

LaRouche: Why Czechs chose philosopher Havel

Jailed political prisoner Lyndon LaRouche addressed in a Feb. 22 statement why Czechs turned to a dramatist, Vaclav Havel, to be their President. Excerpts follow:

Yesterday, the 21st of February, 1990, the new President of Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel, addressed the U.S. Congress for about an hour. Vaclav Havel is not normally what one would think of as a professional politician; as a matter of fact, he's a dramatist, a leading playwright of Czechoslovakia, who went from imprisonment almost directly into the chair of the presidency in his own country. This might happen to me, for example, or more or less.

Vaclav Havel is a dramatist. He's not as great a dramatist by any means as a Friedrich Schiller. But he is a poet, in the sense that Shelley uses the term poet in his famous essay "In Defense of Poetry." And such poets are also philosophers in principle. They may not be systematic philosophers, profound philosophers, but poetry, and drama in the vein of poetry, performs a mission, the mission of philosophy. And Vaclav Havel partakes, perhaps not as a philosopher-king, but as a philosopher-president.

What we must understand from this is that the Czech people turned to such a philosopher for their President in this time. And they did so because during the period of the quiet resistance to the Nazi-like Soviet Communist occupation of Czechoslovakia, it was philosophy, in such forms as Havel's dramatic works, and so forth, which built up the national character of the Czech people as a whole and individually, to prepare themselves for the day of relative freedom.

It is not "money talking," it is not any of these stupid things that trade union hacks and others take for political reality, that count. What counts is philosophy, and it is to the extent that we are enabling people philosophically to understand the processes of which they're a part, as well as those coming down upon them, that we prepare a people to become qualified once again to govern themselves, as the United States, in the recent period, has not been so qualified to do.

The reason that fascism was able to superimpose itself upon the United States, in the form of George Bush's administrative fascism, or the fascism of Jimmy Carter, for example, which is what it really was, is because the American people had lost the fitness to govern themselves, because

they had lost contact with a kind of philosophical viewpoint which qualifies a people to govern themselves in a constitutional way.

Americans had become pragmatist, they'd become too preoccupied with "what do I get out of it personally?" "what does my constituency get out of it as a special advantage, in competition with other constituencies?" that kind of thing. The idea of a philosophical standpoint, which a people must share with their national leaders in order to have a mutual relationship of the type properly associated with the term self-government, that philosophical standpoint has been lacking. And what we have to do above all is by various devices to bring that philosophical viewpoint to people.

Poetry and the resistance movement

Poetry is a conception. Poetry is a way of looking at the world. Poetry expresses the spirit of science, it expresses it in metaphor. . . .

Reality lies not in that which deductive method identifies as the empirical proof of the theorem. Reality lies in the change, the mathematical discontinuity, which separates two deductive theorem-lattices, as a scientific revolution changes science pervasively, so that the old science represents the form of one deductive theorem-lattice, and the new, improved, corrected science, represents an entirely different deductive theorem-lattice. . . . And that which lies between, as *change*, is the focus. . . .

To the extent that speech is organized with grammatical formalism, neither of the two lattices . . . can describe the change.

Thus, in the use of language, we are compelled to resort to metaphor. The function of metaphor is to identify the change which lies between two such lattices, to bring the consciousness of that change to the fore as the substance, as the subject, of the poem. And that can only be addressed by a metaphor. . . .

This is the time for communicating metaphor to the people, metaphor which is understood as the substantive feature of change, as Plato's *Parmenides* dialogue refers ironically to the change.

This is the meaning of Shelley's essay "In Defense of Poetry," that in periods of great revolutionary upsurge, when there is "an increase of power of imparting and receiving profound and impassioned conceptions respecting man and nature," then poetry becomes the only suitable language of communication of important ideas.

It is the transmission of poetry . . . that the important ideas are transmitted to a population—whether they seem to ingest them with acceptance or not—it is the preparation of a population with such philosophy, with such poetry, as in the case of Czechoslovakia's selection of Havel as President, that a people becomes qualified again to resume that which it has lost, the capacity to govern itself, and to select philosophers as its leaders.