

East, or West?

Czech Lands at the Crossroads of Cultures

Where Do We Belong?

- During Miloš Zeman's presidency, our foreign policy took a nefarious direction towards Eastern powers [...] – Pavel Fischer
- I believe in Western culture, in Western democracy, in the conception of a human being who is respected and free – Petr Fiala
- The image of the Czech Republic in Western countries has been getting worse and worse [...] – Jiří Pehe
- People do not object to Eastern orientation, if this is explained as advantageous and natural – Vlastimil Podracký

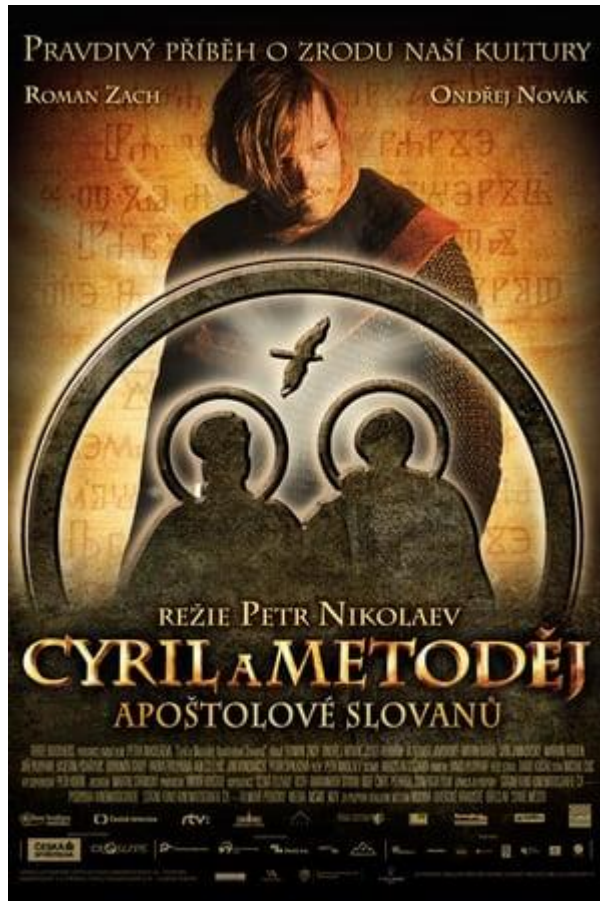
Starting from the East...

- The arrival of Slavs (6th century)
- Great Moravia
- 863: The Christianizing Byzantine mission (St Constantine and Methodius)
 - Inventing the Slavic alphabet
 - Translating the Bible into Old Church Slavonic
 - Founding the bases of law system
- Spread of Christianity to Bohemia (the Sázava region)



Starting from the East...

- TV series: Cyril and Method – The Apostles of the Slavs (2013)



Going Westwards...

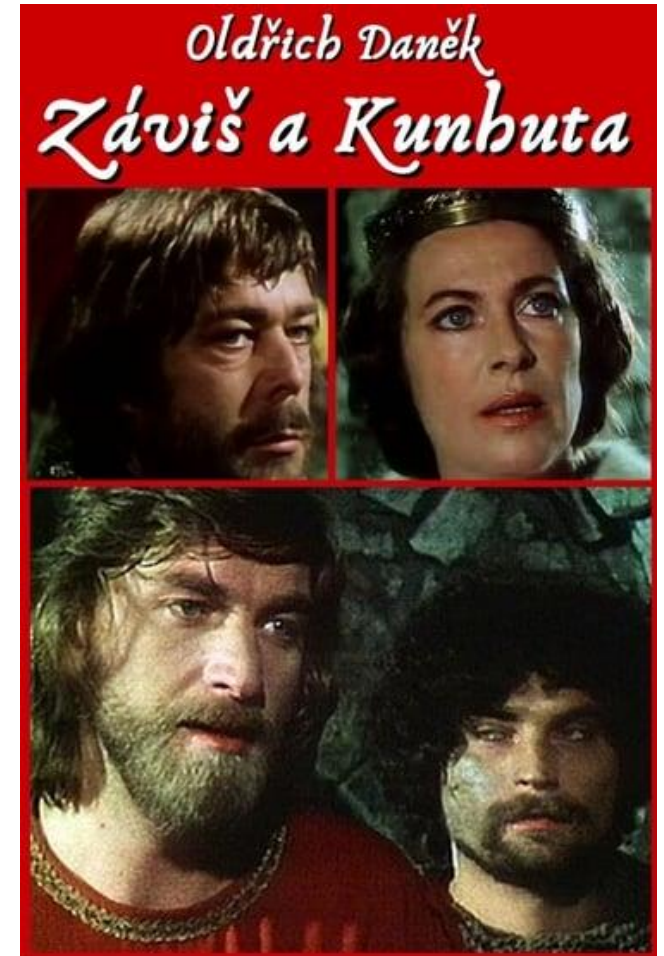
- Saint Wenceslas (cca 902 – 929/935)
 - The Přemyslid Dynasty
 - Bohemian Duchy
 - Subjection to the Saxons (paying the tribute)
 - Murdered by his brother, Boleslav



