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**Eda Kriseová and her Prophecy of the Velvet Revolution:
“The Gates Opened” (1984)**

Hana Waisserová.

This is an introduction to a story, “The Gates Opened,” which serves as a memento of a restrictive regime that banned freedom. It also shares a hope and vision that the gates would open someday—and all would be liberated (despite the chaos and lack of natural order). The story was written in 1984 (sharing a strong symbolic value with George Orwell’s masterpiece). Eda Kriseová shares this anecdote: Around 1984, she wanted to stop writing about the mental institution where she was working, while regularly providing a story to the underground monthly *Obsah*, and many of her stories were set in the mental asylum. This story thus seems to close this one line of imagination offering the grand finale—when the gates opened. In Eda Kriseová’s own words: “Perhaps, it was an allegory for the forthcoming 1989—perhaps it was a prophecy. The whole country turned into a madhouse, and everyone was able to be free and be freely mad. Humankind went crazy in those days—so the story continues.”¹ This introductory essay is followed by an artifact: a typed translation of the *samizdat* story that had not yet been published. Later, the samizdat Czech version was extended and published by Sixty-Eight Publishers in Toronto in 1991, and finally in *Mladá Fronta* in Prague in 1994.² This English translation was never published, but it was presented at public readings. A similar fate and complicated textual history is shared by much *samizdat* writing. However, this unpublished translation serves as a fascinating artifact illuminating some of the absurdities of dissident writers’ lives, for various reasons: typed texts were a witness of the physical strains of the unpublished literary culture. Typists actually damaged their fingers by having to hit the keys hard enough to type six to twelve carbon copies at once. Eda Kriseová would type the first version for “*kvartály*” (literary meetings nicknamed by Ludvík Vaculík), and she confessed that she was extra aware of the length of the story, as she had to re-type it and bring the copies for the meeting of the circle of the writers in the required number of copies. It was hard and even frustrating to get it done. For example, if she inserted the carbon paper incorrectly between the onionskins, it would mistakenly copy the text on the back of the sheet and spoil the whole batch. Therefore, the text is not only a powerful memento, but also a powerful physical artifact. Originally, it was typed for samizdat. Gerald Turner translated the story into the English version presented here. Eda Kriseová edited this typed copy of the English version for a public reading in front of an English speaking audience. (As noted, the Czech version was extended and published in the exile publishing house, and eventually in Prague.) She marked the English translation for practical reasons—as notes to herself on pronunciation and pauses for easier public reading.

¹ In private correspondence in October 2018.

² Eda Kriseová, *Co se stalo*—, (Toronto: Sixty-Eight Publishers, 1991), Eda Kriseová. *Co se stalo*—: 1981-1987, 1st edition in Czech Republic, (Praha: Mladá fronta, 1994).

Eda Kriseová joined Vaclav Havel to the Castle since the very beginning as one of his top administrators, and both alike were eventually again able to publish in their own country!

Introduction

Eda Kriseová lived a good part of her life behind the Iron Curtain. In many ways that felt like living in a barred madhouse and wishing that “the gates would open,” as they had opened during the short thaw in the late 1960s that led to the Prague Spring. During that time she traveled to Turkey, Japan, and Israel as a volunteer on development projects and as a social journalist, which helped her to comprehend both democracies and developing worlds alike—the world outside the Soviet buffer zone. During her travels and at work, she encountered various scenarios of social justice, compassion and social responsibility—values that are central to her stories, since those values were not nourished under socialism and its “life in a lie” that was bursting with many paradoxes, injustices and restrictions.

During the political and cultural awakening of the Prague Spring and under the shadow of the high hopes of the Prague Spring, she left *Mladý svět*, one of the leading journals, although she was an award-winning social journalist for her work there. She was invited to join the most progressive intellectual platform, which helped to shape the views of many Czech people, and which hastened the Prague Spring pro-reform movement: *Listy*. This magazine was banned half a year later, in April 1969.³ Soon after that, Kriseová was blacklisted. This meant that no one would publish her articles; journals and newspapers stopped communicating with her. She became one of the “forbidden ones” and was denied any work for some time; she became alienated professionally and publicly. Yet these difficult times happened to become major formative moments in her life, inasmuch as she refused to compromise her moral integrity despite all the pressure. That attitude stayed with her for the rest of her life and helped her to navigate through troubled waters later on. Learning her lesson from the Czechoslovak totalitarian experience, she never developed a tolerance for populism, demagoguery, and lies; she maintained her lifelong solid civic attitudes.

