Indiana Jones Fights the Communist Police: Text Adventures as a Transitional Media Form in the 1980s Czechoslovakia

Introduction

Research into digital fiction and non-linear narrativity, as well as game studies, are examples of a truly global academic undertaking. Most of the academic output in these fields, as well as the actual texts that are being analyzed, are written in the English language. At first, it might not come as a surprise: video games seem to be an eminent example of cultural globalization; electronic literature and interactive fiction may be comparatively less mainstream, but also originate in a global setting and are dominated by the English language. All of this contributes to an illusion that video games and electronic literature are homogenous phenomena hovering weightlessly in an undefined space, independent of cultural context (maybe with the exception of Japanese culture). This paper and the ongoing research behind it is an attempt to get back on the ground and focus the attention of the two said disciplines on a specific place in space and time: ot the social and cultural context of the late-communist era Czechoslovakia in the 1980s.

This paper aims to introduce the space of Czechoslovak text adventure games of the 1980s as a space of specific textual (or cybertextual) practices influenced by the social, economic and cultural context of the era. In short, it is an attempt to describe the Czechoslovak text adventures as a cultural phenomenon. This cannot be undertaken without describing the overall situation of digital technology. The material for this paper has been gathered in an on-going research project that seeks to map the history of computer game culture in Czechoslovakia, with sources including archival material, contemporary media and, for the most part, personal interviews. The games analyzed in this paper were found in the *textovky.cz* online database (Fismol, 2010)*.* I focused on text adventures for the *Sinclair ZX Spectrum,* which was the dominant platform at the time[1].

The context of the late communist and early post-communist era Czechoslovakia is intriguing in terms of computer hardware and software, access to both of which was severely limited due to

---

[1] Many Czechoslovak games were ported to or originated on other platforms, such as Sharp MZ-800, Atari 8-bit or Commodore 64.

the economic isolation and inefficient domestic production. The late 1980s saw the end of "normalization", a post-1968 political process of mostly non-violent, but systematic suppression of individual and communal liberties. Travelling to countries outside of the Iron Curtain was restricted to a strictly limited number of people; access to culture and technology from the West was scarce and controlled, although there were informal (and underground) systems of distribution of printed media, music, film and software. Although computers were being produced in the country, they were usually not sold for home use – micro computers were initially only sold directly to state-owned facilities and educational institutions. Many early users were introduced to computers at schools, computer clubs run by youth organizations or through parents who happened to work in research institutions and the like. The only way one could become a computer owner was to purchase it abroad, which was no small feat, or to buy it on the black market – in fact both computer clubs and research institutions also frequently resorted to purchasing computers on the black market (Libovický, 2011). The first Czech computer to be available to the public was the 1987's *Didaktik Gama*, a clone of the British *Sinclair ZX Spectrum* 8-bit computer. Over 50,000 of these were sold, but there was still significant shortage of supply. The only computer magazine at that time, *Mikrobáze*, published an amusing account of what buying a computer entailed: On a day when 50 Gama's were supposed to arrive at an electronics store in downtown Prague before the Christmas of 1988, a line of 30 eager customers formed outside of the store already at 6am, 3 hours before its opening (Meca, 1989). Computer games and computing as such were therefore relatively niche hobbies – in 1989, only 1.8% Czech households owned a computer (Czech Statistical Office, 2010b). Video game console market was virtually non-existent.

As for software, first mentions of original copies of computer games being sold in the country surfaced in early 1989, mere months before the Velvet Revolution:

> As far as we know, there are no programs for this computer *[Didaktik Gama – J.Š.]* available on the market. Before Christmas, copies of four games (probably sales items) for the ZX Spectrum were imported. They missed the Christmas season, however, because their price had not been determined[2] soon enough (Bechyně, 1989).

Despite these limitations, there was a lively community of home computer users, many of whom played computer games, including text adventures. Informal systems of distribution were in place, forming a shadow economy as well as a space for free sharing of software. According to Vít Libovický, the author of the *City of Robots*[3] text adventure, this informal distribution worked at "the speed of lightning" – it reportedly took about two weeks in the mid-1980's for a piece of software to get to computer enthusiasts all across the nation.

