



## continuous conversion

by Jaroslav B Tusek

### A BRIEF MEMORY NOTE OF MY FATHER, JUDR JAROSLAV TUSEK

*I put together hastily, after my father's funeral in August 2001 in Prague, Czech Republic, the following assemblage of personal thoughts and recollections of my father. I did not use any documents, personal notes, diaries or other printed materials but simply composed this note based on my own recollections. (Matthew 11: 27). I updated it for the 96th anniversary of my father's birth in January 1912. This is Part I of my memory note of my father; Part II will be in the September 2008 issue of continuous conversion.*

#### CITIZEN OF SEVEN LANDS

Without ever leaving Prague, my father, Jaroslav Tusek, became a citizen of seven entirely different countries in his lifetime. My father was an attorney (advokat) in Prague, Czech Republic. The son of Josef Tusek, foreman for a telephone company from Kostelec nad Labem, and Antonia Budinova from Krinec, he was born on January 24, 1912 in Prague. He lived in Prague almost to the age of ninety; he died there on August 16, 2001.

#### AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN EMPIRE TO FREE AND DEMOCRATIC CZECHOSLOVAKIA

When my father was born, Prague was part of the **Austro-Hungarian Empire**. Till the age of six he lived and received his education within the constraints of the Habsburg monarchy, as a Catholic child of a couple who had just moved to Prague from the Bohemian countryside.

From 1918 to 1938 he was a citizen of the newly-created country of **Czechoslovakia**, consisting of Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia and Zakarpathian Ukraine. This country emerged from the ruins of the Habsburg dual monarchy after the end of WWI.

I believe these were the best years and times for both my father and my mother, who was born in 1921. They were times of hope, prosperity, affluence, freedom, democracy, youth, vigor and glory.



*A happy moment in 2000 at the Tusek home in Prague. From the left, Jarda, his sons Zdenek and Jarda, and his wife Vera. Photo courtesy Kamil Kaderabek.*

#### A NAZI PROTECTORATE

From 1938-1945, following the Munich Agreement in 1938, my father belonged to the **Protectorate of Bohmen und Mahren**, part of the German Third Reich. During this time, he established his office as an attorney in Prague and also began his family.

My father married my mother, Vera Vendrova, when he was 28, in February, 1940, in Prague. Under her influence he changed his religion from Catholic to Czech Brethren Evangelical. I was born in 1941, a citizen of the Nazi Reich. My birth brought great joy to a family suffering the cruelties of war.

My father admired his mother-in-law, Ruzena Vendrova, who was a mature Christian lady from a long line of Christians in the Czech Brethren evangelical tradition, traced back to the 15th-century reformer Jan Hus. My grandmother Vendrova had a positive influence on the whole family during WWII. She kept her faith that the Lord would sooner or later deliver the world from the satanic forces of Adolph Hitler and Emperor Hirohito, through the joint action of American, British, Russian and other Allied forces.

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## AN ADMIRER OF PATTON

Even as the war raged in Europe, my father thought that, more than anyone, the American general George Patton was the man chosen by God for deliverance. “Patton will teach them a lesson or two,” he would say when the going got tough.

As a soldier in WWII, he reached the rank of the captain of the Artillery Division of the Czechoslovak army, and fought the Nazis during the Prague uprising in May 1945 (for which he became a decorated hero), only to be forgotten during the later Communist era, as were so many others who played a role in the liberation of their country from the Nazis.



*Judr Tusek and colleagues in 1976, long before perestroika and glasnost brought communism to its knees. Family photo.*

## POLITICAL FREEDOM RESTORED

For three years, after the end of WWII, he was a citizen of the restored **Czechoslovakia**, and, as such, voted consistently against the Communists. These years were yet another time of joy, hope, democracy and vitality. My brother’s birth after the war made our family’s joy complete.

When my brother Zdenek was born on July 15, 1945, my father became even more optimistic and enthusiastic about the future. He thought the time had come for rebuilding the country, with the help of the Marshall Plan, from the ravages of WWII, and for continuing the Czechoslovak experiment as a multi-national democratic society.

## COMMUNISM COMES TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA

But after the Communist takeover in February 1948, he became a citizen of the **Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia**, which was subservient to the Soviet Union. Moving ideologically from Adolph Hitler to Joseph Stalin, and experiencing

nearly forty years of tyranny and the Communist demolition-derby economy was not my father’s choice.

In fact, he never expected such a regime to last when it first came to being in 1948. [Perhaps neither did Moses expect at first that a journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, which should take (on foot) no longer than two weeks, would take his people 39 years.] I doubt thirty-nine years in the wilderness was Moses’ first choice, either.

## POLITICAL FREEDOM RESTORED—AGAIN

After 39 years of living in a Communist regime, my father became the citizen of yet another country and a new society – that of **post-communist Czecho-Slovakia**, a free democratic country established after the collapse of communism in 1989. But post-communist Czecho-Slovakia, which my father experienced as a retiree from his legal profession, lasted only about three years. In January 1993 my father became a citizen of the seventh nation-state entity established in this area of Central Europe during his lifetime, after a split negotiated with Slovakia. His country became known as the **Czech Republic**.

*(end of Part I. See September 2008 LTF for Part II)*

