

lated by Jiří Musil as a leading scholar and his reflections as an authority on the transition process will continue to be read by many. His work was celebrated in a Festschrift by Wendelin Strubel and Grzegorz Gorzelak *City and Region: Papers in Honour of Jiří Musil* [2008].

Jiří continued to write until he died. Those that knew him will remember those elaborate conversations that drew from sources as disparate as literature, architecture, art, and economics as well as sociology to open new insights into a changing world. In his later years he translated the work of Ernest Gellner and helped to continue the work that Gellner had begun in reflecting on the nature of nations and civilisations.

Jiří was devoted to his wife Eva, who predeceased him, but he leaves a daughter Hana and a grandson.

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Jiří Musil and the East European Origins of the New Urban Sociology

It must have been mid-September 1963. My train arrived from Budapest in the middle of the afternoon at Hlavní nádraží in Prague. This was my first ever trip to Prague. I had just joined the newly created Sociological Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and I was on my way to turn myself into a sociologist. I was 'trained'—it was not much of a training—as an economist at what used to be Karl Marx University of Economics, spent some time at the Hungarian Bureau of Statistics, where in its excellent library I began to read sociological literature and published in 1962 one not too exciting literature review on the 'sociology of leisure', which instantly turned me instantly into a sociologist. When on 15 March 1963 the Hungarian Communist Party finally decided that sociology is not a bourgeois pseudo-science anymore and let the Hungarian Academy of Sciences create a sociological research group, my 'gigantic oeuvre' (consisting of one article) could not be ignored, hence I received a part-time position in the Research Group. Our director, the wonderful András Hegedüs, did not quite know

what to do with me (he was a genuine populist, came from a small village in western Hungary, and loved only peasants cadres, and despised Buda hill gentries—though eventually we became good friends). Since I was a gentry boy from the Buda hills, he told me I have to become an urban sociologist. I did not know quite what that is. But I wanted to go to Prague and the Academy offered month-long stipends, so I applied for one and figured out that some sociological research was being done in an urban planning institute—called VÚVA—so I thought that might be a good start to my education in my new profession. Hence mid-September 1963, there I was at the railway station in Prague.

A young, tall, good-looking man was standing on the platform holding a sign with my name on it. We shook hands: 'Jiří Musil', my host introduced himself, in a deep, warm voice. That was the first day of a long friendship—we intended to celebrate our 50th anniversary in the summer of 2013 in Tatranská Lomnica and Grand Hotel Praha, where we met almost every Summer for the past 25 years.

Unlike me, Jiří was a trained sociologist and he was carrying out serious (though given the strict political controls over social research in Czechoslovakia at that time not very exciting) empirical research at VÚVA on questions like the distribution of the population in the urban space, housing . . . questions that urban planners could find useful. Jiří was a great host; during my month in Prague I visited him not only at his offices in VÚVA, but also in his home at Újezd 15, met his sweet, nostalgic wife, Eva—a soft-spoken translator of French literature—and their daughter Hana, who must have been in her early teens (or even younger) at that time. I got my first education in urban sociology from Jiří—and unexpectedly from a wonderful intellectual whom I met at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Ivan Sviták. (Ivan was a philosopher, but he knew Simmel and during our casual conversation gave me an unforgettable 'lecture' about the social psychology of urbanism. Ivan, a major figure of 'Marxist humanism', went into exile in 1968 and did not have a very successful academic career in Chico, California—so in 1990 he returned to Prague, where he passed away in 1994, remaining until the end as critical of the emergent new capitalism as he was of bureaucratic state socialism.)

That month in Prague and my conversations with Jiří gave me good direction as to which way I should go as an 'urban sociologist'. What I learned from him and Ivan Sviták was that space is consequential for social action and social organisation. The following autumn I got a Ford Fellowship and spent the 1964–1965 academic year in the United States, at Columbia and Berkeley—but with a stop-over in Chicago, where I had the good fortune to meet Ernest Burgess, the last major figure of the Chicago School still alive—and I read everything from and about the 'human ecology' of the Chicago School I could put my hands on. This was all about space-personality-social structure. Upon my return I even published a little book on the 'urban community', a review of the literature of the classical Chicago School.

