

Airing Views on Why the Family Is Vital

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The author addresses the audience while seated beneath the Czech Republic coat of arms.

The Czech Republic chapter of Universal Peace Federation (UPF) recently convened its third conference in the Czech Parliament on the topic of the family.

The purpose of the Prague conference, "The Family and the Present Time," was to inform the participants about pressing issues concerning the family in the Czech Republic and Europe.

The two previous conferences were titled "The Family and Society" (May 2014) and "The Family in the 21st Century" (held during a UPF-organized European Leadership Conference in October 2014). At the June 3 conference, more than eighty participants listened to presentations by six members of the Czech Parliament and one member of the European Parliament, among other speakers. There was a lively discussion after each panel.



Carolyn Handschin from Switzerland

Our national UPF chapter and the Civic Institute organized the conference with the support of the Topaz organization under the auspices of Dr. Nina Nováková, a member of the Czech Parliament.

Changing societal mores

Dr. Juraj Lajda, secretary general of UPF-Czech Republic, in opening the conference, reminded the audience that the family is defined in UN documents as consisting of a father, a mother and children. He spoke of the roles of fathers and mothers and described the fundamental structure of the family including the vertical, horizontal and individual, which correspond to the order of the universe. A violation of this order implies the destruction of the society and universe, he said.

Dr. Jan Jandourek, a well-known Czech essayist, writer and theologian, spoke about the changes in the family in the last two generations. He compared the family under communism and today. During communist times, the totalitarian society could interfere with the family at any time, he said. The family was like a hostage.

Today we have a free society, and there are more opportunities in life.

The concept of family also has changed, Dr. Jandourek explained. More individuals are unmarried, and people do not consider the family as important as before. The passing of experiences from one generation to another is not considered necessary, as the young generation can find all information on the internet. The crisis of the traditional family is a result of the crisis of the traditional society.



Mr. Michal Heres, a lawyer dealing with family law, explained that each law is based on traditions and religion. Nowadays family law is given less value in the Czech Republic; there is no specialization for family law. The courts, he said, should not be the ones to decide about children; rather parents should solve these problems by themselves.

Dr. Petr Mach, a member of the European Parliament, was the next speaker. He lamented that some recent trends seem aimed at destroying the concept that a family consisting of a father, a mother and children. If we are aware of family breakdown and seek out the laws that (when applied) will create circumstances detrimental to the traditional family, correction is possible.

He explained that European money is funding various feminist projects and that gender ideology wants to push the limits. In the family, there is so much freedom, but a free environment disturbs some people, who want to interfere with it. Some people -- government ministers or other officials--are trying to impose their own ideas on others about how best to educate children. One aspect of this trend is that many cases have arisen of children being taken from their families. Dr. Mach gave examples from Norway and Great Britain.



Christian Hausmann from Germany

There is no reason to take away children from their family just because 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 Parliament (MP) and a medical doctor, emphasized that politicians should always take a stand 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 case in which two children were taken away from a Czech mother in Norway.

What families are up against

Mrs. Pavlína Golasewská, an MP, opened the second panel. She outlined some of the factors that are causing difficulties for families: debt, housing problems, various addictions (alcohol, drugs, gambling), promiscuity, mental illness, adverse home environments and a lack of education. She suggested some ways to improve the situation, e.g., innovations in housing laws, improving financial literacy and educating young couples to be aware of their responsibility toward their children.

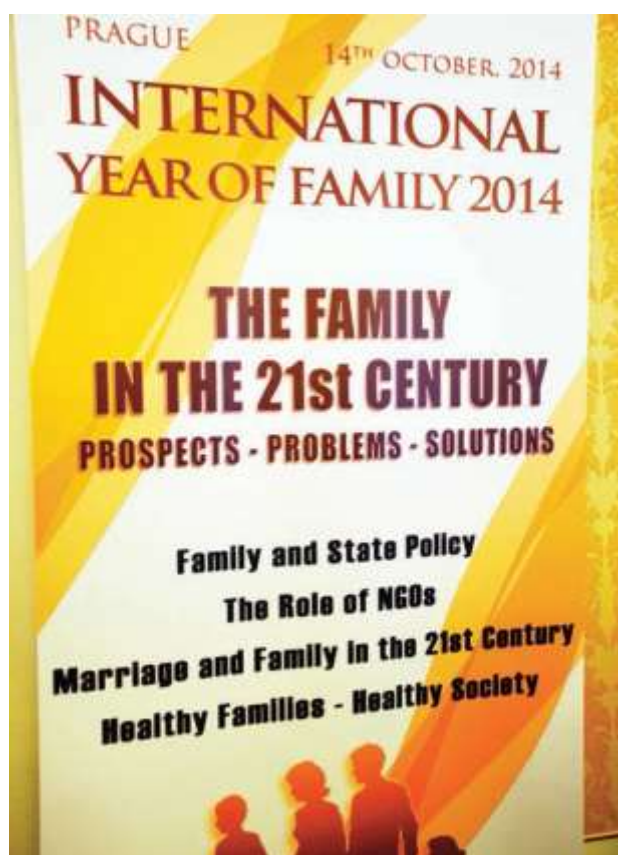
Next Mrs. Pavlína Nytrová, an MP, proclaimed that there must be a healthy family in order to have a healthy state. The family consists of man, woman and child, she said. Among all priorities, the family should be the first. If it is endangered, the state is also endangered.



The author (left) at the head table of the conference, which drew the from throughout the Europe

Nowadays people want to enjoy their lives and no one is willing 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 (human trafficking). She warned that this also could happen in the Czech Republic. If we do not educate our children properly, she said, they will not take care of us when we become old.



Mrs. Nina Nováková, MP, said relationships in the family are unconditional. The family is not a company, nor some fellowship, political party or sports club. It is a natural partnership based on unconditional relationships. In the family, there is 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 responsibility of being a parent. Finally, she stressed the importance of sexual education and education for marriage and parenthood.

The next speaker was Mr. Marek Benda, an MP. The family can survive if we keep our word and the determination we had at the beginning, he said. 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 border between the parents' rights and duties.

The last speaker was Mrs. Radka Maxová, an MP and the chair of the Standing Committee on Family Affairs, Equal Opportunities and Ethnic Minorities. She stated that there are 581,000 single-parent families in the Czech Republic, a number she considers

high. Children need emotional education, and all habits are passed down to the next generation.



The entrance to the Czech Parliament

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. Parents are responsible for the family; the state is not.

Surprisingly, the speakers represented all the political parties in the Czech Parliament, including the governing coalition and opposition parties. We heard a variety of opinions; the conference could thus contribute to the public and professional discussion on family issues.

Mrs. Nováková, an MP, put on her web page the following statement: "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 political parties and one member of the European Parliament could openly discuss problems related to the contemporary family. We did not agree on many things, but were able to listen to each other. This was in contrast to the atmosphere we experience during parliamentary

proceedings, for which the price is high, for it affects the quality of laws and the level of political culture and raises the dissatisfaction of citizens. This conference showed that it does not have to be like that."