

Petra's view of her legs fascinated him, and he felt excited. The skirt was very short and allowed this miracle of nature to stand out fully. He really liked this new fashion. He was in Paris in the spring, but there the skirts were still long, but summer in London was something else, it was a real feast for the eyes. Yes, it was 1968, and this fashion had come from England. He was glad to be young, just over twenty, and that he would certainly see many more legs like these in his life. The girl they belonged to was, like him, a student at the University of Economics. But she had a close friend, so he didn't give himself much of a chance.

Although he was from Prague, he went to the cafeteria for dinner because there was a lot of food, it was quite cheap, and it was a nice environment, with a high concentration of young girls who were mostly in no hurry to go anywhere. However, their attractiveness was somewhat limited by a lack of information. There was no internet at the time, not all households had a television, foreign fashion magazines were not available, and many girls who came from the countryside often looked as if they had just come from feeding the cows. They were not well-groomed or dressed in an interesting way. It usually took several years for them to become a little more civilized. Some managed it in a year, but for others it took until graduation. He recalled a visit to Poland, where he found every woman to be a work of art. Petr said that he would probably not marry a college student, as he found every saleswoman in Prague much more attractive.

He usually sat at the cafeteria table with Štěpán, Miloš, and Fanda.

Štěpán was the son of a lieutenant colonel in the tank unit of the then People's Army, but his real father was a Slovak count who did not marry his mother but from whom he inherited a considerable tendency toward bohemianism, so his military upbringing had no influence on him whatsoever. He was the only one in the Communist Party, which he joined

at the age of eighteen. This surprised Petr, who could not understand how someone so young could voluntarily join the Communist Party. Štefan himself did not justify this step in any way. Perhaps his new father, the lieutenant colonel, played a role here, as did his defiance of his biological father, who most likely did not like communists. After all, even Klement Gottwald was said to be the illegitimate son of a landowner, and he then devoted his entire life to fighting against landowners and their liquidation. Similarly, Masaryk, who devoted much of his time to the breakup of Austria-Hungary, may have been the son of Franz Joseph, according to some historical sources. Otherwise, however, Štefan had normal views. For example, he took part in the March student march to the grave of T. G. Masaryk. There were opinions that if there had been a similar march to the grave of Antonín Novotný, the then president, not many people would have gone. But he argued that it all depended on the organization; if it were well organized, there would be enough people. No one believed him, but he was probably right. After all, after 1969, with the onset of normalization, badges with the inscription "Sorry Tony" began to appear on the coats of teenagers, perhaps as a kind of apology and reminder of the relative personal and political freedoms of the time, which would be lost for a long time. With a certain nostalgia, people began to remember the previously unpopular president.

Štěpán once borrowed John Maynard Keynes' book *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, which was highly regarded in certain circles in Czechoslovakia at the time and was, in a way, a rare work. The basis of study was mostly the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and their interpretations. Keynes's book contained a number of interesting and witty ideas that could not be found in the aforementioned classics. Štěpán probably wanted to appear interesting, so he always carried Keynes with

him and read a few sentences from it here and there. However, one evening, when he was leaving the pub and wanted to finish his meal at a sausage stand on Wenceslas Square, he forgot it there. He was afraid that they would wrap sausages in this rare book, which did not happen, but the book was never found. Štěpán then had to explain in detail to the library where it had disappeared.

Petr and Štěpán could have had a father in common. At one of the school balls, which took place on Friday, a certain Anička Čertová invited Petr to her dormitory. She said, "I'll be there alone on Sunday afternoon, I don't know what I'll do." It was quite cold at the time and Petr didn't want to go there, there was no shortage of young girls, so he didn't go. Later, he learned from Štěpán that she had also invited him and that she was pregnant and looking for someone to blame. Štěpán didn't go there either. But maybe he didn't do the right thing. Later, he was unable to have children, so this could have been his chance. If only one knew and didn't know what is and what isn't, and what will or won't be.