---

[2] In the planned economy of communist Czechoslovakia, prices were set centrally.
[3] For the sake of readability, I will refer to individual titles using their English translations. The full list of cited games with their original titles is available in the bibliography.

An important factor coming into play when discussing text-related applications of digital technology is the language. Most users simply did not read English. Many programmers, encouraged by computer clubs, disassembled foreign commercial programs, translated them into Czech or Slovak, and distributed them further. The importance of diacritics in both Czech and Slovak languages[4] led to the introduction of many competing character coding systems, required especially in text processing, and also text adventures.

Computer games were already popular in the mid 1980s. According to an early 1986 survey published in a newsletter of the Mikrobáze computer club, an average respondent had 22 games, comprising 54% of his or her software collection (Mikrobáze, 1986a). While action-oriented game could be, at least to a certain extent, enjoyed without understanding the original language[5], the same could not be said about text adventures. That was when the Mikrobáze club officially asked its members to translate "dialogue games":

> The most serious problem for us due to the lack of time is the transcription of dialogue games from English into Czech. This is enormously difficult in case of games with compressed text. We welcome (and are ready to remunerate) any fruitful effort that would help include these specific, strategically and logically challenging games into the Mikrobáze collection […] (Mikrobáze, 1986b p. 62).

Being a part the "602nd base organization" of Svazarm – the Association for Cooperation with Army – Mikrobáze was a rare example of a large (reportedly with thousands of members), well-organized club that could actually pay some royalties to programmers. The Mikrobáze collection was available to its members free of charge, which made the club a hub of the informal distribution network[6]. Its encouragement of text adventure localization is an important evidence of the genre's attractiveness, but at this time, first attempts at original Czechoslovak text adventures were already under way.

Overcoming all the obstacles: Text adventures as a genre

Around 1985, František Fuka (working under the Fuxoft label), a teenage amateur connected to the computer club of the 666th organization of Svazarm, started to write his own text adventures. Inspired by foreign games and having made after a few rudimentary attempts, he released a short text adventure *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, which followed all the basic genre conventions.

---

[4] The two languages are to a large extent mutually intelligible.
[5] Most games that circulated in the country were in English, some in Spanish, German or French.
[6] While being a part of the official state infrastructure, the club openly and officially made copies of foreign software for their users. This changed in the late 1986.

Fig. 1. The loading screen (left) and the opening screen of the first Czechoslovak *Indiana Jones* game (Fuka, 1985). Unlike in most of the later text adventures, there were no diacritics. The game screen reads: *"You are standing on a clearing near a huge rock massif. There is small opening in the rock at the ground level. Another quite big opening is about 15 meters above you. You can see a letter. You can go east. Command: ?"*

But what are the specifics and conventions of the genre? Genre definitions shift with passing time and it is often easier to define a genre based on family resemblances, rather than a set of conditions and features. According to histories of text adventures, the genre descends from the game *Adventure* (Crowther, et al., 1976) that originated on mainframe computers in the 1970s United States' research labs and universities. The genre experienced its "golden age" in the USA in the early and mid-1980s and has since then moved to the fringes of digital entertainment (Aarseth, 1997; Montfort, 2005). These days, it is usually called *interactive fiction* or *IF* by both its creators and scholars.

In Czechoslovakia, the genre reached its apex around the Velvet Revolution of 1989. By then, the most widely used Czech and Slovak term *textová hra* (text game) has been shortened to *textovka* ("textie"). Initially, there was also another way of naming this peculiar genre: "dialog games" (as seen above) or "conversational games". Both of these names highlight a different aspect of the games. The dialog part refers to the typical text adventure's gameplay cycle. First, the program prints a description of a particular part of the fictional world of the game on the screen. Then, the player is expected to enter a command that controls the player character. These were originally typed in as verbal commands (usually using the verb+object structure), later in some games selected from a menu or a set of icons. The inventory of possible actions tends to follow certain rules and conventions, including a list of most widely used verbs such as EXAMINE, PICK UP, USE, and so on. Following the input, the program parses the command and if it is valid, the data representation of the fictional world in the computer's memory may change accordingly – the simulated world has been acted upon. The player receives feedback

and can enter another command. This cycle obviously shares many similarities with entering commands into the command prompt of an operating system.