But his deeds I think you know better than I could tell you; for, as is read in his Passion, no one doubts that, rising every night from his noble bed, with bare feet and only one chamberlain, he went around to God's churches and gave alms generously to widows, orphans, those in prison and afflicted by every difficulty, so much so that he was considered, not a prince, but the father of all the wretched. – Cosmas of Prague

Getting High in the High Middle Ages

- The Last Přemyslids (1198 – 1306) – the first uninterrupted line of Czech kings
 - Přemysl Otakar II (1253–1278): the most powerful king in Central Europe
 - Václav III (1305–1306): King of Hungary, Bohemia, and Poland; murdered in Olomouc – the end of the direct Přemyslid line
- Rise in political power and cultural importance; the arrival of chivalry
- After 1306, an important development of Czech-written literature
- TV Film: Závěš a Kunhuta (1984)



Charles IV: The Climax before the Fall

- Czech king and Holy Roman emperor (1316–78); called the Father of the Motherland (*pater patriae*)
- Saint Vitus Cathedral (1344), the University (1348), the Karlštejn castle (1348), the Prague New Town (1348), the bridge (1357)
- Image-builder, a devout Christian, a skilful politician, and strategic player
- Supporter of Czech literary production
- A phenomenon in Czech popular culture
- His period was stormless and peaceful



Charles IV: The Climax before the Fall



- A Night at the Karlštejn Castle (1973) – a musical comedy



Finding an Individual Way

- The Hussite Wars (1419–1434): the Czech manner of reforming the Christian Church
 - Based on the criticism formulated by Master John Huss (burned in 1415)
 - Main principles: poverty of the Church, Calixtinism, iconoclasm
 - Beaten (Lipany, 1434), but Calixtinism tolerated
- Interpretations: the power of the Czech people, their non-conformity and respect for equality of all people, Czech humanism and anti-clericalism
- A predecessor to European reformation movements

Jan Hus (1954)



Jan Hus (2015)