From Journalist to Novelist Writing about a Mental Asylum

During the early phase of the writing ban, she felt devastated and frustrated. First, she became a victim of the regime’s need to target artists and intellectuals, who gave voice to freedom and reflection. Ivan Klíma, himself a persecuted journalist and writer from the same intellectual circle,⁴ summarized the era and the attack on intellectuals and culture in this way:

³ The last piece she was working on when *Listy* was banned was an article on the death and legacy of Jan Zajíc, who self-immolated himself in protest, following the example of Jan Palach.

⁴ They both published in *Listy*, and joined the *Obsah* circle later.

The early seventies were a turning point for both powers-that-be and for Czech culture. The regime decided to break those who, in their eyes, represented the culture, even at the cost of destroying the culture altogether. For their part, the members of intellectual élite decided that they would rather be destroyed than have anything to do with this indelibly tarnished power.⁵

Eda Kriseová was included among this group. In this sense, Kriseová stresses the need for personal connections and networks that made life bearable. She was a part of the regular writers' gathering of the *Obsah* circle,⁶ which helped her to stay creative and keep on writing. The gatherings were also a great escape from the manual jobs that many intellectuals had. Over the years, they would gather for readings, home theater, home lectures, seminars, exhibitions, and concerts organized in their apartments, or in other unconventional spaces.

Yet, in the aftermath of the crushed Prague Spring there were other journalists and intellectuals who were undecided or intimidated, who were willing to signal that they approved of the Soviet Invasion, in order to preserve their jobs. The regime needed the support of intellectuals in a land with civilized and intellectual traditions:

The appearance of being cultured and civilized is particularly important in the Czech lands, where centuries of national and cultural repression have made culture and especially literature popular and highly respected. The powers-that-be needed poets to cloak their intentions and actions in verse. They even needed Archimedes in whose circles they could enmesh people. But they needed them pliant, or even broken... The powers-that-be were usually able to win over a part of the intellectual elite through promises, bribery, concessions and sometimes even by force.⁷

Eda Kriseová shared the surprising advantage that she didn't even have to deal with the dilemma of being compromised, because—as a result of her previous working experience and her prominent profile—she would not even have been asked to join a paper or receive other professional job offers. She came to terms with the fact that her career as a journalist was over.

⁵ Klíma, Ivan. "Culture versus Totalitarianism." *The Spirit of Prague: and Other Essays*. Granta: New York (1994): 111.

⁶ This underground magazine was the most prominent underground cultural platform, published from the beginning of 1980s until 1989, in about fifty or hundred copies. It was initiated by circle of Ludvík Vaculík and writers around *Petlice* (Padlock) samizdat edition. It published poetry, short stories, essays, feuilletons, translations, and various articles on history, music, and politics. Among contributors were Petr Kabeš, Jan Trefulka, Milan Uhde, Ivan Klíma, Ludvík Vaculík, Alexandr Kliment, Karel Pecka, Miroslav Červenka, Eva Kantůrková, Sergej Machonin, Lenka Procházková, and Věra Jirousová. Václav Havel was soon imprisoned for four-and-half years; thus, he could not participate for long.

⁷ Klíma, Ivan. "Culture versus Totalitarianism." *The Spirit of Prague: and Other Essays*. Granta: New York (1994): 111.

Being “a class enemy” meant no work for a while, and that she and her family faced material hardship. She even remembered times when they could not afford a little slice of ham for their small daughter, since her husband, Josef Platz, was still a student in film studies, and she was unable to keep her promise that she would be the one to earn their living, allowing Josef to finish his studies. Nevertheless, like other intellectuals who did not wish to compromise, she somehow had to get by and reinvent herself in order to add meaning to her suddenly evaporating professional life. Nevertheless, those in “the moral ghetto” also expressed solidarity, helped each other out, and soon created a support network that would reach out to the persecuted and their families.

Writing was empowering, and helped the crushed writers who were working at odd and manual jobs not to feel broken; it helped Eda Kriseová to communicate with other intellectuals and a secret readers’ network, and it provided her with purpose. In her public existence, she was surrounded by fear, anxieties, and compromises; many had their hopes crushed, and were skeptical about the possibility of change. People became trained to be afraid, distrustful, and suspicious of each other, passive, and many had withdrawn into their private sphere. Eda Kriseová did not wish to join such a mode of living. She, like other intellectuals, needed to retain her voice, her space, to lead a meaningful life. She mentioned: “Any day lived in a decent way was a victory over the regime.”⁸ Similarly, she used writing as her private space, which has all the freedoms that the outside world was lacking. She confessed:

Writing saved my life because it gave a sense of purpose to my life... I am happiest alone—when I can feel connected to life, connected beyond religion. When I am able to reconnect with the basis of life, and to create. When I can write.⁹

Creative writing became “a room of her own” for Eda Kriseová, a safe space in which she could speak her unbroken voice, where she could be true to herself, where she felt connected. Writing provided her with the space in which she could live in the truth, where she could feel detached from the so-called “life in a lie” that was taking place in the world around her. In her writing, she also projected her realities, visions, observations and reflections. Life in a mental institution became her topos for some time, and it culminated with “The Gates Opened.”