It is difficult to determine who is actually talking to whom in this dialogue, as the narrator's voice is being mixed with the voice of the character and system messages, creating a "mechanical choir" (Aarseth, 1997 p. 120). While Fuxoft's *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* narrates in second person ("You are standing on a clearing near a huge rock massif."), *City of Robots* narrates in first person ("I am in a supermodern city. I can see: A strange lake. An inscription. [...]"). This is more of a stylistic choice as it does not seem to relate to the way the player interacts.

The manual of the *City of Robots* game describes its game mechanics in the following way:

> During the game, the player must decide for an astronaut, as if he was remotely controlling him. The aim of the game is to overcome all the obstacles, find a spaceship, ready it for launch and take off for Earth. There is an emphasis on player's logical and creative thinking (Libovický, 1989).

This quote proves that while text adventures' basic controls might be intuitive and self-explanatory, it is much more difficult to conceptualize what is going on between the player and the character, or between the "conversation" and the narrative that is being generated. Aarseth considers text adventures *cybertexts*, or texts whose traversal requires non-trivial effort and are configurative. According to him, what is specific for the narrative discourse of text adventures is the *negotiation plane*, in which the player seeks to achieve a desirable unfolding of the events (Aarseth, 1997). Viewing text adventures as a genre of computer games (which is rather common), Juul sees them as games of *progression*, as they usually constitute a series of puzzles that need to be solved ("obstacles to be overcome") before moving further (Juul, 2005). These structural traits relate to the frequent use of narrative and gameplay devices such as labyrinths, encrypted messages etc. Thematically, Czechoslovak text adventures drew inspiration from adventure movies (the *Indiana Jones* games), science fiction (*City of Robots*), fantasy (*Belegost*); many of them were light-hearted parodies of existing genres.

In the broader sense, *text games (textovky)* included a number of other subgenres lumped together based on their presentation. Text-based strategy games, such as *Hamurabi* (*Chammurapi* in Czech and Slovak), were also often considered to belong into the same category (Fait, 2011). Another specific subgenre was the *hacking game*[7]. These were simulations of a computer inside a computer, in which the player was "as if" connected to a computer network via a modem and could read messages from his contacts, dial numbers, hack bank accounts etc. Inspired by films like *WarGames* (Badham, 1983), one of the first hacking games was *System 15000* (Kristofferson, 1984) by the U.K. developer Lee Kristofferson.

---

[7] This is a retrospective label not in use in the 1980s.

Although the genre never really took off in the U.K. or the U.S., it became very popular in Czechoslovakia thanks to the *Sting* series started by František Fuka.

Fig. 2. Hacking games: *System 15000* (Kristofferson, 1984) and *Sting III* (Fuka, 1986). *Sting III* was the first game in the Czechoslovak series, intended as a sequel to the films *Sting* (Roy Hill, 1973) and *Sting II* (Kagan, 1983).

Hacking games are rather ingenious in their representation of their fictional worlds: they only represent what is seen on a computer screen. They narrate mainly through email messages and text files downloaded from databases. The player manipulates a fictional computer, so there is minimum mediation: the strangeness of an "as if remotely controlled" character needs not be addressed. As František Fuka puts it on the loading screen of *Sting III*:

> Play the role of the unemployed programmer Tim Coleman, equipped with a Timex 2097 computer and a RS-2368 modem, and try to rob other robbers with a little help from your friends (Fuka, 1986).

Tim Coleman later became the main character of many more Czechoslovak games – and in the game *Fuksoft* (Hrda, 1987) he even met František Fuka, a prolific game designer and at the same time a fictional character in other authors' games. To understand this bizarre situation, we must describe the "social life" of text adventures in Czechoslovakia.

