

UNL prof discusses rights with Czechs

By Larry Peirce
Staff Reporter

David Forsythe recently returned from what he said was "not your average tourist trip" to Prague, Czechoslovakia, where he discussed human rights issues with Czech scholars and dissidents.

The Academy of Sciences of Prague, which hosted Forsythe, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln political science professor, can't be compared to anything in the United States, he said.

"It is a kind of establishment research organization," he said. "It is part of the party/state-rule apparatus."

The communist party and government control the academy and dictates its research.

During the 10-day visit, Forsythe gave two speeches about human rights and political prisoners at Charles University in Prague, and met with Czech foreign ministers and scholars.

Forsythe said an American being invited by an eastern European nation to speak about human rights is a rare event. He said that while the invitation is evidence of a loosening Czech government, censorship was still evident at formal meetings.

He said he was not restricted in what he talked about, but during formal meetings in front of government officials, Czech scholars wouldn't discuss human rights issues in socialist countries.

This self-imposed censorship by his Czech counterparts was a reminder that little has changed in that country.

"They wouldn't even talk about things that are public knowledge in the Soviet Union," he said.

Forsythe said he tried to talk about human rights issues in Yugoslavia, China and other socialist countries, but the Czech scholars would not.

Czech scholars talked about human rights issues in the United States, such as problems with blacks and Native Americans. They also wanted to discuss reasons why the United States hasn't ratified most of the international treaties on human rights.

After meeting with the scholars privately, Forsythe said, it was clear to him that they were ready for change.

Czech leaders are not ready to endorse any change, he said.

Forsythe said the events of the Prague Spring of 1968, when an attempt by the Czech government at liberal reform was crushed by the Soviet Union, still strongly affect Czechs.

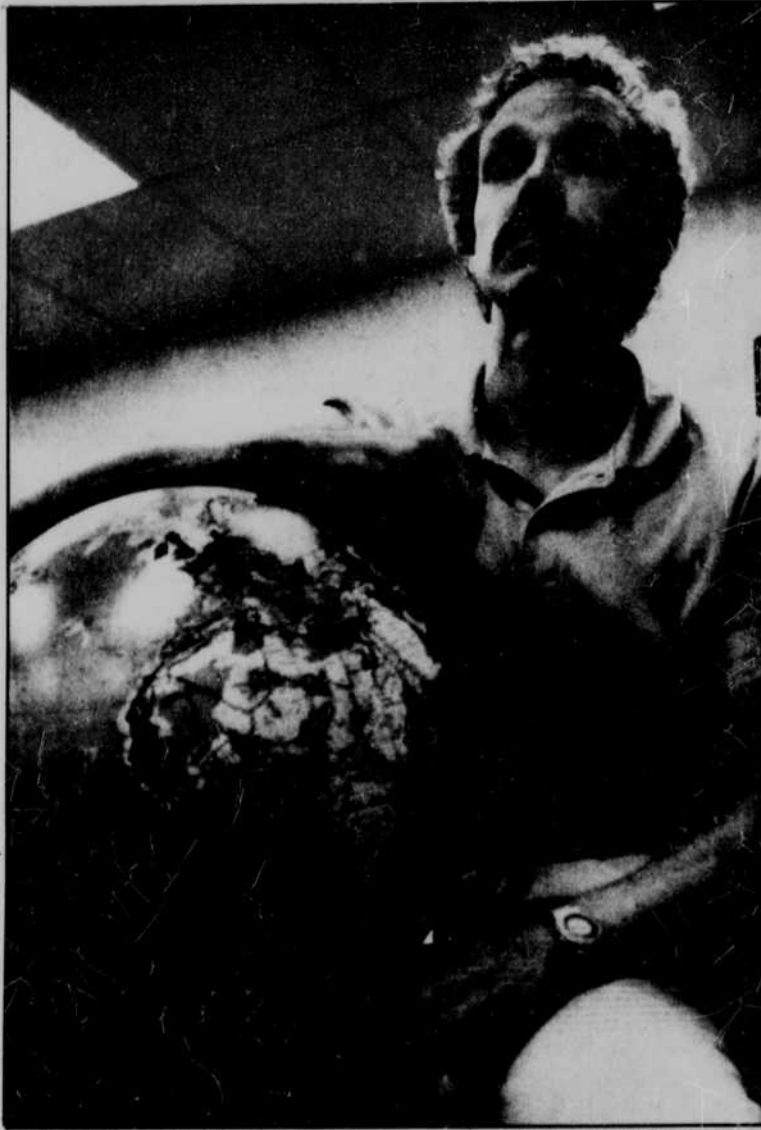
Forsythe said that "in the backs of the minds" of the scholars he met with was the question "Where are those Czech reformers of 1968?"

"Well," he said, "they are in one of three places: they are living abroad, in prison, or shoveling coal someplace. These people do not want the same thing to happen to them."

Forsythe said of the socialist governments that have relaxed government control over citizens' political speech that Czech officials are close to the East Germans, who are resistant to any kind of reform or "glasnost" now seen in the Soviet Union.

"One can discuss all sorts of things in Moscow that one cannot discuss in Prague," he said.

Forsythe said Czech officials expelled 32 westerners, including 6 Americans, the weekend he left.



Connie Sheehan/Daily Nebraskan

Forsythe

These people held an unauthorized meeting on human rights, he said.

With the help of U.S. diplomats, he met with the three Czech dissidents who organized the illegal meeting.

"They were being harassed by the regime," he said. "They were under surveillance."

A great amount of caution had to be taken to arrange a meeting with

dissidents, Forsythe said. He said that if he had gone to the home of a dissident, Czech officials might have physically prevented any discussion.

Along with gifts from the Academy, Forsythe brought home a better understanding of the Czech situation and a continuing dialogue with Czech scholars on human rights.

UNL officials discuss 1989 implementation of photo I.D. system

By Julie Dauel
Staff Reporter

University of Nebraska-Lincoln officials have taken the first step in developing an all-purpose UNL photo identification system.

Members of the student I.D. card committee met for two weeks and discussed how the system will work, the cost, and where students will be able to use the cards, said Doug Zatechka, director of housing.

"Nothing is decided as of yet," Zatechka said. "The committee is reviewing concepts about what the system will do."

The committee, composed of officials from several UNL departments, will meet every Wednesday to discuss plans for the system.

The system is scheduled to be in use by fall 1989.

The photo identification cards might look like Vali-Dine cards used in residence hall food services, Zatechka said. One card will enable a student to check out books at the library, use recreation facilities, vote at student government elections, and get into campus activities and athletic events.

"I see a lot of benefits from the system and it should minimize problems for the students," Zatechka said.

"Instead of a student carrying five cards he will only have to carry one," Zatechka said.

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