

Jozef Jablonický – Alexandre Kojève

Samuel Abrahám

Už ani neviem, či a akým spôsobom má význam vracat sa na stránkach *K&K* k minulosti. V každom prípade, predstava venovať sa budúcnosti, sa zdá dosť rozpačitá. Všimli ste si, ako komerčne a rutinne prebiehalo víťanie nového milénia? Dómy v Londýne, ohňostroje všade a podivná diskusia, či sa týmto rokom končí alebo začína nové tisícročie a či počítačový problém Y2K paralyzuje svet alebo nie... Dožili sme sa roku 2000 a celkom určite ho ľudský druh prežije. No v akom stave sú všetky tie vízie 20. storočia, všetkých tých pacifistov, marxistov, vedcov či šarlatánov každého druhu? Áno, Vernove fantázie sú už zväčša realitou alebo prekonané, no ich relevancia je vyjadrená čoraz častejšie vo výške indexu na svetových burzách. Firme, ktorá rozlúskla genetický kód, akcie rapídne poskočili, dozvedáme sa z dennej tlače, internetu či z televízie. Informácií pribúda, no ako píše Ludvík Vaculík, zažívame „zvláštny rozpor: znalosti o veciach sa rozmnožujú a prehľbujú, ale veci samotné hynú“ (*LN* 13/2000). Minulosť zapadá do zabudnutia čoraz rýchlejšie než kedykoľvek predtým v moderných dejinách. Rovnako, aj ten sen – vždy intenzívny po každej katastrofe – o mierumilovnej budúcnosti a blahobyte pre všetkých, je na tomto svete očividne súdený menšine, a to za cenu nedeziernych následkov pre chudobných tohto sveta a pre zemeguľu samotnú.

Aký význam má teda reflektovať minulosť, povedzme obdobie komunistických režimov, aby sme pochopili dianie v našej spoločnosti? Čo spreď roku 1989 je relevantné pre našu budúcnosť? Nie je to len nejaká mágia alebo obsesia neustále sa zaoberať tým, čo sme počas komunistického režimu osobne alebo sprostredkovane zažili? Nakoľko sa tí neskôr narodení, ktorí len hmlisto zažili komunistický režim, môžu z našej minulosti poučiť? V čom im pomôžu dilemy, pády a heroické činy rodičov, keď každá generácia si zažíva svoje a každá doba dáva priestor na obdobné zlyhania a zachovania si čistého svedomia. Ved' už samotných posledných desať rokov – v každom prí-

I must admit, it is not altogether clear how the legacies of our history can be meaningfully dealt with on the pages of *K&K*. It is also far from clear what relevance twentieth-century ideologies and the many visions they inspired may have for the present, let alone the future. Almost every attempt to glean what the future may hold becomes either an exercise in fantasy or is reduced to a banal extension of the comforting familiarity of the present day. Both tendencies were all too noticeable in the trivial way in which the world greeted the new millennium. Amidst warnings of dire catastrophe – either divinely ordained or computer-generated, we were treated to London's Millennium Dome, festive displays of fireworks, and a rather moot debate on whether the millennium really starts this year or next.

Yes, like a child's dream come true, humankind somehow managed to survive until now. Most likely, too, we will survive the year 2000. And yes, many of the technological fantasies of Jules Verne have been realized, even surpassed. Yet, their relevance to civilization is more and more often expressed in terms of their value as shareholder commodities on the stock exchanges of the world. Instantly, the airwaves or the internet send us word that the stock of the private consortium mapping the human genome has surged in anticipation of a definitive breakthrough. We now have access to an unprecedented amount of information, and can access it in "real time". But, as Czech writer Ludvík Vaculík has lamented: "we experience a strange type of discrepancy: our knowledge about things multiplies and deepens, yet the things themselves perish". Indeed, the past seems to be falling into the abyss of forgetting more quickly than at anytime in modern history. Forgotten just as quickly as our once intensely felt hopes and dreams for peace and prosperity have been betrayed by a world seemingly designed for the benefit of a few at the expense of the many – and to the detriment even of the earth itself.