Don't strand your friend: the culture of Czechoslovak text adventures and intertextuality

Although there was a vibrant text adventure market in the U.S. and the U.K., English-language commercial games could not gain a sizable following in Czechoslovakia due to the language barrier. The establishment of the domestic *textovka* as a national version of the international genre was an important step in the history of the Czech computing culture. For some time, text adventures comprised the majority of domestic game production. One of the reasons was that they were relatively easier to make. František Fait, lead programmer of the game *…and what*

about that?! said: "We didn't have time, knowledge or skills for anything more." (Fait, 2011). This is not to say that *any* text adventure is easy to make, but that a passable text adventure is easier to make than a passable action game; in fact, all of the games discussed in this paper were amateur productions and only a few could stand comparison with foreign commercial titles in terms of gameplay and narrative complexity. Between 1985 and 1989, at least 65 original text adventures were produced for the *Sinclair ZX Spectrum*, along with some translations (Fismol, 2010).

Their authors were mostly amateur users of 8-bit computers; some of them were connected to computer clubs run by youth organizations or Svazarm. They were interconnected (although not reliably) by the informal distribution network – Sybilasoft's Michal Hlaváč remembers that as producers of popular text adventures, they received letters from all over the country (personal communication, 2008).

The informal nature and interconnectedness of the Czechoslovak hobby computing scene, along with an open-minded approach to copyright to both foreign and domestic work, resulted in pronounced intertextuality. Let us start with *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom.* It would be foolish to think it was a licensed product. It was more of a piece of fan (interactive) fiction. Interestingly enough, the original film was only released in Czechoslovakia in 1990 – it is likely that Fuka saw it on a pirated VHS. For many players, this game was their first contact with this media franchise.

What was then the relationship between Fuka's a Spielberg's (1984) Indiana Jones? A systematic classification of metatextual relationships was introduced by the Slovak stucturalist Anton Popovič. According to Popovič, a *metatextual continuation* is the transfer of a particular semantic invariant from one text (the *prototext*) into another. He then classifies metatexts according to three binary categories: (1) the attitude of the author of the metatext towards the prototext, which can be either *affirmative,* or *controversial*; (2) the strategy of the author, which can determine whether the relationship is *obvious,* or *covert*; and (3) the level of the text, i.e. whether the metatext relates to the prototext as *a whole*, or to its particular *elements*. In this classification, a parody would be a metatext that is controversial (as it "makes fun" of the original), covert (because, as opposed to travesty, it does not declare its relationship to the prototext) and relating to the prototext as a whole (Popovič, 1975). Popovič originally took into account only one prototext and one metatext, but we can easily extend it to multilateral relationships.

Although Fuka's *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* shares the title with Lucas' one, it only selects a certain part of it, which it edits (eliminating, for example, all supporting characters) and adapts into a text adventure. We may call it an affirmative, obvious, partial metatext. Its sequel, *Indiana Jones 2* (1987), is very vaguely inspired by the *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of*

the Lost Ark film (Spielberg, 1981), but is in fact embedded into the fictional universe as a stand-alone episode that takes place during Indy's "holiday". In the third part of his series, Fuka states explicitly:

> This game is to a certain extent (but not entirely) inspired by the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, which might make into our movie theaters some time this decade (Fuka, 1990).

Indiana Jones and the Golden Idol of the Celts (Madmax, 1989) was written bhen y a different author independently of Fuka (although the author greets him on the welcome screen). Although Indiana Jones was nowhere to be found in the Czechoslovak mass media, he became an iconic hero of Czechoslovak computer games – eventually becoming the player character in the anonymously released, topical text adventure *The Adventures of Indiana Jones in Wenceslas Square in Prague on January 16, 1989*[8] (Znovuzrozeny, 1989). The game takes place during the Jan Palach Week in January 1989 that saw violence by the Public Security (*Veřejná bezpečnost*, the police force in the Communist Czechoslovakia) and the People's Militia against a peaceful gathering commemorating the 30th anniversary of the death of Jan Palach[9]. Indy is caught on Wenceslas Square, where the clash took place, and has to find his way back into the United States. This involves brutal disposal of the members of law enforcement:

> You are standing in front of the Grocery House department store. The entrance into the subway is fortunately clear. An annoying man (probably a communist) is looking out of a balcony and happily watching the good work of the members of the Public Security. You can go down, to the right and inside. You see a cop.
> > USE AXE
> You drove your axe so deep inside his skull, that it cannot be pulled out. You see a dead cop.
> (Znovuzrozeny, 1989)