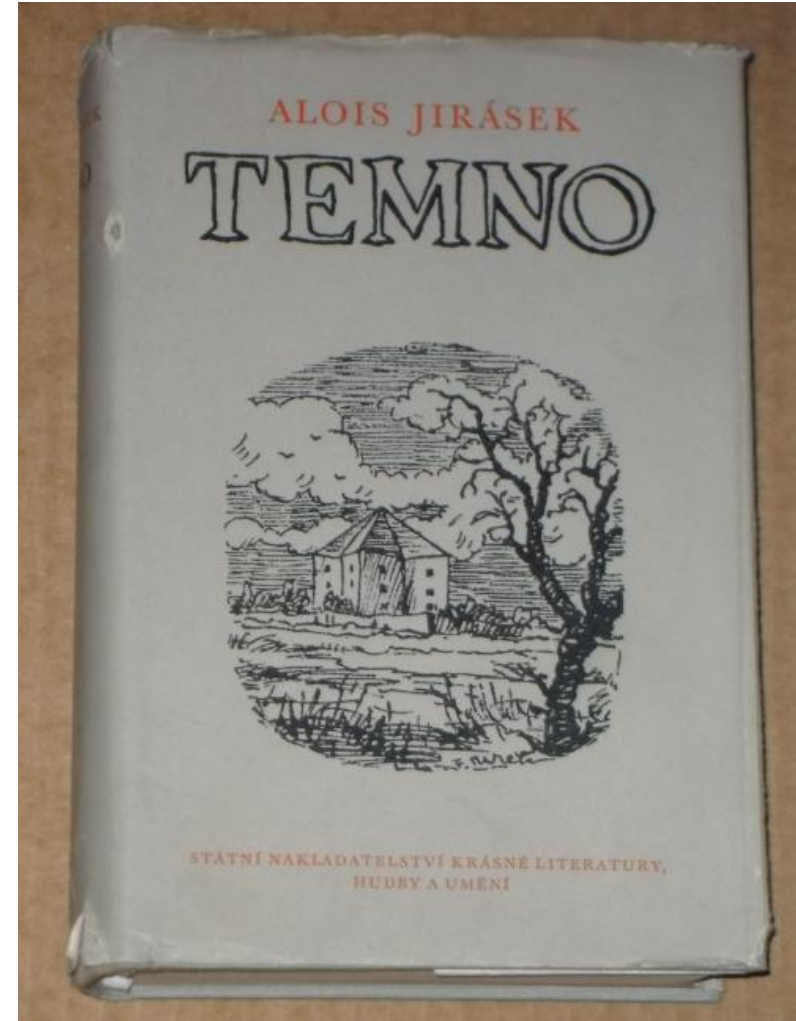
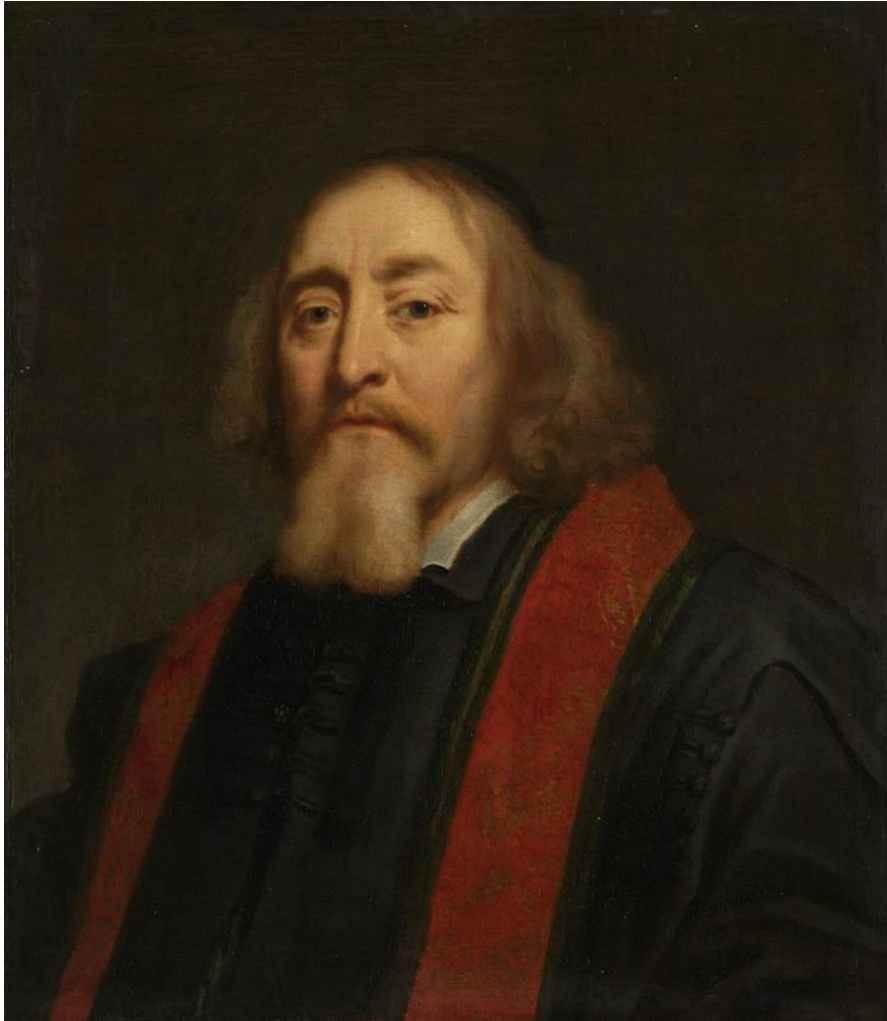
- Zdeněk Marold: The Lipany Battle (1898)