I believe we next met when Jiří invited me to a conference outside Prague in 1968. By that time I was very much involved with George Konrád in empirical research on housing and urban social segregation. With Konrád we were also working for the Hungarian version of VÚVA—called VATI—an urban and regional planning organisation, and we were doing survey work on the spatial expressions of social inequality. Space and inequality: that was the focus of our work (many many years later I published in English a summary of this work under the title *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism* [1983]). I do not quite remember which paper I presented, but it must have been my work on housing inequality. We were around that time ready with our theory of urban inequality: we found that the administrative allocation of housing systematically privileged under socialism the already privileged social groups, high-ranking party and government cadres and professionals much needed for the socialist economy received ‘public housing’. Workers and peasants had to build their own housing for themselves, usually with their own labour, purchasing land and construction materials on the market. The ‘socialist city’ was not a city of equality. But ‘socialist cities’ were fundamentally different from ‘capitalist cities’ in the way inequality was generated. While under capitalism inequalities originated in the market, and redistribution (in the case of housing: public housing) counteracted such inequalities; under socialism inequalities were generated by redistribution (administrative allocation of housing) and they were reduced by market mechanisms. This conference was a memorable event for me; Jiří introduced me to his good friend Ray Pahl, who was also busily re-thinking what urban sociology should be doing and was already working on his formidable book *Whose City?* [1970]

Jiří, Ray, and I began to develop a new research agenda for urban sociology. In a way we were rediscovering the classical Chicago School. Ray resisted this idea—Chicago School in Western sociology was regarded as dead or even reactionary—but Jiří and I, since we were working for urban planners, found the Chicago School more relevant: like the Chicago school of Park and Burgess we were interested in ‘human ecology’, an urban sociology which focused on the space-social structure interaction, the unequal distribution of various social groups in space and their unequal access the scarce resources.

However, by the late 1930s and early 1940s the Chicago School had lost its steam. Following Louis Wirth it became a sort of urban social psychology (‘urbanism as a way of life’), which for a while attracted a lot of attention, but it lost its social and policy relevance. By the late 1950s and early 1960s—a time when sociology was politically radicalised—urban sociology found a new cutting edge, and it was race and ethnicity (Ruth Glass played a crucial role in this shift) that were important, but it lost its focus on ‘space’ and its emphasis on inequality lost the ‘class dimension’. Urban sociology became indistinguishable from the sociology of race and ethnicity.

Jiří, Ray, and I wanted to retain the critical edge of the discipline, but we wanted to bring back space and class into the picture. One of our important in-

spirations came from Herbert Gans, who in his path-breaking essay 'Urbanism and Sub-urbanism as Ways of Life' foreshadowed a new agenda for urban research: yes, space is relevant, but our dependent variable should be inequality, and space as an independent variable should be complemented by race *and* class. Pahl's *Whose City?* also asked a good question: who benefits from the action of urban planners? What is a good city? What is good urban planning? Good planning is that which after the intervention of the planner makes access to spatially unequally distributed scarce resources more egalitarian than it was before the intervention of planners. Jiří wrote a formidable paper around this time, a paper in which he in some ways revolted against the role he was assigned to at VÚVA. He contrasted 'sociology for planning' (what planners expected from us in VÚVA and VATI and similar institutions to do) with 'sociology of planning'. This was a programme to turn sociology from a servant of planning into the social critique of planning!

This all happened around 1968. It was the time of the Prague Spring. It was a time of a radical re-thinking of the social order, East and West. It was also a time of great hopes. Interestingly, it was a time when Western critical thinking was looking for Eastern inspiration. The year 1968 brought hopes together. In the West the yearning for more equality was matched by the desire for more freedom in the East. It was not socialism versus capitalism: we wanted to transcend this distinction, we were hoping to combine the socialist ideal of equality with the liberal (bourgeois/civic/bürgerlich) ideal of liberty. This was exactly the *big* idea of the Prague Spring. I remember Jiří telling me during the spring of 1968: we are not against socialism, we want socialism with a human face—what we want is freedom and equality.