In “The Gates Opened,” she projects the paradoxes of living in a barred institution, such as the misery of a socialist employee like the chief doctor opposing the freedoms of patients, the paradoxes of loveless marriages and people’s restrictive lives in a restrictive regime that opposes the outlets of love and pockets of freedom within the institution. She suggests that a change of seasons may come one day—as in the dream that the gates have actually opened, creating a powerful image of freedom, yet the chaos that would replace the restrictive order.

⁸ Linková, Marcela, and Nadá Straková. 2017. *Bytová revolta: jak ženy dělaly disent.*

⁹ Interview with Hana Waisserová, summer 2016.

Writing Mad House

Eda Kriseová started writing fiction (shifting from journalism) at a time when she took refuge in the mental hospital outside of Prague where “The Gates Opened” takes place. She joined the large mental institution with about five hundred patients that was located in the former monastery of Želiv. The hospital was severely understaffed, and there were about forty patients assigned to each nurse. She was a volunteer, someone the patients could talk to. She was then twenty-eight years old. This experience with patients would be decisive for the future direction of her life. She confessed:

There were many serious cases. Some people spent twenty, thirty, or forty years there. I wanted to help them, but they helped me much more. First, I thought I would write social journalism, but that was nonsense, because I was not about to be published. So I started to write short stories about these completely forgotten people, the poorest of the poor. But it was very difficult; it was completely different to become a writer from being a journalist. The patients helped me a lot; they were like sources of surrealist poetry. They were creative and productive. They were old, and they would not be cured by the new kind of psychopharmaka. They unlocked my fantasy.¹⁰

Paradoxically, Eda found herself liberated in a place full of control, with bars on its windows, as she faced a new reality. Though she felt stripped of her freedom of expression, and stripped of the freedom to travel, paradoxically, she discovered a new sense of freedom in the imagination of those patients of the mental hospital. She was inspired by the patients, and she reinvented the meaning of her existence despite the omnipresent bars, prohibitions, locks and fences. She revitalized her sense of humanity and compassion, and she felt needed as well. Her first collections of short stories¹¹ reflect on her patients and their life stories. She remembers the time and its paradoxes: “Writing became my rescue island; it became my psychotherapy, and it helped me to overcome the worst moments of my life. Writing became an island where nobody can reach me, and only I can spoil the experience.”¹²

This new existence provided her with renewed purpose—she transformed herself from a published journalist into an unpublished writer (one who was eventually officially banned for twenty years). Earlier, she even tried to approach other publishing houses outside of Prague, but her name was too well-known. Eventually, she had three written manuscripts in her drawer before publishing the first one underground.

It took several years to establish the underground publishing scene. Ludvík Vaculík, her former colleague from *Listy*, asked her to provide her manuscripts for

¹⁰ Interview with Hana Waisserová, summer 2016.

¹¹ Eda Kriseová, *Křížová cesta kočárového kočího*. (Brno: Atlantis, 1990); Eda Kriseová, *Sluneční hodiny*. (Brno: Atlantis, 1993).

¹² Interview with Hana Waisserová, summer 2016.

the underground publishing press *Edice Petlice* (Padlock Editions).¹³ Each “edition batch” had about seven carbon copies, since a typewriter could not produce more.¹⁴ Her texts circulated among a handful of underground Czech readers, and eventually they were smuggled out of the country, and published in German in Switzerland, and in Czech in exile publishing houses abroad. The general Czechoslovak readership was not aware of her writing, since she enjoyed no promotion, recognition, or public readings. She even wrote two children’s books (*Terezka a Majda na horách*; *Prázdniny s Bosonožkou*) that were published underground and in London, and then smuggled back into her own country!