pade v našom postkomunistickom regióne – má takú bohatú históriu. Nastalo toľko zmien a zlomov, ktoré zrejme predurčujú našu budúcnosť viac ako dianie za predchádzajúcich päťdesiat rokov. Keď diskutujem o tomto probléme s mojimi priateľmi, vychádza nám (nie k našej úplnej spokojnosti), že sa treba zaoberať osobnými príbehmi; nie pochodom ideí, vízií, ale osudmi jednotlivých ľudí – významných, bezvýznamných, dobrých či zlých. Ako prežili, ako reagovali vo svojom živote na dianie vo svojej spoločnosti, čo ich motivovalo k veľkým či podlým činom a nakoľko máme právo alebo povinnosť vynášať nad nimi súd.

S osudmi dvoch osobností, historikom Jozefom Jablonickým a filozofom Alexandrom Kojëvom, ktorých predstavujeme v tomto čísle, si komunistická éra zahrala naozaj podivne. Prvý navonok hrdina a druhý antihrdina, no ich príbehy odkrývajú vrstvy, ktoré jedinec chytený do súkolia dejín zdanlivo nemôže ovplyvniť.

Jablonický nie je a nikdy netúžil byť hrdina, jeho životopis je o človeku, ktorý bol spokojný so svojim údelom, a ako historik nechcel bojovať so systémom, v ktorom žil. No komunistický režim si myslel, že tak ako väčšinu jeho rovesníkov aj Jablonického pokorí a buď ho použije pri písaní, čo on nazýva „dvornej histórie“, alebo ho aspoň umlčí a marginalizuje. Režim vyžadoval od neho jednoduché ľudské zlyhanie prameniace zo strachu z dôsledkov, ktoré mu jeho odpor mal zapríčiniť. Z mnohých diskusií, ktoré za posledné roky s pánom Jablonickým vediem, mi vychádza obraz, že jeho postavenie odporcu režimu nevzišlo z postupného „prekuknutia“ komunistickej ideológie (to prišlo až neskôr), ale jednoducho z jeho ľudskej náture. Robil si poctivo svoju prácu a pokojne to mohla byť akákoľvek iná profesia. Keby bol lekár, chemik alebo zámočník, Jablonický by určite prežil svoj život pred rokom 1989 rovnako ako mnoho tých, ktorí trpeli, niektorí boli vyhodení zo strany, no nerebelovali. Jeho odpoveďou by bola poctivá práca vo svojom fachu alebo to, čo by mu režim dovolil.

Avšak poctivý historik bola kategória, ktorú komunistický režim, a hlavne režim v Československu po roku 1969, *apriórne* považoval za podzrivú a nebezpečnú. Ešte v roku 1980, teda tri

In a world so mired in the eternal present, what then is the point of stopping to reflect upon our communist past? Can it help us to comprehend the unfolding of our current condition? Is there anything from before that watershed year of 1989 that remains relevant to our future? Or is such an exercise really no more than an obsessive need to constantly revisit what we personally experienced or intimately know about our communist past? To what extent can those who were born more recently, and who remember only vaguely the communist era, learn from our experience? What can they gain from the struggles, the dilemmas, the many failures and the all-too-rare heroic acts of their parents, when they, like each new generation, are destined to wrestle with the challenges of today? Considering even just the last ten years, just the new era of post-communism, so much has happened, so many – often turbulent – changes have taken place, that this last decade alone might prove far more decisive to the shape of our future than anything that occurred in the previous fifty years.

Pondering over these issues among friends, some of us have speculated that, perhaps, what matters most about our past is not the grand march of history, nor the stale recounting of ideology and of power. Rather, what may be most useful to the next generation are the personal histories of the individual men and women who lived it – some of them important figures, some of them obscure, some of them good people, some of them not. How they lived their lives, how they reacted to the political and social forces that swept over them, what it was that motivated them to do great or evil deeds. By examining their lives, and only by doing so, can we approach the more fundamental question of how, and indeed, whether, we should judge them.

