

Jan Patočka and Max van der Stoel, March 1, 1977

Jan Patočka:

I am Charter spokesman, but... actually, up to now, I have done more writing than speaking. In order to explain Charter 77, its meaning, to avoid certain misunderstandings that have been largely diffused, in particular in the big campaign that has been waged against the Charter. Above all, we are in no way political dissenters, we are against this label and against what it names. We stand on the ground of this State and its laws. We are not aiming at any constitutional changes or projects. What interests us is the modus procedendi, enforcing valid Czechoslovak laws. Experience has taught us that when we address our complaints *only* to Czechoslovak authorities, the complaints fall flat, and this has persuaded us [a telephone rings], as a safeguard, to inform the accredited press agencies here of our appeals at the same time as the highest Czechoslovak authorities. This and this alone is the reason why the Charter too was announced to these agencies, but strangely enough we are being blamed—it's used as a kind of prime argument—because a French newspaper published the document a few hours before it was scheduled to be handed over to officials here. We have been reproached with this over and over again, though over and over again we have pointed out that this method, used for putting us off, presents something incidental as essential and brings the non-essential to the fore. Those are just a few remarks about our way of proceeding...

Max Van der Stoel:

Thank you very much. I appreciate your explaining your views. I myself have two things to say. First of all, no government has naturally the right to interfere in the internal affairs of foreign States. On the other hand, the government of the Netherlands, and not only the government of the Netherlands, insists on the full application of the Helsinki Final Act in all its various aspects... all aspects. I wish to reaffirm that, and I stand on reaffirming it also to you.

Jan Patočka:

I thank you quite specially for this explanation... which is not only important, but also hugely morally strengthening for us. We shall never... deviate from the path of the law, we shall never do anything in violation of Czechoslovak legislation, and we... it is our common commitment to strive for legality and... and respect... unconditional respect of all signed, published and... and ratified Czechoslovak laws.

Max Van der Stoel:

Thank you very much.

Přeložila Erika Abrams