Hence it is not surprising that it was in Prague during the spring of 1968 when Jiří, Ray, and I began to develop an agenda in this spirit for a 'new urban sociology'—a critical study of spatial inequalities. During the fall of 1969 we met at a small workshop in Budapest (Rainer Mackensen joined us from Germany) and we prepared the 'Budapest statement' (or 'manifesto'—I somehow lost the text, I do not even know the exact title), which was a call for a 'new urban sociology'. This came at the right time—urban researchers were ready for this initiative and in 1970 in Varna at the World Congress of Sociology we organised a successful session. A large number of sociologists joined us and we prepared a proposal to create a new research committee. This became Research Committee 21, Sociology of Urban and Regional Development. During the following years RC21 blossomed, wonderful scholars from Manuel Castells to David Harvey joined it, and RC21 created its journal, the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Development*. We organised annual conferences, and had some of the best attended sessions every fourth year at ISA World Congresses.

While our initiative for a new urban sociology marched forward victoriously, both Jiří and I faced painful problems in our personal and professional lives. As the dream of the Prague Spring faded away Jiří was faced with the di-

lemma: should he stay in England where he had many friends and good job prospects, or should he return to Prague where hopes for greater liberty were lost? After a great deal of soul searching he returned to greying Czechoslovakia, to his beloved Prague, the only city Eva could imagine her life in. Jiří had to pay a price for his love for Prague: rigid censorship limited the scope of work he could do, post-1968 Czechoslovakia was not welcoming to 'sociology of planning'. This was the most difficult personal and professional decision in his life. My life took a different turn. After 1968 Hungary was also becoming politically more rigid (the conditions were never quite as bad as in the Czechoslovakia of Gustáv Husák) and I went in the opposite direction. I was radicalised intellectually and politically, so in 1975 I had to leave my beloved Budapest with my wife and three children—with a one-way exit visa.

For many years we did not even see each other, but we started to rebuild our friendship during the 1980s. It must have been in 1982, when I was first allowed to return to Hungary that we met again. He came to visit me in Budapest and we agreed we would meet regularly at Tatranská Lomnica for a couple of days every summer. We both loved the High Tatras and we both had 'property rights claims' on it. After all, it was Czechoslovakia, Jiří's country (he also spent summer vacations there as a child) so he wanted to be my host, welcome me and show me around. But the High Tatras were also mine: my father was born at the feet of the High Tatras in the city of Kežmarok and the bones of my ancestors were buried under those grounds for seven hundred years. For some curious reason I felt I know every stone in the Zips—and in interesting ways I did; I navigated the streets as if guided by the spirits of my great-grandfather. So we both were at home and we both were strangers. Jiří as a committed Czechoslovak patriot was at home, this was his country (after the breakup of Czechoslovakia he painfully recognised—though as the last Czechoslovak patriot never accepted—that this is now a different country), but he was in a way a stranger too: his mother was the daughter of a Russian Orthodox priest and his father a Czech Jew, who met his mother in Siberia as he—as a member of the Czech Brigade—was escaping the Red Army. I was a stranger: carried a Hungarian, an Australian, and a US passport and spoke a few dozen words of Slovak, nevertheless I was at home since my father and his ancestors way back to the 13th century were Zipser patriots, and after all we were in Spiš, in Zips. This led us to fascinating conversations about nationalism and ethnicity (Jiří was a great admirer of Ernest Gellner and became intensely interested in these questions) and history. For me the Austro-Hungarian Empire of Franz Joseph were the golden years, for Jiří, the Czech nationalist, they were the decades of oppression (though as post-communist politics showed its uglier faces over time Jiří began to appreciate more the operetta liberalism of *der Kaiser*).

