

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Bachelor's Degree Paper is to reconstruct the Norwegian perception of the process of democratization during the second half of the 1960s and to trace Norway's ensuing assistance provided to Czechoslovakia's independent initiatives. The work succinctly summarizes the development of Czechoslovak-Norwegian relations and the activities of the post-February 1948 and post-August 1968 exiles in Norway. It also explores the way Norway's foreign policy and general public were influenced by the historical milestones that had a determining impact on Czechoslovakia's post-World War II history. These landmarks include the Communist coup d'état in February 1948, the year 1968 with its Prague Spring movement and the following military invasion of the country, and the emergence of Charter 77 in 1977.

In the process of the formation of Czechoslovak-Norwegian relations in the fifties and sixties, a major role was played by post-February 1948 exiles. The organization *Norsk-Tsjekkoslovakisk hjelpeforening* was particularly instrumental in this respect. The institution was headed and founded by Anna Kvapilová, who – formerly in her native country – had been an activist of the National Socialist Party and collaborator of Milada Horáková. During the WWII, she was imprisoned in the concentration camp in Ravensbrück on account of her activities in the resistance movement. After its Embassy was re-opened in Prague, Norway took an avid interest in, and was sympathetic with, the process of democratization in Czechoslovakia. The promising collaboration of the two countries in the cultural sphere was marred by the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops. The military occupation of Czechoslovakia was condemned by Norway's government and public.

Charter 77 and the persecution of its signatories was an impulse toward activating Norwegian assistance during the period of harsh repression in Czechoslovakia, known as "Normalization". The official reaction voiced by the Norwegian government in response to this persecution and violation of human rights was quite discomfiting to the Communist regime in power. The Foundation (Støttefond) for the Support of Charter 77 was established in Norway as a branch of the Sweden-based Charter 77 Foundation. The Norwegian branch supported Charter 77 signatories in material terms, while constantly reminding the Norwegian public and political representatives of the need to voice their opinions related to the situation in Czechoslovakia. Michael Konůpek, a writer, publicist and signatory of Charter 77, who had emigrated to Norway in 1978, was one of the leading figures of this process in Norway.

The main question of the paper was defined as how extensive and effective Norwegian assistance was. The results of the research show, that this assistance was very significant.

The information obtained from archival materials has been complemented and partly confronted with documents from the archives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway and the Czech Republic, the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Oslo, the Anna Kvapilová files from the National Archives of Norway, and – last but not least – Michael Konůpek's personal archive. The study written by A. S. Skjerven: *Den tsjekkiske og slovakisme migrasjonen til Norge 1948-1989* has been of key importance in elucidating to readers the individual emigration waves to Norway.

Key words:

“Normalization” period, Czechoslovakia, Norway, emigration, Charter 77, Charter 77 Foundation, Norsk-Tsjekkoslovakisk hjelpeforening