Becoming a Dissident

*You do not become a “dissident” just because you decide one day to take up this most unusual career. You are thrown into it by your personal sense of responsibility, combined with a complex set of external circumstances. You are cast out of the existing structures and placed in a position of conflict with them. It begins as an attempt to do your work well, and ends with being branded an enemy of society.*¹⁵

—Václav Havel

Eda Kriseová matches well with Havel’s understanding of a dissident, as one who does not become a dissident overnight—it is a gradual journey. Eda Kriseová became a dissident and was persecuted not for being vocally anti-Soviet, but for wishing to speak in her own uncensored voice. She was persecuted for her wish to enjoy the right of free expression. She notes: “I was sentenced to be a dissident. It was not my choice. When I was banned, and I started to publish with underground publishing houses, my books were smuggled across borders, and I became truly illegal.”¹⁶

Dissidence certainly meant violation of the unwritten social contract with the regime and the resulting isolation, yet the dissidents also attained a certain sense of

¹³ In the samizdat *Petlice* Press (1972-1990), Eda Kriseová published twelve texts: *Křížová cesta kočárového kočího* (no. 91, 1977), *Sluneční hodiny* (no. 119, 1978), *Perchta z Rožmberka aneb Bílá Paní* (no. 125, 1978), *Pompejanka* (no. 144, 1979), *Klíční kůstka netopýra* (no. 167, 1979), *Ryby raky* (no. 248, 1983, and no. 311, 1985), *Prázdniny s Bosonožkou* (no. 287, 1984), *Sedm lásek* (no. 310, 1985), *Bratři* (no. 312, 1985), *Arboretum* (no. 352, 1986), *Terezka a Majda na horách* (no. 367, 1987), *Co se stalo...* (no. 375, 1987). Re-editions of Eda Kriseová’s texts were published in other underground publishers such as *Krameriova Expedice* (1978-1990; organized by Vladimír Pistorius), and in *Expedice* (1975-1990; organized by V. Havel).

¹⁴ Eda Kriseová mentioned that some typists had the tips of fingertips and nails hurting from typing hard to get all the copies through, and typists such as Zdena Ertlová were harassed by the police.

¹⁵ Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” translated by Paul Wilson, *International Journal of Politics*, 15/3-4 (Fall-Winter 1985-86): 63.

¹⁶ Interview with Hana Waisserová, summer 2016.

moral authority, comfort and even joy that derived from their status as a dissident. Dissidents were forced to reinvent their own world, with their own special rules for human hierarchy, solidarity and social relations that allowed them to lead somewhat “normal lives” even while surrounded by “the abnormal.” This ability is sometimes labeled “the moral superiority” of dissidents; today it makes them distant from the majority, or they are perceived as some sort of moral elite (that differs from those who moved in the “gray zone” and others).¹⁷ Though dissidents’ moral credit is undeniable, yet dissidents such as Eda Kriseová have lived largely outside of institutional structures, distant from the public that learned to adapt for years. As many Czechs negotiate the past, and even justify their need to distance themselves from the dissidents, in this regard it is important to give enormous credit to women dissidents for creating a sense of normality for their families and friends. Moreover, as known from dissident narratives, women were apparently more crafty, intricate, adaptable, enduring, and performed better in active daily operations of lives in dissent in order to escape the attention and surveillance of the police—as women understood well the power of “life in truth.”

Eda Kriseová explained the philosophy of life that helped her to keep going:

I think life is something so precious that you are not allowed to let it be limited, to follow any limitations. I mean voluntarily. Of course, you can be put in prison, or worse things could happen. But still you may feel free. And I think to live a life and not to be satisfied with it is a great sin.¹⁸

Being at peace with one’s life is true for many other active dissidents as well. Living in the underground shaped and formed the lives of dissident women, and it pushed women to the limits, while providing them with newly defined space, a sense of solidarity and a sharing between men and women who happened to be together in the same boat. Paradoxically, some women rediscovered their full potential, even though they were *personae non gratae* who were denied public recognition, constantly harassed, persecuted and ostracized, and surrounded by fear and public hostility. Nevertheless, as with other dissidents, Eda Kriseová appreciates the solidarity of belonging to a persecuted yet eventually active and creative community that nourished sophistication, friendship, human decency, solidarity, knowledge, the arts, and striving to live in the truth.

When the Gates Opened

When “the gates” actually opened, Eda Kriseová was right in the middle of it all. In 1989, she joined the newly formed Václav Havel government for two-and-a-

¹⁷ The “gray zone” refers to the majority that managed to live rather normal lives, and would be positioned neither as active communists, nor as dissidents in opposition. See Jiřina Šiklová, Káča Poláčková-Henley, and Gerald Turner, “The “gray zone” and the future of dissent in Czechoslovakia,” *Social Research* (1990): 347-363.