Whereas Fuka's Indiana Jones maintained much of the humor of the original films, this variation is a hyperbolic, but still rather blunt and uncompromising response to the 1989 events. It is a metatext that is obvious and affirmative in terms of portraying Indiana Jones as an action hero. However, the sheer absurdity of the situation (for instance, there is no explanation of why Indy went to Prague in the first place) push it into the realm of parody. In terms of puzzle design, the game's Wenceslas Square is a battlefield: Each place on the map is deadly unless you have the right items and immediately use them. This game was not the only text adventure attacking the Communist regime. 1988 saw the release of a less confrontational and more satirical game *Perestroika* (UV Soft, 1988).

---

[8] I have not been able to track down the author of this game. I cannot even state exactly when the game was released. It could have been an immediate response to the events of the Palach Week, but it could have also been released after that November's Velvet Revolution.
[9] A student who committed suicide by self-immolation in 1969 as a protest against the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia and the post-1968 development.

Fig. 3. Indiana Jones as a protagonist of intertextuality in Czechoslovak text adventures. The menu-driven *Indiana Jones 2* (Fuka, 1987) on the left: *"You woke up in a small two-engine airplane gliding above the Egyptian desert. It is beautifully peaceful here, because the engines are still and there is no living soul here other than you (An interesting situation, isn't it?) / You see: A whip. Empty seats. […]"* On the right, *The Adventures of Indiana Jones in Wenceslas Square in Prague on January 16, 1989* (Znovuzrozeny, 1989): *"O.K. You are standing at an unobstructed entrance into the subway. As soon as you showed up, an officer came to you and searched you. Having found nothing, he called on his "comrades" and they beat you senseless. As they were running away to deal with some woman with a baby carriage, one of them lost a machete. You crawled for it and committed hara-kiri. INDIANA JONES IS DEAD [scroll]"*

Another example of parody (or travesty in Popovič's terms) is a text adventure in Slovak titled *Fuksoft* (Hrda, 1987). In this game, the main character, Tim Coleman from Fuka's *Sting III*, has to rescue his neighbor, František Fuka, from a certain death plotted by Coleman's antagonists, also from *Sting III*:

> Vengeful Jack Ragger and Jonathan Fox got into F. Fuka's apartment and plant a timed bomb there. I hope you will be a gentleman and won't strand your friend! (Hrda, 1987)

The whole adventure takes place in an ordinary apartment building in Czechoslovakia. The author of this game, Stanley Hrda ("a promising programmer of the 21st century") later became a character in the *Haunted Castle of Programmers* (Tom&Jerry & Delphine soft, 1988). In another crossover, *Stinging Indiana Jones* (Kořenský, 1987), František Fuka actually met Indiana Jones.

The previous account suggests that these wild outbursts of intertextuality hardly fit any neat categories. Text adventures were produced in an uncoordinated and impulsive manner in an interconnected, but decentralized community. This led to much confusion, as there were for instance two different games called *Podraz 4*, one by a Slovak author (Tokar, 1987) and another one by a Czech (Rak, 1988). Neither of them can be finished without knowing some of the information from Fuka's *Podraz III*, although he took no part in their production. At the same time, many programmers were making conversions and variations of existing games for other home computer platforms.

Intertextuality was one of the ways in which the Czechoslovak gaming community was building its identity using a shared fictional universe, in which Fuka, Coleman and Indiana Jones could all meet. Apart from that, extradiegetic elements of the games also served community purposes – they often contained messages and shout-outs to friends and colleagues, as the example of *Indiana Jones 3* (Fuka, 1990) shows:

> Of course I want to say hello especially to T.R.C. and Cybexlab […] And, what's going on?? Radek Solar still hasn't returned the black shopping bag I left at his place on last year's New Year's Eve […]. (Fuka, 1990)

Such greetings are commonplace on the demo scene and among cracking groups, but quite rare in commercially distributed games. In Czechoslovakia, these substituted the lack of other communication channels – before 1989 there was only one dedicated computing magazine (which was only published intermittently) and no gaming magazines.

