

Family and Present Time

UPF Conference in the Czech Republic

Prague, Czech Republic, 3. June 2015



By *Juraj Lajda*

The Czech UPF chapter convened a conference on the family in the Czech Parliament. This was the third conference on family issues organized by UPF in the Czech Parliament.

The two previous conferences had focused on the themes of „Family and Society“ (May 2014) and „Family in the 21st century“ (European leadership conference in October 2014).

Over 80 participants could listen to the presentations of six members of the Czech Parliament and one member of the European Parliament, among other speakers.

There was a vivid discussion after each panel, just like a small Parliament session. A wide public and a professional audience could listen to relevant content concerning the family.

The conference was co-hosted with the Civic Institute and supported by the Topaz organization under the auspices of Mrs. Nina Nováková, member of the Czech Parliament.

The purpose of the conference was to inform and update the participants about hot issues concerning the family in the Czech Republic and Europe. The conference was divided into two panels.



The conference was opened by **Dr. Juraj Lajda**, UPF secretary general for the Czech Republic who mentioned that it was convened on the occasion of the International Family Day and the Global Parents Day, both proclaimed by the United Nations.

He reminded that the family consists of a father, a mother and children as defined by the UN documents. He

spoke of the role of fathers and mothers in the structure of the family – challenges and solutions.

In his presentation, he described the fundamental structure of the family including the vertical, horizontal and individual orders which correspond to the order of the universe. A violation of these orders implies destruction of the society and universe.



The next speaker was **Dr. Jan Jandourek**, a well-known Czech essayist, writer and theologian. He spoke about the changes of the family in the last two generations. Dr. Jandourek compared the family under communism and today. During communist times, the totalitarian society could interfere with the family at any time. The family was like a hostage. Today we have a free society, there are more opportunities in life.

The concept of family also changed. There are more single individuals, people do not consider the family so important and the passing of experiences from one generation to another is not considered so necessary. The young generation can find all the information on internet. The crisis of the traditional family is a result of the crisis of the traditional society.



The next speaker was **Mr. Michal Heres**, a lawyer dealing with family law. He explained that each law is based on traditions and religion. Nowadays the family law is underestimated in the Czech Republic. There is no specialization for family law. The courts should not decide about our children but parents should solve these problems by themselves.



Dr. Petr Mach, member of the European Parliament was the next speaker. A family consists of a father, a mother and children, he said. It is unfortunate that some trends attempt to destroy this concept. If we are aware of the family breakdown and find out which laws are destroying the family, then correction is possible. Various feminist projects are financed by European money. The gender ideology wants to go beyond limits. In the family there is a lot of freedom and a free environment that disturb some people,

who want to interfere with it. Someone, a government minister or an official, has some idea how to educate children and tries to impose it on others. There are many cases when children are taken from families and given to others. Dr. Mach mentioned Norway and Great Britain. There is no reason to take away children from a family if one parent smokes, he said. The family should be the priority and the child belongs above all to the family.



Dr. Jitka Chalánková, a member of the Czech Parliament and a medical doctor, emphasized that a politician should always give his/her voice on behalf of the family (at least conservative politicians). The adoption of children by homosexuals is not correct, she said. The more the state interferes with the family, the easier it will be for parents to lose their children. Dr. Chalánková is very active in a cause where two children were taken away from a Czech mother in Norway.



The second panel was opened by **Mrs. Pavlína Golasewská**, a member of the Czech Parliament. She outlined some of the factors, which trouble families: loans (aggressive advertisement), housing problems, various kinds of addictions (alcohol, drugs, gambling), low education level, frequent promiscuity, mental diseases and adverse home environment (bad relationships). She suggested some ways to improve the situation. E.g. a novelty of the housing law, financial literacy, educating young couples to be aware of their responsibility towards their children.



Her presentation was followed by **Mrs. Pavlína Nytrová**, a member of the Czech Parliament. She proclaimed that there must be a healthy family in order to have a healthy state. The family consists of man, woman and child, she said. Among all priorities, the family should be the first. If it is endangered, the state is also endangered. Nowadays people prefer to enjoy their lives and nobody wants to sacrifice for others. Individualism is growing, the only value is money and freedom tends toward anarchy. It is difficult to keep a healthy family, she remarked, with the desires held by young people. Education for parenthood should start at school. She mentioned that last May there was an auction of children in Brussels, and warned that this could happen to our country. If we do not educate our children properly, they will not take care of us when we become old.



Mrs. Nina Nováková, member of the Czech Parliament, mentioned that the family is the only environment where all three generations get on well. The problem arises when we try to redefine the family. The relationships in the family are unconditional. The family is not a company, nor some fellowship, a political party or a sports club. It is a natural partnership based on unconditional relationships. In the family we have a principle of mutuality and a principle of appropriateness. Nowadays we let the children decide

about important matters too early. Mrs. Nováková introduced the term of “qualified parent”, meaning that one should voluntarily take on the duty to be a parent. Finally, she stressed the importance of sexual education and education for marriage and parenthood.



The next speaker was **Mr. Marek Benda**, a member of the Czech Parliament. The family can survive if we keep our word and the determination we had at the beginning. That is to say, we should have respect toward our word and toward ourselves. Indeed, nobody should prescribe how the family should behave. He mentioned that there is no borderline between the rights and duties of parents.



The last speaker of the conference was **Mrs. Radka Maxová**, member of the Czech Parliament and chairperson of the Standing Committee on Family Affairs, Equal Opportunities and Ethnic Minorities. In her introduction she mentioned that there are 581 000 incomplete families in the Czech Republic, a number she considered high. There is a general crisis of the Western style family. The child needs emotional education and all habits are passed down to the next generations. There should be more emphasis on moral values – personal responsibility and awareness that one is entering a bond and has to take care of children. The parents are responsible for the family and not the state. Unfortunately, the family policy in the Czech Republic is not conceptual.

Surprisingly, the speakers represented the five political parties present in the Czech Parliament. Both the coalition and opposition parties were represented. A variety of opinions could be heard, and we could thus contribute to the public and professional discussion on family issues. Mrs. Nováková, member of the Czech Parliament, put on her web page the following words: *“The conference on “The Family and the Present Time” created an unusual working, accommodating and friendly atmosphere, completely different from that experienced during Parliamentary proceedings. Members of Parliament from five different political parties and one member of the European Parliament could openly discuss problems related to the contemporary family. We did not coincide in many ways but were able to listen to each other. This was in contrast with the atmosphere we experience during Parliamentary proceedings, for which the price is high, for it affects the quality of laws, the level of political culture and it raises the dissatisfaction of citizens. This conference showed that it does not have to be like that”.*

We hope that this conference will also influence lawmakers to support and protect the family.