Subjected, Exploited, and Reborn

- 1526: The House of Habsburg starts to rule in the Kingdom of Bohemia (loss of the prominent position within the Holy Roman Empire)
- Tendency to curtail Calixtinism
- 1618: Insurgency of the Czech nobility
- 1620: The White Mountain Battle – defeat
 - Destruction of Czech noble houses
 - Massive exiles of the Czech Protestants (Czech Brethren)
 - The Dark Age (?)

Subjected, Exploited, and Reborn



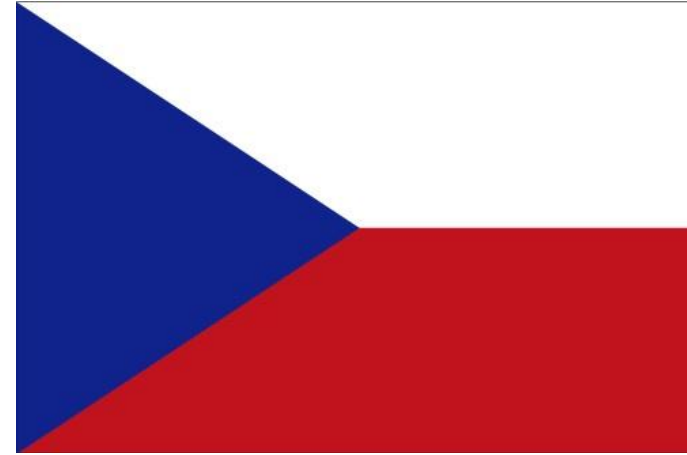
Subjected, Exploited, and Reborn

- 19th century: National Revival



Czechoslovakia: A Dream Come True?

- Established on 28 Oct 1918 (a national holiday)
- Ideas: republicanism, democracy, West, humanity, secularism
- Focus: Hussites, Czech Brethren, Czechoslovakism, TGM
- Out of scope: Baroque period, (discredited) Catholicism, royalism
- An island of democracy in central Europe



Czechoslovakia 1928 - 1938



GERMANY

⊙ Prague

BOHEMIA

MORAVIA-SILESIA

⊙ Brno

SLOVAKIA

⊙ Bratislava

AUSTRIA

POLAND

⊙ Užhorod
SUB-
CARPATHIAN
RUS'

HUNGARY

ROMANIA

Big Eights

- 1918: CS established
- 1938: The Munich Treaty
 - The Sudetenland loss
 - Betrayal of the West
- 1948: The Communists took over the power
 - Eastern bloc, Warsaw Pact
- 1968: The August Invasion
 - Betrayal of the East
- 2008: The outburst of the Great Recession
 - No serious consequences for the Czech bank system



Czechoslovakia, 1918-92



After 1989: And What Next?

- 1989: The Velvet Revolution – end of the Communist rule
- 1999: NATO membership
- 2004: EU membership
- 2007: Schengen Area membership
- 2009: Czech presidency of the EU Council
- However...
 - Eastern voices
 - Euroscepticism
 - Lessons from history



David Černý: Entropa



Hot Topics:

If You Wanna Get into Trouble, Speak about...

- Beneš Decrees
- Václav Havel and his heritage
- Václav Klaus
- Miloš Zeman
- Communism
- Roma people
- Faith
- European Union
- Telling Czechs what to do