either by word or action lose their jobs or are made to suffer other repressions; religious instruction in schools is suppressed, et cetera.

A whole range of civil rights is severely restricted or completely suppressed by the effective method of subordinating all institutions and organizations in the State to the political directives of the ruling Party's apparatuses and the pronouncements of highly influential individuals. Neither the Constitution of the CSSR nor any of the country's other legal procedures regulate the contents, form or application of such pronouncements, which are frequently issued orally, unbeknown to and beyond the control of the average citizen. Their authors are responsible only to themselves and their own hierarchy, yet they have a decisive influence on the activity of the legislative as well as executive bodies of the State administration, on the courts, trade unions, social organizations, other political parties, business, factories, schools and similar installations, and their orders take precedence over the laws.

#### POLICE ACCUSED OF SURVEILLANCE

If some organizations or citizens in the interpretation of their rights and duties, become involved in a conflict with the directives, they cannot turn to a neutral authority, for none exists. Consequently, the right

of assembly and the prohibition of its restraint, stemming from Articles 21 and 22 of the first pact; the right to participate in public affairs, in Article 25; and the right to equality before the law, in Article 28—all have been seriously curtailed.

These conditions prevent working people from freely establishing labor and other organizations for the protection of their economic and social interests, and from freely using their right to strike as provided in Point 1, Article 8 of the second pact.

Other civil rights, including the virtual banning of "willful interference with private life, the family, home, and correspondence" in Article 17 of the first pact, are gravely circumscribed by the fact that the Interior Ministry employs various practices to control the daily existence of citizens—such as telephone tapping and the surveillance of private homes, watching mail, shadowing individuals, searching apartments, and recruiting a net work of informers from the ranks of the population (often by illegal intimidation or, sometimes, promises), etc.

#### RIGHT TO TRAVEL IS VIOLATED

The Ministry frequently interferes in the decisions of employers, inspires discrimination by authorities and organizations, influences the organs of justice, and even supervises the propaganda campaigns of the mass media. This activity is not regulated by laws, it is covert, so the citizen is unable to protect himself against it.

In the cases of politically motivated persecution, the organs of interrogation and justice violate the rights of the defendants and their counsel contrary to Article 14 of the first pact as well as Czechoslovakia's own laws. People thus sentenced to jail are being treated in a manner that violates their human dignity, impairs their health, and attempts to break them morally.

Point 2, Article 12 of the first pact, guaranteeing the right to freely leave one's country, is generally violated. Under the pretext of "protecting the State security," contained in Point 3, departure is tied to various illegal conditions. Just as arbitrary are the procedures for issuing visas to foreign nationals, many of whom are prevented from visiting Czechoslovakia because they had some official or friendly contact with persons who had been discriminated against in our country.

Some citizens—privately at their places of work, or through the media abroad (the only public forum available to them) have drawn attention to these systematic violations of human rights and democratic freedoms and have demanded a remedy in specific cases. But they have received no response, or have themselves become the objects of investigation.

The responsibility for the preservation of civil rights naturally rests with the State power. But not on it alone. Every individual bears a share of responsibility for the general conditions in the country, and therefore also for compliance with the enacted pacts, which are as binding for the people as for the government.

The feeling of this coresponsibility, the belief in the value of civic engagement and the readiness to be engaged together with the need to seek a new and more effective expression, gave us the idea of creating Charter 77, whose existence we publicly announce.

Charter 77 is a free and informal and open association of people of various convictions, religions and professions, linked by the desire to work individually and collectively for respect for human and civil rights in Czechoslovakia and the world—the rights provided for in the enacted international pacts, in the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference, and in numerous other international documents against wars, violence and social and mental oppression. It represents a general declaration of human rights.

## FOUNDED ON A COMMON CONCERN

Charter 77 is founded on the concepts of solidarity and friendship of people who share a concern for the fate of ideals to which they have linked their lives and work.

Charter 77 is not an organization; it has no statutes, permanent organs or registered membership. Everyone who agrees with its idea and participates in its work and supports it, belongs to it.

Charter 77 is not intended to be a basis for opposition political activity. Its desire is to serve the common interest, as have numerous similar organizations of civic initiative East and West. It has no intention of initiating its own programs for political or social reforms or changes, but it wants to lead in the sphere of its activity by means of a constructive dialogue with the political and State authorities—and particularly by drawing attention to various specific violations of civil and human rights, by preparing their documentation, by suggesting solutions, by submitting various more general proposals aimed at furthering these rights and their guarantees, by acting as a mediator in the event of conflict situations which might result in wrongdoings, etc.

## CHARTER 77 LOOKS TO BELGRADE

By its symbolic name, Charter 77 stresses that it has been established on the threshold of what has been declared the year of political prisoners, in the course of which a meeting in Belgrade is to review the progress—or lack of it—achieved since the Helsinki Conference.

As signatories of this declaration, we designate Dr. Jan Patočka, Dr. Vaclav Havel and Professor Jiri Hajek to act as spokesmen for Charter 77. These spokesmen are authorized to represent Charter 77 before the State and other organizations, as well as before the public at home and throughout the world, and they guarantee the authenticity of its documents by their signatures. In us and other citizens who will join Charter 77, they will find their collaborators who will participate in the necessary negotiations, who will accept partial tasks, and will share the entire responsibility.

We trust that Charter 77 will contribute to making it possible for all citizens of Czechoslovakia to live and work as free people.