¹⁸ Michael Long, ed. *Making History: Czech Voices of Dissent and the Revolution of 1989*. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), p. 69.

half-years as Secretary for Pardons and Paroles, and she witnessed much great energy, yet also much chaos, injustice, and many high hopes. Afterward she passed the office on to professional administrators and became a freelance writer. She has always remained a very active and engaged citizen, actively working toward civil society—she became a popular writer and public intellectual. In addition to those roles, she is a European, a cosmopolitan, and has travelled widely—as an unofficial cultural ambassador of Czechoslovakia and Europe. Her writing is universal, worldly, yet deeply personal and humane. As a former dissident, she doesn't like to be considered as part of institutionalized structures, and political parties, although she is regularly invited to many public readings, gatherings, campaigns, conferences, and talks, where she stimulates debates. Many of her readers frequently contact her, and her books enable many readers—of all generations—to identify and appreciate truth in their own lives. She has consciously been making a difference. As she confessed soon after the fall of the Iron Curtain, “My life has nothing in the middle, only heights and depths. It's a pendulum. I wonder what will come next. I very much miss writing and being alone. Now I could actually be earning some money for writing!”¹⁹

Besides publishing again, Kriseová was also able to fulfil her earlier passion for travel, and she has travelled to and written texts set in other European countries, in India and Africa.²⁰ She is not sorry for her experience—she has lived in interesting times, and she has a lot to write about; she has much to offer in her writing—a space in which she exercises and nurtures freedom and spells out her mature sense of deeply humane femininity, solidarity, and responsibility. In her latest texts, she reflects and meditates on the meaning of life, and on the significance of being a woman who has the ability to cultivate a spiritual and moral life. Her writing transcends current gender gaps, and traps. She is the model for today's grassroots movements as one who is able to inspire many on how to be a good citizen of the open society, on how to have a voice, as well as how to create and cultivate civic communities.

¹⁹ Eda Kriseová, “Czechoslovakia: Velvet Intuition, Interview with Eda Kriseova, Advisor to Vaclav Havel,” with Jill Benderly, *On the Issues Magazine*: Fall 1991, accessed April 20, 2017, http://www.ontheissuesmagazine.com/1991fall/benderly_fall1991.php.

²⁰ Eda Kriseová, *Čísi svět*. (Praha: Prostor, 2011); Eda Kriseová, *Necestou slečny H. a dnešní Afrikou*, (Praha: Prostor, 2010).

The Gates Opened

Eda Kriseová

About the author: Eda Kriseová studied journalism at Charles University, Prague, and became a reporter and editor of *Mladý svět* and *Listy*, two popular progressive journals on the eve of the Prague Spring. She has also travelled extensively, worked as a volunteer on projects for developing countries, and lived in a kibbutz in Israel. After the Russian invasion of 1968, the world was closed down for her, as was her profession: Kriseová was banned from publishing and was blacklisted; she naturally joined Prague's intellectuals in opposition—so called dissidents. Unable to get a job, she retreated out of Prague and worked as a volunteer in a small community mental hospital and started writing short stories, eventually publishing her works in underground literary revues and samizdat press, and in translation in the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, the United States, and Czech exile publishing houses. In 1989, during the Velvet Revolution, Kriseová was a member of the coordinating committee of Civic Forum (Občanské fórum), and she joined Václav Havel in his presidential office. She led the Department of Pardons and Paroles, but then resigned along with Havel prior to the Velvet Divorce and returned to writing and travelling. Since then, she has been a freelance writer, and public intellectual. Eda Kriseová's texts are found in many prestigious anthologies in English and German; her short stories and novels, including a biography of Václav Havel (1991; 1993), have been translated into seven languages. In 1991, after "the gates opened" the original version was expanded and it was first published in Czech in Toronto in the *Škvoreckýs' Sixty-Eight Publishers* in 1991, and finally in the Czech Republic in 1994. The English version has never been published. The translation copy presented here is from Eda Kriseová's personal archive, and it is unique for its typeset and additions. It seems to exist only in one copy, and we were unable to find the Czech original for the translator. Thus, consider this translation as unauthorized, as we were unable to trace the original version that would allow the translator to authorize his translation. Nevertheless, it is an authentic document and it serves as a powerful artifact for the reasons mentioned in the introduction. What better occasion to publish this prophetic story in *Kosmas* than in commemoration of the fall of the Iron Curtain "when the gates finally opened," which meant many authors like Eda Kriseová and Václav Havel could finally be published in their own country officially.