Jiří was a sober optimist. I never remember him to have been bitter. He had the talent to spot the light at the end of the tunnel—he could identify the 'upside' in situations which were dominated by 'downsides'. He intensely disliked

Husák's Czechoslovakia, but he patiently explained to me the essence of the post-1968 Czechoslovak compromise between the state and civil society: 'You keep out of politics and we won't interfere in your personal life. You do not have to work hard, nevertheless we offer you security, acceptable living standards, steady jobs, a bearable health-care system, and you can drive your Škoda to your vacation home at the week-ends and live your life the way you want to live it. We Czechs, we are petty bourgeois, we value security and freedom; you Hungarians are entrepreneurial; we make reforms you do revolutions.' As a social democrat he was sceptical of Kádár's goulash communism: 'look at what they do to the pensioners—all that old people can afford to buy in Budapest supermarkets are chicken-legs'. 'But you need more entrepreneurship'—I tried to challenge him; 'Well you need more equality and security'—he responded. We were both right and, of course, none of our countries got enough of either equality or liberty from post-communist capitalism, which turned out to be far too unequal and does not offer much security—and provides much less liberty than we—even me, the eternal sceptic—hoped for.

During the summer of 1990 Jiří was full of optimism: now real freedom had arrived. I was suspicious: I saw dark clouds on the horizon, I suspected the Latin-Americanisation of Eastern Europe, I saw dubious characters from the pre-war system reappearing on the scene and restoring the pre-war racist and authoritarian rule and ideology (I can only wish I had been wrong all along). He was a Czech and he was an optimist; I was a Hungarian and I was a pessimist. After the first free elections in 1990 in Hungary I wrote an article to the Hungarian daily newspaper, I believe, in *Népszabadság*: 'We are sitting in a theatre. After 45 years the curtain goes up and what do we see on the stage: it is a scene from 1944—as if nothing had changed over the past 45 years'. Jiří, unlike me, embraced the new liberal idea (though he never fully abandoned a social democratic commitment to egalitarianism) with the enthusiasm of a teenage boy. While I was a sceptic about the macro conditions in post-communism, I understood he had finally arrived in the harbour. I told him: Jiří, finally you can write your great book!

It is a digression, but I have to insert here a short paragraph—after all this is a portrait of Jiří Musil the man, not only Jiří Musil the sociologist—about his charming boyish character. Even at the age of 84 he retained the spirit and energy of a teenager: he tended to be optimistic and romantic, I would even say naïve: 'yes, yes, let's do it . . .'. And he could laugh like a 16-year-old. Let me add here an anecdote to illustrate what I am getting at. In 1994 or so I invited him for a visit to UCLA. I was about to run the Big Sur marathon that week-end and we invited him to join us in Carmel. This was planned as a family event (all my children and grandchildren would join us). I was foolish enough not to book hotel rooms in advance and of course since the marathon was on there were no rooms available. Finally we found *one* room which four of us had to share: Jiří, me, my wife Kati and my son Balázs, who at that time was already a PhD student. Jiří and Balázs are eternal teenagers. They were having fun at night, jumping up and down the

bed—I have photos of Jiří in his pyjamas laughing his head off. I wanted to sleep to be ready for the 26.2 miles next morning. No way—not with spiritually two teenagers in the room.

While the great book was never written—the opportunity came just too late in life—after 1990 he had the life (and career) he deserved. He was elected as the first director of the post-communist Institute of Sociology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and finally from the marginality of VÚVA he found himself at the academic centre of his profession. He also became one of the founding fathers of the Central European University and he was charged with building the Prague branch of the CEU. This after a promising start withered away mainly for reasons beyond his control, but for many years he commuted to the Budapest campus to teach there and when he retired the CEU took good care of him. When he turned 80 his colleagues organised a wonderful international conference for him in Prague—Jiří, Ray, and I had our last reunion. Jiří was happy, though Eva, already very ill, could not attend the event. Soon after the celebrations we lost Ray (I wrote his obituary. Once in Tatranská Lomnica I told Jiří: you should write my obituary; he responded: you will write mine . . .) and he lost Eva. But he found wonderful Helena, a friend of Eva (Jiří whispered to me: ‘she is four years my senior, just like Eva was, but is she not amazing, isn’t she?’ Yes, she was and she is amazing), who became his companion for the remaining years of his life.