Miloš was from South Bohemia and worked as an assistant to a professor who was the terror of the school. He kept him quite busy, so he had less time for us. He had a sharp mind and sometimes brilliant thinking, and he was also quite hard-working, so the professor made good use of him. None of us had any idea that one day the assistant professor, who would by then be a full professor, would speak at his funeral. He dated a student from another department who, when beauty was being handed out, was really far away from it; to say that she was quite ugly was entirely accurate. Miloš, on the other hand, was handsome, tall and slim, and girls liked him. Some men find pretty women boring, and the uglier a woman is, the more exciting she is for them.

Fanda was from Moravia, from the Wallachia region. He had previously studied astronomy, but switched to economics and enjoyed it. Miloš, Petr, and Štěpán liked to drink occasionally, so Fanda didn't refuse, but he was relatively ascetic. He was quite rational and followed certain patterns. One of these was that a fifth-year student should find a girlfriend from the first year and marry her. He actually did that. His asceticism set him apart from the others, who had a certain tendency toward hedonism and bohemianism.

Miloš, in particular, sometimes got carried away, and when they were in a pub, he would erase beer stains with an eraser, which the waiter overlooked, but when he erased the headcheese, the waiter noticed and chased him and his friends away. Sometimes at a ball, he would drink from the glasses of dancing couples.

Miloš and Štěpán, along with some girls and other friends, would stop by Petr's place on New Year's Eve. They would go to Lucerna, which was only a short distance from Petr's place, and on the way back, they would stop there to finish their food and drinks. Petr was there with his parents, so they always treated them generously. His friends really enjoyed it and remembered it for many years to come, but some of the girls thought they were overdoing it with the food and drink, so they kept admonishing them.

The 1960s were an interesting period in the world, the so-called "sixties" or "sweet sixties," a period of political and cultural liberalization, which manifested itself in the West, among other things, in a cultural and social revolt by young people disillusioned with their parents' consumerist lifestyle, leading to the building of barricades, the hippie movement, the sexual revolution, the rise in popularity of drugs among young people, the great development of rock music, and the enormous popularity of the Beatles.

In 1967-1968, political protests and movements involving students and other segments of society took place in a number of countries, but nowhere did they reach the intensity seen in France. In France, however, the causes of the unrest were different than in Czechoslovakia. The economic situation in France deteriorated for the first time since the war, and unemployment rose significantly. Many protests were therefore directed against the conservative society of the time, against the materialism of the previous generation, and against the spread of technocracy. There were numerous smaller Marxist and neo-Marxist movements, such as the Trotskyists, Maoists, and Leninists. Stalin was perceived by certain groups as one of the liberators from fascism, and they defended him even when Stalinism had long since been condemned in Eastern Europe. The most influential intellectuals of the time, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and others, were also left-wing oriented, and many were members of the Communist Party, professing existentialism and humanism or structuralism. However, students also read various left-wing classics such as Marx and Bakunin.

In Czechoslovakia, only students of economics or other social sciences read Marx as required reading, and a detailed knowledge and analysis of *Capital* was a prerequisite for passing the political economy exam. Stalin was perceived by the younger generation as more of a criminal, and the ideas of communism were not popular.

From the early 1960s, the young generation in Czechoslovakia took on various degrees of opposition to the existing regime. For example, they would gather every May 1st in the evening at the monument to the poet Karel Hynek Mácha in Petřín Park. In 1963, about 1,500 of them gathered at Petřín.

A significant impetus was the Strahov demonstration by students in November 1967, who had not seen any improvement in the electricity supply to their dormitories and therefore took to the streets with a banner reading "We want light," which the government correctly understood as a desire for freedom, against it, and intervened with unusual harshness. This then led to discussions about the dismissal of Antonín Novotný from his position as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

The student May Day celebrations also played an important role. In 1968, they carried Brezhnev around with a sign reading "This is your doing," which he allegedly said when asked about his approval of Antonín Novotný's replacement. But it soon became clear that it was not our doing at all.

It was a wonderful time. The second half of the 1960s was the culmination of a positive period under the previous regime. Censorship was abolished, plurality of opinion flourished, people could travel, and there was social security. Many parents often recalled the First Republic as the best time of their lives, and Petr's generation later remembered the 1960s in the same way.