## TRIBUTE TO JOSEPH SCHECHTER

## HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 1977

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, at an honorary luncheon on February 15, the Westside Jewish Community Center will commemorate Mr. Joseph Schechter's many years of devoted service. The occasion will mark the initiation of the 1977 United Jewish Welfare Fund Campaign, Mr. Schechter's favorite charity.

Now in his eighties, Joseph Schechter arrived in the United States from Besarabia, Russia, in 1898. He founded and successfully developed a metals and aluminum business. Since retiring in 1955, he has worked tirelessly to help and raise funds for community organizations. He has served as a member of the board of directors of the Westside Jewish Community Center, president of the center's senior adults board of directors, and on the Area Council on Aging for Los

Angeles City and County. As a volunteer staff worker, Joseph Schechter has worked on almost all standing committees of the center. He is a zealous fundraiser for community services to young and old.

For Joseph Schechter's present and past value to us as a most exemplary citizen, I am proud to commend him to you. It is a privilege to do him honor, and to look forward to having the benefit of his help for many years to come.

## PERHAPS NOW, POST CARD REGISTRATION

## HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 2, 1977

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, in our last election over 80 million Americans participated in the exercise of democratic freedom by casting their ballots. While that is a record number, there still remain approximately 70 million people who, while eligible to vote, do not do so because of various bureaucratic barriers placed there by the States.

A short while ago, I introduced H.R. 2347, a bill which would establish through the Postal Service a system of post card voter registration. This legislation would make it easier and more convenient for Americans to exercise this most basic of rights. It is my belief that if this bill or the concept embodied therein, were to become law, the result would be a much stronger Republic as more Americans would participate in the process of selecting their elected representatives.

Organized labor has been one of the principal supporters of a universal registration system. They have been instrumental in bringing about registration by mail systems in several States throughout the country. From the research that I have been able to ascertain, the 16 States that have adopted registration by mail statutes in the last 2 years, the experience has laid to rest many of the arguments employed by those who argue against a universal post card registration law. This is not to say that my bill or any legislation similar to it would be completely free of any fraud. However, I maintain that if we are to achieve the goals that our Founding Fathers envisioned for us, then it is up to us as the people's representatives to work tirelessly to make the system fraud-free and thus insuring the validity of the results.

In the January 24 issue of Newsweek, Alexander Barkan, the national director of the political arm of the AFL-CIO, sets out the reasons why the Congress must enact a universal registration statute. I believe that the arguments put forth by Barkan are indeed worth sharing with my colleagues, as this Congress will most certainly take up the issue of post card registration. In that regard, I would hope that you would read the following article, and study my legislation on the subject. Mr. Barkan's comments follow:

## THE MYTH OF VOTER APATHY

(By Alexander E. Barkan)

We've just come through a national election. Many concerned with it were preoccupied not so much with the question of who would win but whether anybody would show up. "What if we held the election," they asked, "and nobody comes?" As many bets were placed on the come-out as on the outcome. Newspaper headlines and other media comments on "apathy" in the Presidential race were so common some thought it must be a third-party candidate.

That's a joke. Apathy, voter frustration and mistrust are quadrennial stories, dusted off in Presidential-election years. I'm convinced they're inflated. Almost always in an election year, voter interest is slow to generate. While the media and the candidates are all in a dither and immersed in political matters, voters—many of them—keep one eye on the pennant races, the World Series, other concerns. In the last few weeks, their interest picks up perceptibly, then peaks in the final days of a campaign.

One problem is that by then registration in all but a few states has closed out—and millions of citizens have not registered. Meanwhile, millions of others have been discouraged from registering by archaic laws that make registration at least inconvenient and often a challenge to one's ingenuity and perseverance. A postelection New York Times poll found large numbers failed to register because "it was too hard for them."

## PERFORMANCE

It's been too hard for too many too long, and the labor movement believes it's high time to erase the pointless laws that limit voter participation. It is time to enact a universal voter-registration law. The Federal government should take on the responsibility of registering voters. Our people will vote if it's made easier for them.

This year, approximately 150 million Americans were of voting age and eligible. About 70 per cent, or 105 million of them, were registered. On Nov. 2, more than 80 million voted—which was a record number, if not percentage.

So, almost 80 per cent of those who were registered voted. Not so bad, and good enough to suggest that millions more would have turned out had they been able simply to get in line Election Day and make their choice known.

Strong evidence undergirds this belief. In Wisconsin, a recently enacted state law permits voters to forget about registration entirely, just walk up on Election Day, provide a driver's license or other proof of age and residence and go into the booth and pull the levers. About 200,000 unregistered Wisconsinites voted Nov. 2, creating an actual increase in voting participation over 1972. Voter participation was 10 points above the national average of 54.4.

In Minnesota, the case was made as compellingly. Under a similar state law, more than 22 per cent of the 1.9 million persons who voted had not registered beforehand. Minnesota's voting performance of 75 per cent-plus was 7 points up from 1972 and more than 20 points over the national average. Walter Mondale's presence on the national ticket surely helped, but not that much.

## REGISTRATION BY MAIL

In neither Wisconsin nor Minnesota was there fraudulent voting. Administrative headaches, if any, were minor. It cost nothing extra.

As an interim step to universal registration, the trade-union movement has supported enactment of registration-by-mail laws. In the past two years, sixteen states have adopted them. In most, experience with the law supports the belief that they're a step in the right direction. In Texas, Ten-