



*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
(Ephesians 2,1-6)*

**HOME MINISTRY AUGUST 2024
DEAR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS OF
THE REACH BEYOND MINISTRY
TO THE PEOPLES OF CZECHIA
AND SLOVAKIA**

SUMMER IN EUROPE

Central Europe is an area with a moderate climate. Most people are not prepared for warmer temperatures. At the end of

June, when schoolchildren begin their two-month vacation, people begin to migrate south to the sea. Larger families, pensioners and those who can, leave their homes and spend the summer in country cottages or in the mountains... Even the government takes two months off.

Air conditioning is usually only in modern office buildings and some large shopping malls. Public transportation, some trains, buses and trams are unbearably hot. The cities are scorching hot and the streets are deserted.

We remember the blistering hot days, the deserts of California, Arizona, or the Asian tropical humidity in Indonesia, Ecuador and other places. It's interesting how hard it is for Europeans to tolerate temperatures that rarely exceed 95 F. Because we live in densely populated areas, blocks of houses are the only shade if you walk on the other side of the sidewalk. Yes, every city has sidewalks and now bike lanes. We are surrounded by concrete, asphalt, no trees, not enough parks, no sprinklers, dry lawns... Large areas of solar panels on the ground and roofs of houses probably radiate more heat than can replace the energy of thermal power plants. It does not take an ecologist or an economist to see that we are not the best stewards of resources. The fight against climate change has no long-term solutions. Neither electric mobility nor wind farms will save us from the coming energy crisis. The war between Russia and Ukraine, the disrupted gas and oil pipelines are just a small example of energy vulnerability. Unlike Europe, America is rich in natural resources. The proponents of the Green Deal are paving the way for a deep energy crisis.

It is difficult to sum up a summer theme in an optimistic sentence at a time of brain melt.

HEAT ISSUES

The Prague's week-long Rainbow Festival campaign is taking on a new shape and meaning. In this case, the rainbow is not a symbol of God's promise as we know it:

When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth (Genesis 9, 16).

The theme of this year's LGBTQ+ festival, which supposedly focuses on "family," is even more perplexing. The Christian March for Life and the Alliance for the Family, advocates of the traditional family, are organizing a one-day public event that usually attracts protests from opponents of conservative values to the point that armed police are monitoring the event. It seems that the classical definition of the family has been hijacked; it is no longer the preserve of conservative Christians. The whole event ended with an inclusive church service. Here is the press release:

Do you have a phobia of churches and the sermons you hear in them? No more, the church is coming to you! This combined service with clergy from different churches will remind you that Christianity and the values of faith, hope and love are not just lip service that often hides a disregard for differences. Come and bring your thanksgiving and your prayers. Let them be heard. We will pray for relationships in the real families where people live.

BEST DECISION OF OUR LIVES

We are probably the first generation to have lived a life of peace, free from real poverty and hardship. World politics being decided in Moscow or Washington DC dur-

ing the Cold War gave us a sense of security. For Eastern Europe, the Warsaw Pact led by the Soviet Union was a guarantee of "peace". No one dreamed that something as terrible as August 21, 1968 could happen. Before that day, our lives were relatively carefree. We were young, people got married, children were born, we had friends, we didn't know what unemployment was. Everyone had not only a job, but also the duty to work. The motto of the system was: "If you don't work, you don't eat. It was obviously plagiarized from the Bible:

For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat (2 Thess. 3:10).

Those who did not work were considered parasites, and if they did not end up in prison, they became involuntary slaves in labor camps.

University and high school graduates were not allowed to look for work; they were assigned to a job and had to join according to a key determined by various government departments. These ministries also determined which fields were useful to society and which were bourgeois, i.e. undesirable. The working class was at the top, building a better and fairer future. The middle class was oppressed, and the former class of businessmen, industrialists, intellectuals and artists had fallen to the lowest rung of society.

Life in a socialist and classless society was tolerable to a certain extent. Much worse off was our parents' generation, which experienced the communist victory in the 1948 elections. This was followed by a massive nationalization of property in order to create a working classless society. *"I am a miner, who is greater"* or *"When the forest is cut down, the splinters fly."* Step number two to just distribution of wealth

was monetary reform in 1952. Citizens lost all their savings. The backbone of the nation was broken. We had peace and dry bread. And the state, it "cared" for the welfare of its citizens from the cradle to the grave. But the people yearned for freedom, and there was an attempt to reform the system, the Prague Spring. This was followed by the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops. Under Soviet directorship the country was occupied by 500,000 ground, air and military troops, 6,300 tanks, 2,000 cannons, 550 fighter planes and 250 transport planes. Endless lines and convoys of military vehicles and tanks rumbled through the streets. This was our awakening on August 21, 1968, 56 years ago:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLrXCW-bS7Y>

The "brotherly help" and subsequent occupation of the then Czechoslovakia, then called "Action Danube," led to the total suppression of the liberal internal political changes in society known as the Prague Spring. The resistance of the population was soon broken and all hopes of revival, reform and democratization of society ended. It was a time of arrests, interrogations, torture, corporal punishment, drugs, loss of jobs, repression, censorship, mutual distrust, isolation. The period of "normalization" led to emigration, capitulation, and collaboration, the enslavement of the nation, the broken spines and bent backs of individuals. The disintegration and degeneration of society followed. The ideas of socialism led to character destruction.

