

Toman Brod In Vienna



This photo is from Vienna, probably from the year 1963. I think that it was actually the first time I had visited Vienna; I was there for some conference. I didn't go abroad too often, to go somewhere outside of Communist Czechoslovakia wasn't that easy.

At the beginning of the 1960s the time of horrors passed, it was again somewhat freer, and I got an offer from the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, to concern myself with international and Czechoslovak politics under their auspices.

I accepted, in 1963 I transferred to an institute that concerned itself with the history of Eastern Europe.

During my studies of Czechoslovak-Soviet relations, however, I came across things that were very dangerous and even more explosive than the issue of Czechoslovak soldiers in the West.

That's why I more or less only gathered material; when I began to write a book, they threw me out. I did then publish the book as a 'samizdat', but it wasn't until after 1989 that I could really concern myself with it seeing the light of day. I consider it to be my life's work.

As is well known, the 1960s meant a certain freeing up of conditions for life in Czechoslovakia, it wasn't for example all that difficult to go to the West for various scientific conferences, I was a founding member of the Committee for the History of the National Struggle for Liberation, so also thanks to that I was invited to foreign conferences.

I went to Vienna, Berlin; I saw a world that was for us absolutely unthinkable.

Goods everywhere, fruit and especially electronics, clothes - at that time jeans were starting to be popular, finding them was a problem, and when someone had them, that was fantastic.

You could naturally find similar goods in Tuzex, but still, to see those full display windows, those riches in Vienna and Berlin, neon lights and night life... simply a different world.

The time of the 1960s was mainly political, I gave loads of lectures, about Benes, about soldiers in the West, about February, about the resistance, about the situation during the Protectorate.

Here in those days it was claimed that the Communists had been the biggest fighters against Hitlerism, we were refuting that falsehood, because on the contrary, up until 1941 the Communists didn't fight against Hitler at all.

Opposition to Hitler was mainly composed of the citizenry; the Communists were concentrating on usurping power after the war, not fighting Hitler. Of course this was all news.

Everyone stood in amazement when we, the historians, who had access to secret materials, were telling them this.

And can you imagine what sort of a shock it was for Communist functionaries, when they heard about it? How we, also Communists, are disrupting the Party and social monolith...