UNBEARABLE STRANGENESS OF SPLITTING

At Parcon '92 in Ostrava - the last one in the federation - was agreed, that Czechoslovak fandom is not going to split, because it doesn't depend on the policy. However, fandom surely depends on the consequences...

Slovak fans and softer currency.

The real crown/crown ratio is better for Bohemia - maybe much better, nobody knows exactly. For that reason all banks in Slovakia have been overcrowded with people who are handing all their savings, change money to hard-currencies accounts and transfer crowns to Czech banks. Therefore the government is hurrying to divide the currencies as soon as possible (and of course there's no hope they'll announce it more than a while before). Let's consider now - almost all those nice SFs on the book market have been translated and published in Bohemia, what can be said also about films and movies. How many Slovak fans, including me, will be able to buy already now so expensive books for the Czech crowns? (It's gonna be hard anyway, because an ordinary Slovak bookshop hardly sells you any Czech book at present.) How do you see further development of Slovak fandom without books?

Ikarie, the only professional SF magazine, published in Prague.

The population of Czechs is two times bigger than the population of Slovaks. And I dare to say that the difference between the numbers of Czech and Slovak fans is even bigger. Let's look at a small specimen of fans - the travellers, the ones who paid presupporting membership for Glasgow '95 bid. On the list of 124 fans there are only 20 persons from Slovakia. If all Slovak fandom is one sixth of Czech and Slovak fans, then it certainly wouldn't be able to run a magazine of Ikarie's size and circulation. Slovaks will have either to buy expensive Ikarie - or nothing. Let's hope that despite its price Ikarie will remain the natural link between Slovak and Czech fans.

Well-known Czechoslovak national convention, Parcon.

Ondrej Neff, the editor-in-chief of Ikarie and SF writer sees the split in his special ironical view. In the editorial of the last Czechoslovak issue of Ikarie he's visualising a secret future Parcon and smuggling of new SFs over the Czech-Slovak border there... Besides this he says - already without tongue in cheek - that he wouldn't be surprised if there was some Parcon in Slovakia again in the future, but I don't think it is more than a gesture of good will. Parcons were rarely in Slovakia and scarcely will be ever more, they will turn from Czechoslovak national convention to Czech one. Slovak trufans will probably have to travel to Bohemia, as long as they will be able to afford it. They might try to start creating their own big tradition and try to become popular, but that's less probable.

Isn't it a pity that some politicians don't read SF?

Yes, it is. Not only last Parcon, but also the meetings with Slovak and Czech fans, their opinions published in fanzines and Ikarie have showed me their wide disagreement with all of this. If you saw them chatting at a con's bar you wouldn't recognize they're members of different nations at all - they are sitting again one next to the other exactly as in the old times when they discussed illegal publishing of SFs. Fans have always been intelligent, open-minded personalities who have solved more complicated questions of life of whole planets during millions of years. They haven't been scared even of dark abysses of parallel worlds nor the wild monsters at the end of the universe, they know such an obvious thing that

the bigger ship can better resist enemy's laser. That even if Slovakia is the most supersovereign separated state, nobody will appreciate it enough unless it DOES something.

Scary, scary night?

Old politicians returned to the Slovak government. They try to close up an university, because it doesn't agree with their policy. Nobody is fired, as it should be in normal democracy. On the other hand, they are continually firing chairmans and directors of big companies, hospitals, associations and people faithful to the state-party are being planted instead. Additionaly, at the very beginning of this year they tried to destroy one of the last democratic newspaper in Slovakia even by cheating. While Bohemia elected Václav Havel as the first Czech president, Slovakia can't agree even upon which of the former communist will become the first Slovak president. Big names of Slovak art leave for Prague saying they can't be free. Postal connection between the two new republics has been disabled because of money incompatibility. I whisper myself: when will they close the frontiers?

Future (?)

Undoubtedly it will be Czech fandom, which will take over the Czechoslovak one in the eyes of the world - because of Parcons, Ikarie, longer tradition and more writers like Karel Čapek with his 'robot'. And what about Slovak fans left behind the border? Hard question. Please let me quote Ondřej Neff writing about difficult times and human stupidity: "I'm stumbling over my thoughts and I realize the limitations of imagination." Can you believe this was written by our (sorry, Czech) best science-fiction writer (I mean the part about the imagination)? Maybe now you can better get what I'm speaking about.

For above reasons I suppose that *Czechoslovak fandom* becomes to be sheer history. But let's cheer up - in a way fandom cannot be broken except for the possibility that one its part would move somewhere to Magrathea and cut off all contacts with home... As long as we are on one planet, the borders mean only distance, not wall. (Hope.)

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