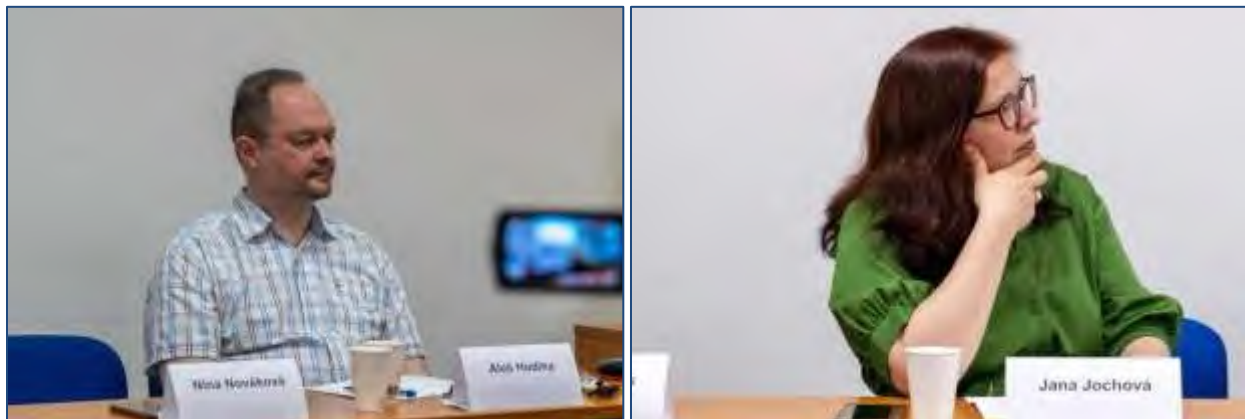


UPF Czech Republic: Czech Experts Discuss Family, Identity and the State

Juraj Lajda
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Prague, Czech Republic - Experts on family issues shared their perspectives at a conference hosted by UPF-Czech Republic on May 25, 2006, in Prague, to mark the International Day of Families.



Ms. Nina Nováková, a former member of Parliament and currently chairwoman of the Association of Christian Seniors, spoke on the topic, "Family and the Search for One's Own Identity." She pointed out that humans are social beings who want to belong somewhere and need to know their identity and place in society. This is where the family plays a key role, as it provides an individual with their first identity and sense of belonging. Unlike a political party, a loving family strives for the genuine development of the individual; parents want their children to be better than they are themselves, she said.

The next speaker, Mr. Aleš Hodina, founder of the International Institute for Family and Children, addressed the issue of parental separation and whether this means the end of a family. He pointed out that

the main factor in marriage breakdown was financial issues, suggesting that the state is not sensitive enough to this point and should do more to sustain families.

He also commented that, in the past, it was considered natural that children would care for their parents if needed. There were no pensions until German chancellor Otto von Bismarck introduced the practice for a select group in 1889, paving the way for state-sponsored elderly care. Today, the state contributes to pensions, and children no longer feel the natural need to care for their parents. Mr. Hodina said that, in his opinion, this is one of the reasons people do not want children.



Ms. Jana Jochová, chairwoman of Alliance for the Family, addressed the topics of marriage and parenthood. She noted that children are a reflection of their parents' values. She pointed out that society is ignoring the declining birth rate, which will be a major problem in the future. She went on to say that divorce means that family ties are severed, and children do not have a proper relationship with their grandparents. In her opinion, she said, the state should not interfere in family matters and cannot replace the family, which is a unique unit based on emotional bonds. The state can provide material support, but it cannot influence emotional relationships.

The next speaker was Mr. Martin Slešák, an attorney, representing the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) in the Czech Republic. He outlined the federation's view that the family is a school of love, and the best environment for children's spiritual and emotional development. He listed four types of relationships that an individual enters into within a family, ranging from children to parents. For these reasons, the family is important and must be protected and supported, he said.

The final speaker was Mr. Juraj Lajda, president of UPF-Czech Republic, who mentioned futurist Samuel Huntington's book *The Clash of Civilizations*, in which the author argues that future conflicts will occur between different civilizations. Civilization is defined by language, culture, customs, religion and self-identification. Civilizations go beyond political regimes or economic systems. It is precisely in this situation that families should play a significant role, Mr. Lajda noted. A family is founded on relationships of love; emotional and kinship bonds are formed even in multicultural families, allowing them to transcend cultural differences.

History teaches us, he added, that even as different cultures diverge from one another, the family has always existed as the basic unit of societies and nations, and is the necessary structure through which humanity can survive and thrive.

The conference concluded with a lively discussion.