We met for the last time in Tatranská Lomnica during the summer of 2011. Jiří was already struggling with cancer but his spirits were still unbroken. I was bitching about the Euro-crisis, but Jiří had no doubts about the radiant future of the European Union. We did our usual tours, visited the church in Javorina, we ate our usual cabbage soup for lunch in the small tavern we stopped by every year in Ždiar, and we visited the graveyard of my ancestors in Kežmarok. He even braved swimming two laps in the pool of Grand Hotel Praha under the supervision of Helena. I wanted to treat them to a flashy dinner in the new five-star Austrian hotel at Štrbské Pleso, we even drove all the way to Štrbské Pleso, but he fell ill so we had to return to Tatranská Lomnica, though a bit later in the evening he joined me in the bar for a *pivo* [beer] and *borovička* [Juniper brandy], no matter how much Helena disapproved it. We both suspected we might not meet again in Tatranská Lomnica.

In 2012 I went to Kežmarok and Tatranská Lomnica very early in June. Jiří told me he could not travel any longer, but asked me to visit him in Prague. So I arrived in August 2012 one day in the early afternoon at Hlavní nádraží in Prague, almost exactly 49 years after my first visit. Nobody was waiting for me on the platform. I paid a ridiculously high fee for the taxi—a mafia is running the taxi company at the railway station; they charged something like 30 USD for any, even the shortest trip in Prague—to take me to the splendid Prague Palace Hotel just a few blocks from the station. The plan was for us to go to a French restaurant near Újezd 15. I was yearning for the reunion—which I suspected may be our last one—and I was afraid of it. First I went to the bar to have my *pivo* and *borovička* so

I would have the courage for the meeting, then I took a taxi to Újezd 15. On our way accidentally we passed by the building where VÚVA used to be. Újezd 15 was all so familiar. Not much had changed during the last 50 years. The house still had its nostalgic socialist decay, situated carefully between a slum and a bourgeois apartment house (just like my apartment house in Budapest). Helena opened the door, Jiří rushed from his room to meet me in his bathrobe. He was still the 16-year-old boy full of enthusiasm, though in slower motion, pretending to be 84 and dying. He had just fallen the other day and could not go to the restaurant, but Helena was taking care of us. She indeed served us a superb dinner—starting with a wonderful Prague ham—and we continued our 49-year-long conversation. Jiří was still full of plans, he was writing about the history of Czech sociology and asked me to send him the book by my son Balázs on Zipser cities—he wanted to review it. I did not ask him about the great book, I knew it would remain unwritten.

I believe we both deserved to have been born in better times in better places. As usual he probably talked a little too much and may not have listened at all. More often than not, when he asked a question, he did not wait for the answer, he gave his answer. Around 9 pm we had exhausted our usual items of conversation. I had the urge to get out. ‘You seem to be tired, you need a rest’—I told him, and he graciously agreed. We embraced each other and I said to him: ‘Promise me next year in Tatranská Lomnica . . . or Jerusalem’. We laughed for the last time. Now it must be Jerusalem. Three weeks later he passed away.

I do not know whether Jiří Musil was a great sociologist. By all likelihood he was not (neither am I)—only time can tell. But he was a Mensch and a wonderful, warm, loving individual. Born in terrible times in a terrible place, he achieved the most that could be achieved under the circumstances with as much integrity as possible. Had he been born in Ohio his publication list would be longer, the journals he published in would have been more prestigious, his publishing houses would have been higher ranked, and he would be getting more citations and many more entries in Google. Nevertheless, for both of us the peak of our careers as urban sociologists was between 1968 and 1970. At the time we were the midwives to the birth of the new urban sociology, a new research agenda of urban research which could not have happened without his input from Eastern Europe.

Rest in peace—you deserve it, my dearest Jiří!

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