Communism played a fickle game with two individuals whom we have chosen to present in this issue: the historian, Jozef Jablonický, and the philosopher Alexandre Kojëve. Superficially, the former might be judged a hero and the latter, a villain. Upon closer reflection, however, their stories reveal a certain shared fate as individuals

roky po vylúčení zo strany, Jablonický píše: „Naďalej sa hlásim k zásadám demokratického a socialistickeho historika. Môj občiansky postoj a prístup k témam z najnovších dejín neotriasli nezmyselné výsluchy, ani policajné sledovanie a obmedzovanie. Nevzdávam sa práva vyjadrovať sa k problémom, na riešenie ktorých mám patričnú kvalifikáciu a mnohoročné skúsenosti.“ A to sa Jablonický prevažne venoval Slovenskému národnému povstaniu, teda takpovediac komunistickej prehistórii - obdobiu pred uchopením moci komunistickým režimom v roku 1948. Nevyjadroval sa k aktuálnemu politickému daniu počas normalizácie ako disidenti. Neprerzíte písal odborné historické práce, otvorene referoval o svojom šikanovaní a bol v styku s ľuďmi, ktorí mali často iný svetonázor, no ľudsky mu boli blízki a morálne sa navzájom podržali.

Osud Jozefa Jablonického po roku 1989 je rovnako príbehom, ktorý reflektuje dobu výstižnejšie ako mnohé analytické štúdie. Napriek svojej odvážnej činnosti počas normalizácie, nebráni sa sebakritike za svoje zlyhania z minulosti. V roku 1995 píše: „Prečo som bol uvedomelý? Prečo som šiel na trať mládeže? Prečo som staval priehradu mládeže? Prečo som vstúpil do strany? Na to všetko si musím odpovedať. Aj som získal, aj som doplatil. Nič z toho neprehodím len tak za hlavu.“ Jablonický si nesype na seba len popol, ale tým istým dychom sa pýta na to, na čo mu do teraz nik z opýtaných neodpovedal: „Kto z komunistov na Slovensku urobil aké-také sebahodnotenie?“ Jablonický je v tomto ohľade ojedinelým prípadom v našej spoločnosti - a zdá sa, že tento druh sebareflexie je pre Jablonického rovnako oslobodzujúci, ako keď sa koncom sedemdesiatych rokov rozhodol otvorene ísť proti prúdu komunistickej historiografie.

Historici, ktorí pred rokom 1989 mlčali alebo robili „dvornú históriu“ komunistickému režimu, neboli schopní - tak ako drvivá väčšina vedeckých obcí a vlastne ako celá slovenská spoločnosť - zreflektovať svoju existenciu počas komunistickej normalizácie. Po roku 1989 nastal čas mlčania o minulosti a história sa začala písať odznova - niektorí historici píšu kvalitne, iní tendenčne, podľa toho ako boli stavaní a predurčení.

caught in circumstances shaped by historical forces far beyond their capacity to control.

Jablonický (b. 1933) was not and never sought to be a hero. His curriculum vitae reveals an individual largely content with his lot, a historian who was dedicated to his craft. He did not seek to pick a fight with the system in which he lived. But his dedication to historical truth was alone sufficient to invoke the wrath of the régime. The communist authorities wanted to crush him, as they did the vast majority of his like-minded contemporaries, by forcing him either to write what he referred to as “court history” or to retreat to silence and marginalization. The régime sought to do so by systematic attempts at professional humiliation, backed by threats to him and his family if he failed to comply. From the many conversations that I conducted with Jablonický in the past years, I have come to believe that his opposition to communism did not come from any prior or well-reasoned philosophical objection (this would come only later), but directly from the force of his character. A dedicated craftsman, his approach to history was honest and professional, an approach, one imagines, he would have adopted even if his chosen profession had been different. Had he chosen to become a doctor, a chemist or a plumber, it is likely that he would have lived his life the same way, that many honest men and women before 1989 lived their lives, only to suffer various degrees of the routine humiliation, ridicule, and social exclusion without, however daring to rebel.

To be an honest historian was a different matter. A profession that every communist regime, and, especially that of normalization-era Czechoslovakia, judged a priori to be an existential threat. As late as 1980, some three years after his expulsion from the Communist Party, Jablonický wrote: “I still adhere to the principles of a democratic and socialist historian. My civic attitudes and my approach to the topics of our most recent history were neither shaken by ludicrous interrogations nor by police intimidation and restrictions. I refuse to deny my right to express my views on the topics for which I have suitable qualifications and many years of experience.”