Eda Kriseová:

The Gates Opened

It was autumn. The roses were still in bloom, but the buds on the chestnut trees were already ^{beginning} shiny in the bright autumn sun. The nice thing about autumn is that things begin all over again before they are even finished. It is not until January that stiffness and ^{paralysis} paralysis sets in and spring feels further off than it did in November.

The ^{Chief Doctor} Superintendent has yet again put off moving into his new house for the winter. He also postponed it last autumn on account of the first increase in the price of heating-oil. And this year it went up again so he is staying in his cosy service ^{apartment} flat, where one of the patients, thank goodness, loads the boiler with bad brown coal. The ^{Chief Doctor's} Superintendent's wife suffers. She would sooner live in town somewhere and have a social life as in her younger days, but she knows she won't leave here alive. Seeing ^{that} her husband had ^{led} dragged her off to this jungle, she at least made him build her a house out of a foreign magazine. You may as well die of hard work as anything, the ^{Chief Doctor} Superintendent would repeat to himself as he lugged ^{bags} a barrow-load of cement, threw sand into the cement-mixer or gave a hand to the bricklayer. The patients would stare through the fence at the ^{Chief Doctor} Superintendent slogging away and were unable ^{to} not help him as it was against the rules. Patients are strong and physically fit, the ^{Chief Doctor} Superintendent is thin and he can no longer ^{straighten} straighten up on account of a slipped disc. He looks forward to death as a release and stays behind in the clinic until late at night. The ^{Chief Doctor's} Superintendent's wife complains that they have no family life. She sleeps alone in the marriage bed with a water-bottle to keep her warm. Towards morning, when the ^{Chief Doctor} Superintendent has fallen

asleep, his wife kicks the cold water-bottle in his direction as she no longer wants it. The ^{Chief Doctor} Superintendent then struggles with the icy monster until morning when the alarm-clock comes to his rescue and once more as always the actual nature of the monster is revealed.

The ^{Chief Doctor} Superintendent only stays home when his favourite daughter Danuška comes down from university. Danuška bundles her parents into her car, sitting them both in the back to stop them hassling her, and drives at sixty miles an hour along narrow lanes lined with apple trees. Her mother ^{bites} bites her hankie and the ^{Chief Doctor} Superintendent, I'm afraid to say, squeals with fright at every bend and begs Danuška to slow down; but she just tells him off for being late and making them miss the beginning of the film. The ^{Chief Doctor} Superintendent must put up with it; he must put up with his entire life, and sometimes it strikes him that putting up with things is much braver than fighting back. And yet those who fight are regarded as heroes while those who put up with things are thought of as cowards.

It had been like this ever since a new nurse appeared on the ward and the ^{Chief Doctor} Superintendent dusted down the wings he had long ago put away in the garden shed. The wings had been ^{fouled} fouled by the ^{hens} hens and pigeons but he gave them a cleaning, ^{preened} preened them and straightened out the feathers. And it looked as if he was about to unfurl his old wings and soar beak first into the sun when the nurse persuaded him to let them know at home what he was planning. His wife took leave of absence and they spent a long time analysing their marriage until there was no love left. Why couldn't he love her instead of a nurse who had had no qualms in taking a man away from his wife and a father away from his grown-up children. The ^{Chief Doctor's} Superintendent's wife promised to be nicer to him and she was. She increased her dose of amatory altruism and

he, ^{guilt stricken} | guilt-stricken, | ^a hung his wings up in the garden-shed ^{red} for the last time. It set him more firmly against the new house and the life he would live in it | for his own good until he died. It is the only way he will achieve, in his wife's words, spiritual integrity and peace of mind.

Things in the madhouse went on just as before. Mr Hora, one of the patients on the ^{admiral} toughest ward, attacked a doctor as she came along the corridor after collecting her salary. He ripped up her purse with her pay because he ^{wouldn't} can't stand synthetics. He had already ripped many a nurse's blouse and ruined leatherette slippers.

Alena, one of the ^{psychologists} psychologists, fell in love with her colleague Mirek. She explained that her relationship with him was compensation for the one she had not managed to live out | with her father. She's dependent on her father, that's her problem. Mike is dependent on his mother, that's his problem. His problem could be solved by her playing the maternal role, but that wouldn't solve her problem. What scope would she have for ^{revolution} ^{her problem} abreaction of her childhood dependence?

I asked her if Mirek loved her and ^{if} she loved him and she burst into tears. That showed me how unhappy she was and maybe why she was professionally engaged in creating human happiness.

