

Prague April 16, 2019

The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Dear Secretary of State

I have been dismayed by the news that in the United Kingdom you just need to quote someone's words out of context to get the Her Majesty Government (HMG) to sack him.

The more so when the person involved is Sir Roger Scruton whom I was honoured to know in the early Eighties when he started to regularly visit Czechoslovakia.

He did not come for fun or sightseeing, but in order to help my countrymen who strived to maintain small enclaves of serious thinking in bleak landscape of a Communist nonsense.

He invested his energy and resources in activities of the Jan Hus Foundation that organized the visits of academics from the West who participated in underground seminars and discussions attended by Czechoslovaks eager to hone their reasoning capabilities in encounters with real thinkers.

And by no means were these academics from one philosophical camp only. Many of them belonged to what could be termed as decidedly un-conservative schools of thought.

Younger readers should know that all these activities were regarded as "ideological subversion" by the ruling Communists and therefore state security operatives frequently stormed into the private flats where the seminars were held and rounded all participants up.

Western academics were subjected to several hours of interrogation and then expelled from the country with stern warning never to attempt anything like that anymore. So it was inevitable that in 1984 (now Sir) Roger was banished for good. He could not visit my country until 1989 when the Communists were gone.

In the several years we could regularly meet I developed a great respect for him. Not only for his dedication to helping us at the time when such endeavours seemed utterly hopeless, but also for his devotion to hard and thorough thinking.

In discussions with him – and we occasionally disagreed – I never saw him retire behind a mental cliché that so often serves as a surrogate for thoughts in minds closed by an ideology.

He was a rare species of a thinker.

So although our political views on many issues diverged after 1989 I did not hesitate for a moment to support a petition asking the then president Václav Havel to award him the Medal for Merit, first class.

He received it in 1998.

In 2014 he published "*Notes from Underground*" – a story set in Prague in the Eighties that masterfully depicts what it has been like to live under totalitarian regime in case one refused to kowtow to the party line of the day.

For me it was a proof that Sir Roger's acumen and moral perspicuity have not diminished in the least since we had been debating sundry issues in times fortunately long gone.

And that is why I cannot but be dismayed by his dismissal.

Does it mean that the closing of one's mind is becoming a prerequisite for any role in the United Kingdoms' government?

Your sincerely

Pavel Bratinka



Mr. Pavel Bratinka (in that order: physicist, technical official, street sweeper, stoker, MP, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Member of the Cabinet, capitalist, European public affairs consultant).

Co-Signatories:

Mr. Ivan Havel (dissident, scientist, brother of late President Václav Havel)

Mr. Daniel Kroupa (dissident, Member of the Parliament, Senator, academic)

Mr. Petr Pithart (dissident, Senator, former Prime Minister of the Czech Republic)

Mr. Alexandr Vondra (former Charter 77 spokesman, Advisor to President Václav Havel, Senator, the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence)