During the period of communist totalitarianism in Czechoslovakia, the secret police, known as the State Security (StB), became synonymous with terror and inhuman treatment. The interrogations carried out by the STB were often brutal and cruel, and often resembled practices that one would expect to find in the Middle Ages rather than the

20th century. During these interrogations, torture was common, not only physical but also psychological, resulting in long-term trauma and sometimes death for the victims.

Fidel Castro, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam supported the Soviet invasion. Other Western governments responded with restraint. The Soviet "temporary stay" and occupation lasted from August 1968 to June 1991, a full 23 years of ignominy. Another anniversary is here.

VISITING THE GHETTO IN TEREZÍN

We spent most of the hot days at home. However, we made a long-planned visit to the Terezin Museum. It was strange to see the huge boards with the names of children who were imprisoned in the ghetto. We even found some names of children whose stories we knew and who were among our friends. There were 7,590 children who passed through Terezín, only 142 survived, and we knew and know several of them personally.

In the light of current events, we realize that we live in troubled times. Generations that do not know or pay attention to history are the best candidates or voters, the perpetrators of similar disasters that happened in the past. No wonder the majority of society is plagued by fear for the future. Especially young people feel hopeless. The activists of the environmental movement "The Last Generation" are approaching the problems of our time in perhaps the worst possible way. Their "good intentions are paving the road to hell," as usually. Just to name few:

- Cut energy consumption in half
- Reduce material flows by 90 %
- End all land use

We should not be mere spectators, but remain vigilant, alert, not betray and not lose our honor.

PRAISES AND PRAYER NEEDS

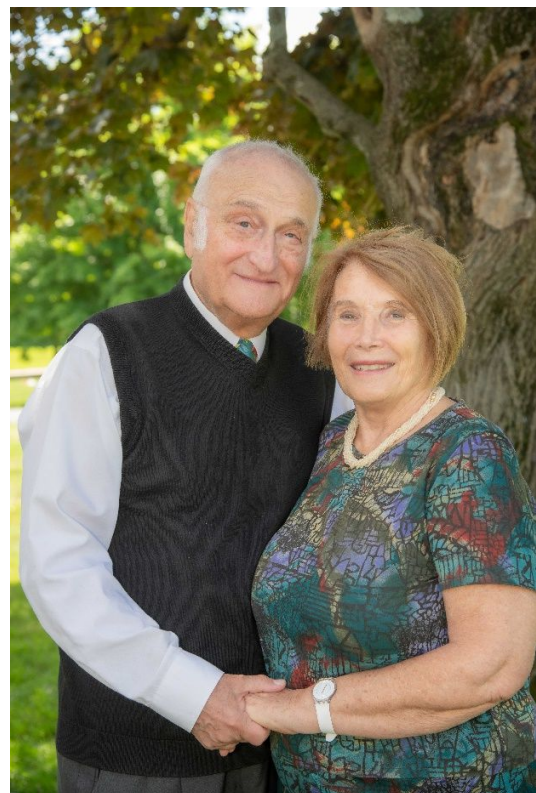


- Our prayer time in the classless congregation.
- Our Jewish neighbor is a great joy. Pavel has spent a lot of time talking with him, lending him a number of books, articles, references... and the result – now he loves the Sermon on the Mount and his wife tells us that he is reading the New Testament with great interest. He has eyes to see, ears to hear, and is reconciled to God.
- From the comfort of our own home, we had two Zoom meetings. Reach Beyond and Global Expansion, Ministry Ask Pastor John (Piper) episodes in Slovak broadcasting.
- Pavel's brother remains in a coma. He's been moved from the intensive care unit to the follow up intensive care. As far as medical options are concerned, he is being very well cared for, but his condition remains almost unchanged. He opens his eyes but no sign of recognition. The doctors do not see or expect any change for the better. With each visit, we realize that his condition is like a long goodbye.
- The same company has rehired our son Filip. We are happy that they can stay where they have been living for over 20 years.

- Our younger grandson Nate is looking for a job.

Thank you for your prayers, support and participation in our life and Czech and Slovak ministries. In His sovereign grace.

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