Nastalo „nové“ delenie, v duchu „novej“ doby – osobná minulosť sa zdala nepodstatná. Historici nemohli a ani nechceli integrovať Jablonického do svojho kruhu bez toho, aby jednotlivito sebakriticky zreflektovali svoju osobnú minulosť. Jablonický vlastne ani nestál a nestojí o túto spoločnosť. Rovnako ako pred rokom 1989 zostáva sám sebou, starší, chorľavejší a prirodzene menej produktívny. Teda jeden ľudský príbeh...

Druhý ľudský príbeh je o Alexandrovi Kojèvovi. V *K&K* sa mu vo svojich príspevkoch venoval už Tom Darby. Počas môjho štúdia politickej filozofie v Ottawe sme o Kojèvovi čítali ako o ojedinelom zjave: o filozofovi, ktorý tak ako málokto rozprúdil diskusiu a mal vplyv na filozofiu a politickú filozofiu 20. storočia. Jeho interpretácia Hegelovej *Fenomenológie ducha* mala revolučný dopad na celý odbor, hoci nechýbali tí, čo sa kriticky stavali k jeho interpretácii „konca histórie“. Tento termín spopularizoval a dosť nešťastne zaktualizoval Francis Fukuyama. Kojève fascinoval mnohých akademikov tým, že takmer nič nenapísal a jeho prevratné myšlienky poznáme z prepísaných poznámok jeho poslucháčov na parížskej *Ecole normale des hautes études* a z jeho korešpondencie. Jeho žiaci a obdivovatelia, ako píše Waller R. Newell, tvoria *who is who* vo francúzskej filozofii (okrem R. Arona inklinujúceho doľava) ako aj medzi severoamerickými politickými filozofmi (väčšinou konzervatívnymi a pravicovými). Nadôvažok sa Kojève na vrchole svojej akademickej slávy rozhodol zavesiť filozofiu na kliniec ako boxer v najlepšej forme a dal sa na diplomaciu a politiku. „Prečo by som nemal piť najlepšie vína a bývať v najdrahších hoteloch a zároveň mať ozajstný politický vplyv,“ pýtal sa sarkasticky Alexandre-diplomat. Jeho pozícií a vplyvu v politickej filozofii tento odchod vôbec neuškodil, práve naopak, jeho hviezda, aj vďaka Fukuyamovi, posledné roky žiarila čoraz viac.

A zrazu ako blesk z jasného neba sa v septembri 1999 v tlači objavila správa, že francúzska tajná polícia získala hrubý spis usvedčujúci Kojèvea z tridsaťročnej spolupráce s KGB. Samozrejme, KGB je nespoľahlivý zdroj, podrobnosti nie sú známe a nevieme presne, o akú spoluprácu išlo. Nevieme, aký motív ho viedol k tejto spolupráci,

Jablonický's speciality was the Slovak National Uprising of 1944, in a way a part of communist pre-history, that is, well-before the communist take-over of 1948. He never questioned the actual political conditions of the Normalization era, as the Czechoslovak dissidents had. With unceasing labour, he continued simply to write his historical texts and to loudly protest when the persecutions of the regime sought to thwart him. By virtue of his situation and his character, he soon came into contact with other persecuted individuals who often had different convictions, but with whom he formed close and mutually supportive relationships.

Even after 1989, the fate of Jozef Jablonický tells a story, no less than it did before, that reflects the period better than any analytical study could. And no less than before, he deserves high credit for his self-critical reflections on what he judged to be his own failures in the past. In 1995, he wrote: “Why was I so complacent? Why did I eagerly participate in the Communist Youth and help build their railways and dams? Why did I become a member of the Communist Party? It is my responsibility to respond to all these questions. I did gain something, but I also paid a price. I refuse to act as if it never happened“. Jablonický not only agonised over his lot but, at the same time, asked a question that has yet to be answered: “Who from the communists of Slovakia has offered at least a modicum of self-criticism?“ Jablonický is, in this respect, a unique figure in Slovakia. His kind of self-reflection and self-examination, it would seem, was as liberating after 1989 as it had been in the 1970s when he decided to speak openly against the falsities of official, communist historiography.