The social worker came here that evening and I was pleased to see her. It ^{gets} is dark at six and the night is long. It is almost as if the house could not wait for dusk | in order to come alive. During the day it is quiet and peaceful but at night I hear footsteps, knocking, ^{shuffled} stifled laughter, the sound of ^{grouping} groping along the walls and ^{spinning up} squirming. Sometimes a guitar plays of its own accord. Outside a little owl ^{imitates} ^{down!} emits a banshee wail. I open the window and ^{yell} yell "shush", but it won't leave me.

I poured her a glass of wine. She is just the person I

wanted to see. She tells me that the ^{Chief Doctor's} ~~Superintendent's~~ best friend came from Prague to see him, a man by the name of Pergl, who pretends he has gone mad. The ^{Chief Doctor} ~~Superintendent~~ admitted him to his ward for the time being, and now Pergl is settled in and doesn't want to leave. The presence of his best friend is an embarrassment for the ^{Chief Doctor} ~~Superintendent~~, but Pergl begs him ^{to} fervently not to have him transferred as he is supremely happy in our establishment. He has already weeded all the ^{gardens} ~~rockeries~~ out of sheer ⁱⁿ gratitude and raked up all the leaves. He wants to hear nothing about his work or his family. He says that the family is an instrument for the exploitation of man ~~by~~ man and he never wants to go back to civilian life again.

"Let him stay here", the social worker urged the ^{Chief Doctor} ~~Superintendent~~, who was coming under pressure from the family. "He's happy here. The nurses are pleased to have someone normal here. Everyone's happy, Doctor, especially Pergl. Surely you wouldn't want to spoil it for them?"

The ^{Chief Doctor} ~~Superintendent~~ kept Pergl, ~~on~~. But each morning he wakes up with the thought: Lucky Pergl.

And so we go on chatting until late and the social worker complains to me that the madhouse is running out of tablets and every other day some patient ends up not getting his particular drug and that sets him off. Reactions to ^{tranquilizers} ~~atastatics~~ are very individual and totally unpredictable. It's the same with therapy: there's just no convincing some patients and they refuse to cooperate. There was wide-eyed Naděnka trying to teach the sexual deviants how children are born. She spent two hours carefully explaining it all to them and then some ^{deviant} puts up his hand and says the rest of them might have been born the way Mrs Naděnka explained, but he was brought by the stork. Naděnka patiently pointed out how that was impossible and why and the

patient seemed convinced. And then a few days later Naděnka was reading the diaries | that the patients have to write | and what did she find? The deviant had written: Today Mrs N. explained to us how we were born. But it doesn't apply to me. The stork brought me to the maternity hospital in Brno. Mummy told me so and she must know, | seeing she was there.

"Wouldn't that drive you round the bend?" the social worker asked. "^{frank}Futile, ^{utterly}utterly futile. | That's why I often have a read of Ecclesiastes."^{skrivajedes}

I had a dream in which the madhouse ^eran totally out of tablets. The patients had eaten the whole lot | and there was no further delivery. First the patients from the women's section invaded the men's wards, breaking down the doors, pulling out the bars and using everyone ^{nikdy více} of any use. And straight away they made themselves some children to boost our numbers.

I was always saying to the psychiatrists - not in the dream, of course - that sexual abstinence must worsen the patients' condition. It stands to reason. The psychiatrists agreed with me but nothing was done about it. So far as I recall, they only put up with one couple: Marie and Curly the Philosopher. They were allowed to go to the woods together. They used to make love there like deer and slugs and hedgehogs.

In the dream Curly was still alive and Marie was beautiful. They locked themselves in the ward and had no taste for revolution. Lovers are no threat to any system and ^{vice versa} vice versa. I expect that people who get involved in politics are mostly the sort | that don't know | how to love and the unhappiest are the ones who make revolutions and want to change a world | which they are not happy in.

I was aware it was a dream, but I was unable to dispel it. Not that I wanted to really. On the contrary. I would go on

adding new ideas and each would develop of its own accord. It was one of those early-morning half-waking ^{g/B} dreams that I like best.

