

Ambassador says Hungary on verge of collapse

By Michael J. Sears
Emerald Contributor

Grandmother-turned-revolutionary Rita Klimova, the Czechoslovakian ambassador to the United States, told a packed room Friday her country is teetering on breakup.

The human rights activist and former dissident told the crowd of students, faculty and local residents that Czechoslovakia's political situation is changing from day to day, and the drive for independence is growing among Slovakian citi-

zens in the eastern part of the country.

Czechoslovakia is a federation of two nationalities — Czechs and Slovaks. Many Slovaks have long believed they would be better off establishing a separate country apart from the Czechs, Klimova said, and have made moves toward that end since the collapse of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia two years ago.

Klimova, who is a Czech, said although separation is a possibility, it will not take place in the violent fashion of

Yugoslavia or the Soviet Union.

"There is no history of violence between Czechs and Slovaks," she said. "Even in the worst case scenario, there will be no violence."

The 59-year-old former dissident became a favorite among the Western media during Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Revolution" in November, 1989. The former communist and economics lecturer joined playwright Vaclav Havel in forming Civic Forum, a coalition of Czechoslovakian human rights activists which helped bring

down the hardline communist government.

When Havel became president in 1990, he appointed Klimova as ambassador to the United States.

Klimova said one of the top priorities of the new Czechoslovakian government is to "return to Europe." She said 40 years of socialism has left her country devastated, and establishing a market economy and economic links with the West will bring Czechoslovakia back to its pre-World War II prosperity.

Klimova also said the dismantling of socialism would cause economic inequalities within society, and that some economic injustices will occur. However, she said the top priority of the government should be to establish an efficient market economy, not economic justice.

"If we address justice now, we will all be equal in poverty," Klimova said.

This brought the ire of one of the listeners, who asked if the government's job is not to provide economic justice, what should the government's role be.

"The government's role in society should be minimal," Klimova said.

She admitted her change of mind is a complete turn-around from her younger days as a member of the Communist Party, but the experience of living under socialism showed her the

problems caused by large government involvement in society.

Earlier in the day the charge d'affaires from the Hungarian embassy, Eniko Bollabas, spoke on the role of Hungarian women in post-communist Hungarian society.

Bollabas, a long-time women's rights activist, said Hungarian women face a two-fold challenge because they must overcome injustices of both the communist and pre-communist era.

She said new organizations of women's rights are emerging throughout Hungary to replace communist organizations that never really advanced the well-being of women. Bollabas said the old National Alliance of Women was a puppet organization for the communist party.

"Their stand was that there were no problems for women in communist Hungary, so there was no need to push for women's rights," she said.

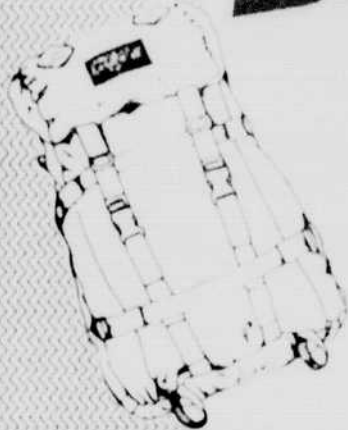
Bollabas said problems Hungarian women face today include overwork, low wages and the growing problem of pornography. She also said because of the past communist system in Eastern Europe, there are few women role models in Hungary.

The seminar, "New Political Cultures: Economics, Gender and Society in Eastern Europe," was held by the University's Russian and East European Department.

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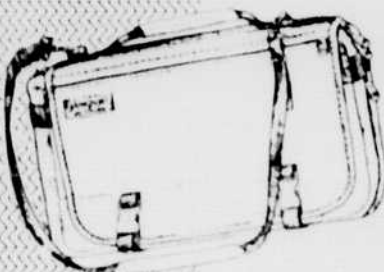
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The curriculum at CSPP-Los Angeles exposes Blackman to the latest developments in organizational theory and practice, and this is crucial as he examines job security in his dissertation.

Blackman is a fourth year student in the Organizational PhD program at the California School of Professional Psychology, Los Angeles, a program that develops professionals who are helping organizations respond to complex problems in today's changing world.

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