Most historians before 1989 - like the vast majority of academics, and of Slovak citizens, too, for that matter - were more complicit in the shaping of official historiography and history. They dutifully studied the communist era and routinely exalted the conduct of the regime. Immediately after 1989, a reaction set in, from which there ensued a general refusal to deal with one's own past. History, both societal and personal, began to be written anew. Some authors did it better,

no vo svojej neskoršej korešpondencii Kojève často dosť cynicky koketoval z myšlienkou, že metafyzicky sú Západ a Východ jedno a to isté a nie je podstatné, kto v budúcnosti zvíťazí. Iný bude len jazyk, ruština alebo angličtina, ktorým budeme komunikovať. Samozrejme, podobné reči znejú inak od bývalého filozofa a sarkastického diplomata popíjajúceho skvelý cabernet sauvignon, a inak od agenta KGB, ktorý bol vydierateľný a mohol byť kedykoľvek odhalený a väznený.

Najdesivejší je podľa mňa fakt, že Kojève bol agentom KGB ešte v čase svojej akademickej slávy koncom tridsiatych rokov. Ako mohol KGB-ák vychovať francúzsku filozofickú elitu a udať smer konzervatívnej politickej filozofii v Severnej Amerike? Desí ma predstava, že to bol niečí plán. Viem si predstaviť, že originálny filozof sa stane agentom - spôsoby náboru sú rôzne: vydieranie, zastrašovanie, pasca, atď. Čo sa mi však zdá nepredstaviteľné je, že by sa agent tajnej služby stal originálnym filozofom... Prieči sa to všetkým predstavám, spojeným s politickou filozofiou: hľadanie pravdy a jej derivátov (teda aj tvrdení, že pravda neexistuje), hľadanie formy alebo možnosti najlepšieho politického režimu (tam patrí aj názor, že ideálne politické zriadenie je nezmysel), hľadanie roly etiky a morálky v živote jednotlivca a spoločnosti. Navyše, politický filozof musí byť ako občan, na rozdiel od iných vedátorov, osobne zaangażovaný do formovania a pomenovania najlepšieho dostupného politického systému. Inými slovami, ľudský príbeh Alexandra Kojève, ak sa potvrdí jeho filozoficko-kagebácka genéza (a francúzski filozofi a americkí politickí filozofi svorne významne mlčia), nabúra teoretické myslenie viac než akákoľvek radikálna teória.

Príbeh Alexandra Kojève je šokujúci, nepochopiteľný a smutný a môže ho vymyslieť len život a osud zajatý vo vymedzenom priestore svojej doby. Neplynú z neho žiadne ponaučenie, morálne či praktické, no tak ako v prípade Jozefa Jablonického nám potvrdzuje, že čestnosť a múdrosť musia byť spolu prepojené. Dnešná doba asi ako každá doba zneužije poctivosť aj inteligenciu, ak si ich jednotlivci neprepojia vo svojej hlave sám. To nie je odkaz mladým do budúca, ale len večný príbeh o zlyhaní a zachovaní si ľudskej integrity. •

some did it worse, and all did it according to their own experience, position, and predilection. In the actual profession of history, a new division occurred, a division that corresponded to new social and political circumstances. What mattered to most professional historians was to show that their particular pasts were not decisive. Many of them were unable or unwilling to welcome Jablonický into their circle, as they were unable or unwilling to engage in self-examination and honestly appraise their own part in the making of communist history and historiography. In fact, Jablonický himself never sought out their company. Just as before 1989, he adhered to his principles, though he was, by then, older, ailing and naturally less productive. So goes one man's history...