Mr Poláček, who had a life-long fear of women, stormed the town-hall with a hand-picked guard and appointed himself to the supreme office. He declared new laws and forced the guards to invade the homes of peaceful country folk and persuade the ^{populace} populace about the need for change. They all said yes and then rushed off to buy ~~to~~ food because they ^{surmised} surmised that hard times were on the way. Meanwhile Mr Poláček sent off ready-made, pre-stamped ^{stamped} letters to the UN and the presidents of the leading powers, informing them about the creation of the new state and requesting recognition and entry into Western organisations. He laid great stress on human rights. Mr Hrdlička, the postmaster, loyal to every state, read the letters and confiscated them. He regarded it as his professional duty to read letters and help people. He had always disposed of ^{anonymous} anonymous denunciations ever since the Occupation. He knew all there was to know about every citizen but never used it. It was his conviction that ^{filth} filth should be cleaned up, not spread around. We've had enough evil, he would always say, when it looked as if better times were on the ^{horizon} horizon. And then he would look around to see where the storm might be coming from.

Mr Horáček launched an ^{assault} assault on the town-hall, but when it failed he captured the radio at least, and in ^{ingratiating} ingratiating tones he called on citizens to ^{assemble} assemble on the convent square. He made them all sorts of promises. They would have turned up had they not been afraid that Poláček might find out. So they waited at home to see how things would turn out and refused to get involved.

Mr Horá, the patient who can't stand plastic, rushed around

the village exposing and destroying anything that was made from synthetic material. If he saw a plastic drainpipe he would wrench it out of the wall. He broke the nightlight-holders in the graveyard, ^{low} tore the roofs off sheds and porches and destroyed bakelite door-knobs and handles. He burnt the washing on the washing-lines ^{highly} if it was synthetic. He really let himself go in the village dump: he gathered up all the plastic bags from the trees and fields where they had been blown ^{ins} in the wind. He burnt the polythene and bakelite and a thick pall of greasy smoke ^{polythelin} rolled over the countryside. If his fit lasts and he has enough stamina the hopes are he will rid the area of plastic.

Mr Skála took over the post of director of the psychiatric hospital where the only remaining patient was Mr Pergl. Pergl called the patients back, urging them not to go anywhere because things were worse outside. They took no notice and the pre-war patients were rudest of all to him. He got no lunch and they didn't even bring his supper. He went to the kitchenette and found a dry crust of bread. He ate it and went to bed in his cold bedroom, where he lay waiting for his wife to find out and come ^{to} collect him.

I was walking along an avenue of pollarded lime-trees in my dream when I met them. First in line was Mr ^{Fish} Ryba who had gone mad on account of fish. He would always be jerking his arms and the upper part his body as if holding a fishing rod and landing a catch. He had emptied the contents of the larder into the river and refused to speak to anyone because they were biting, so they locked him up in the madhouse. Now ^{Fish} Ryba was running straight for the river.

Eliška, who had lain motionless for years, now saw that no one was going to wash, comb or feed her any more, so she slipped out of bed, did a few exercises, and set off in search of a

husband.

They moved here and there on my closed eyelids, dressed in all sorts of clothes. There was a shortage of ^{blous.} corduroy trousers ^{behdidynoj} so they wore them in turns for going out on walks or going to vote every four years. Most of them left ⁱⁿ ~~on~~ their tracksuits or pyjamas. Those who had won and were wearing trousers were a motley crew. There was no mirror in the hospital, so the small, fat ones had overlong trousers rolled up at the bottom and they held them up with their hands as there was never any string to be found in case someone used it to hang himself. The tall, thin ones had their trouser bottoms just below their knees. They didn't know their names or ages and had no notion of the difference between a river and a pond or who was the leader of the country either now or before. Those who yearned for power advanced across the fields and fanned out through the woods in all directions. I expect they thought all roads led to the capital.

Růženka Marešová, who had always adored the ^{Chief Doctor} ~~Superintendent~~, thumped on the door of his office demanding love in terms too specific to report here. In any case, the ^{Chief Doctor} ~~Superintendent~~ was not within. Disguised as a patient in a navy-blue track-suit, he had ^{trask nil} abandoned hospital and home. And he too was running through the fields and woods to somewhere far away, whither his wife had spirited the greatest love of his life. Would she still be waiting for him perhaps?

^{slow} The gates of the madhouse remained wide open. Some of the ^{kill'd} patients pillaged, others raped, but what was that compared to the Hussites? (Crusejdas)?

My dream started to dissipate and ^{lose} momentum. It looked as if I'd have to run off somewhere and save the situation somehow. I opened my eyes and sat up in bed. I could see the

low white ceiling and on it a clear white light and thought I was dead. I was relieved that it was behind me now, but then I looked out the window and saw that the first snow had fallen. All around the building was a ^{pristine} white ^e layer; no footprints led in or out. It was a sign to me that the ~~other~~ ^{former} had been a dream. Otherwise they would have been here already.

Translation by A.G.Brain

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