are certain to be terminated, if they have not already. So far, the Soviet Union has not pressured the ANC to end its armed struggle, but the effect of Moscow’s ‘new thinking’ is undeniable in the organisation’s present emphasis of a negotiated settlement. For example, Namibia’s independence, to date the crowning achievement of superpower co-operation on regional issues, forced the ANC to give up its front-line bases in Angola.

The ANC has received little support from its Western backers. Only Sweden is known to have complained to Hungary about its new ties. So mute has the international response been that Nigeria has taken it upon itself to remonstrate with the Central European states. The veiled dealings of the East should become a target for the Western anti-apartheid movement which could push the insecure new governments into the limelight. Indigenous solidarity movements must also come together, if Central Europe is to be prevented from sustaining the longevity of apartheid.

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RETURNING HOME

Czechs are fed up with dogmatic communism. But the result can be unsettling. Pavla Miller catches up for a meal with old friends.

Last month I went to visit my family and friends in Czechoslovakia. For a couple of weeks, everything went well. Prague was as beautiful as ever, my relatives cautious but chirpy about the recent political changes, the ever-present signs of political activity moving and exciting.

My first visit to old school friends was a success; catching up on who did what until well into the night. The second visit started innocuously enough, with light chatter over biscuits and wine. Before soup, unemployment, inflation, high interest rates and concentration of media ownership found their way into my description of what life was like in Australia.

After some deliberation, my friends decided that Australia was not a country to emulate, in economic matters at least. You obviously do not have a proper capitalist economy with a proper free market, they retorted, and that’s what we need here. I suggested that a “proper free market”, unconstrained by monopolies, restrictive trading practices and such is a bit difficult to come by, except perhaps in fresh vegetables.

The soup got burnt as the debate heated up. I took the line that rejection of a corrupt and inefficient communist regime need not imply that “proper” capitalism (whatever that meant) was full of virtue; one should not trust either lot.

My friends argued that any attack on capitalism put me in the same boat as the corrupt communists. You have listened to too much propaganda, they said. The logic of capitalism is neutral and impartial. It is efficient and logical. You need to do away with the welfare state to get the economy functioning properly. Look how well South Korea and Chile are doing. Now that the communist dictatorship has fallen in Nicaragua, even they will be able to become prosperous.

There followed a tiny bowl of burnt soup and a fierce argument about US imperialism, freedom fighters and such. It was then that I brought up the matter of the World Bank and its influence on Third World countries through crippling debt repayments. Does that sound like democracy? They should not have borrowed the money if they couldn’t pay it back, argued my increasingly unfriendly friends. We never finished the meal. Hostility against detractors of the World Bank and all it stands for had become too intense.

This is a true story about otherwise friendly and honest impoverished intellectuals, hard working, idealistic and long interested in politics; people in many ways similar, I would imagine, to a large proportion of ALR readership. Their views are undoubtedly representative of a large section of the Czech population. They are no simple reactionaries - they would probably let rightwing visitors finish their meal, but would disagree vehemently on many fundamental issues.

And there is no end to the story. Logically, it seems to make sense for an unrelenting diet of dogmatic communism to give way to dogmatic anti-communism. But logic notwithstanding, the experience has left me thoroughly confused.

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