Another history is that of Alexandre Kojève, a writer who has been featured by Tom Darby in previous issues of *K&K* (2, 3-4/98 and 2/99). During my study of political theory at Carleton University in Ottawa, Kojève was considered an extraordinary phenomenon. He was a philosopher who, like few others in this century, influenced central questions in political philosophy. His interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* had a revolutionary impact on the whole field of political philosophy, although many have remained highly critical of his thesis of the "end of history" – a theory that Francis Fukuyama popularized without initially acknowledging Kojève's influence. Kojève fascinated a number of academics for, among other reasons, the fact that he did not publish much of his thought and that it is known largely from the notes taken by his students at *Ecole normale des hautes études* in Paris and from his own correspondence. Kojève's students and admirers, as Waller R. Newell writes in his essay, constitute a virtual who's who of French philosophers (except Raymond Aron all leftward leanings) and of North American political philosophers (mostly conservative). In addition, while at the pinnacle of his academic career, Kojève decided to give up philosophy and become a career diplomat. "Why should I not drink the best wines and stay in the most expensive hotels and have real political influence", he once asked sarcastically in his correspondence. Neither his status,

nor his influence were at all damaged by his departure from the academic field. On the contrary, his star began to shine ever more brightly, thanks also in recent years to Fukuyama.

It was like a bolt of lightning from a clear sky when, in September 1999, the news appeared that the French secret police had obtained a thick dossier indicting Kojève for his thirty-year-long collaboration with the KGB. While the KGB is not the most reliable source, neither has it been, in recent times, the most unreliable. As the details of the case have not yet been revealed, we cannot ascertain the truth about the nature of his alleged co-operation or what his motivation may have been. What we do know, however, is that Kojève, in his later correspondence, often – and quite cynically – expressed the idea that, metaphysically, the West and the East were basically the same and that it made little difference which side eventually won. The difference, he maintained, would only be in which language we would use for global communication – Russian or English. Of course, this sort of blather sounds quite different from a former philosopher and sardonic diplomat sipping vintage Cabernet Sauvignon than from a KGB agent – a person who could, at any time, be blackmailed, revealed and incarcerated.

What seems to me the most disturbing is the possibility that Kojève might have been a KGB operative even at the height of his academic career in the 1930s. How, one wonders, could a KGB collaborator charm the French philosophical elite and dictate the discourse of conservative North American political philosophers? It is tempting, and no less disturbing, to imagine that it was all part of some deliberate plan. It is relatively easy to imagine how a genuine thinker might become a communist agent – the means of recruiting were manifold and ruthless: blackmail, threats, all the traps that a secret police has in its repertoire. What is harder to grasp is the notion that, perhaps instead, an agent of the secret police might have become an original philosopher!

This idea is offensive to the very purposes of political philosophy. It violates the widely-held notion that the purpose of political philosophy is to search out truths. Or to explore the permuta-

tions of such inquiry – including the notion that “Truth” may not exist. Or to describe and defend ideal arrangements. Or, at least, to strive toward explaining the best form of political regime, short of utopian nonsense. It involves a kind of intellectual probing that is fundamentally concerned with the role that ethics and morality play in social functioning. In addition, a political philosopher, as citizen, is personally engaged in the search and designation of the best possible political solutions for the society and time in which s/he lives. Surely, this might sound like a naive portrayal of political philosophy, especially in an age when Carl Schmitt has become so popular. But mockery of Plato, Aristotle, and their followers should not distract us from the central ethos of their professional endeavour.

Thus, if Kojève’s KGB connection should be fully verified – and, here, the almost unanimous silence of French philosophers and American political scientists seems telling – his career could pose a more serious challenge to our understanding of the role of political theory than any radical theoretical attack ever could.

Kojève’s story is possibly shocking, maybe absurd, and, perhaps, even pitiable. His may be the fate of one who was simply too caught up in the place and the time in which he lived. There may, in fact, be no lesson, moral or otherwise, to be learned from Kojève’s story. Even so, we can, perhaps, take from the example of Jozef Jablonický the notion that wisdom is, perhaps, best and truest where combined with human decency. In our age, no less than in prior times, humanity tends to suspect honesty where it is ignorant and to malign intelligence where it lacks conviction. Perhaps we can only respect both qualities where and when remarkable individuals can connect honesty and wisdom with personal character. This observation is not meant merely as a message for the younger generation and their future, but also expresses a variation on the eternal story of how individual human beings can choose to fail or succeed in preserving their own integrity, whatever the world they may find themselves in.

Translated by S. Abrahám and K. Ballentine