To the pilots of Cosmic Information Service: text adventures and nationwide contests

Although *textovky* are hard to overlook in the history of Czech gaming and home computing culture, it is very difficult to find any statistical data that could quantify their impact. According to the data from 1989 cited above, there was 1,8 computer per 100 households in 1989. Many more were at educational and other institutions. How many of these were used to play text adventures? Enough to grant celebrity status to some of their authors. In the scrolling message on the intro screen of *Indiana Jones 3*, Fuka goes on to say:

> Please, if you get stuck in this game, don't send me letters – I'm already drowning in letters. If you can't help it, call this number [a phone number], but not at 8 in the morning (I like to sleep in!). (Fuka, 1990)

The popularity of text adventures is also evidenced by the fact that already in 1990, companies like Ultrasoft and Proxima started to commercially re-release popular text adventures, along with new titles (Fismol, 2010). The turn of the decade also saw the releases of two ambitious multiplatform projects: *City of Robots* (Libovický, 1989) and *…and what about that?!* (Fait, et al., 1990). Both of these were connected to nationwide contests in which the players who finish the games first could win prizes. To keep the same conditions for all players, the games had been encrypted and protected by a password, which was announced by national media on a certain date. After the completion, the game generated codes that were to be sent to the organizers via telegram or mail. Similar contests had taken place in the U.K. in the 1980s, but they were not as much connected to national mainstream media (Švelch, 2010).

When Zenitcentrum Beroun, a small state-owned center for computer hobbyists based in the town of Beroun, organized the *City of Robots* contest (in cooperation with other youth organizations), 5,000 prizes were ready to be given out, at least according to the game's manual (Libovický, 1989). The support of Czechoslovak Television and daily press was secured thanks to the connections with the central management of the Socialist Union of Youth (Libovický, 2011). *City of Robots* was a more "official" project than for example Fuka's games, but that does not mean it did not take risks. On the one hand, *City of Robots* was made possible using the infrastructure of the Communist state (although many local youth centers tended to be depoliticized), on the other hand, the cover featured a drawing by a well-known comics artist Kája Saudek, an "undesirable" figure banned from appearing in the mainstream media.
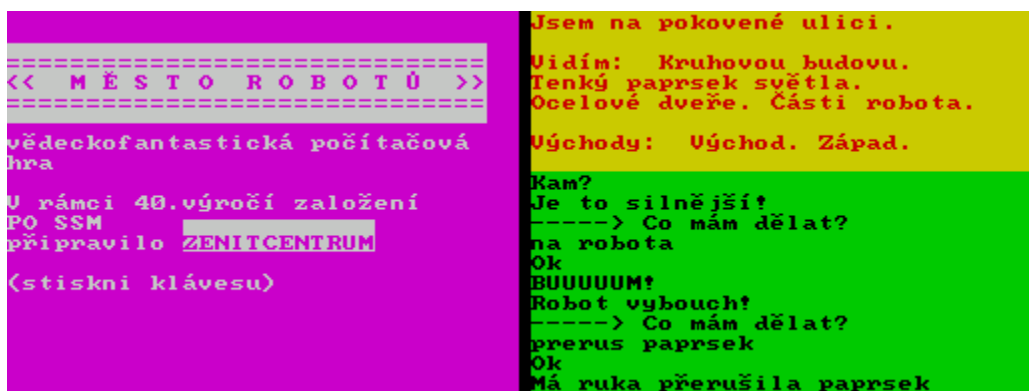

Fig. 4. The title screen and an in-game screen of *City of Robots* (Libovický, 1989). The title screen reads: *"<< City of Robots >> A science fiction computer game. Produced by Zenitcentrum to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Pionýr[10] Organization of the Socialist Union of Youth. (Press a key)".* The in-game screen: *"I am on a metal-plated street. I see: A round building. A thin beam of light. A steel door. Robot parts. Exits: East. West. […]"*

The game itself, programmed by Vít Libovický, a computer enthusiast and one of the first professional freelance programmers in Czechoslovakia, was an adaptation of a text adventure game in English[11]. It featured a rudimentary science fiction story (although it was very light on writing and focused on the puzzles instead) and an advanced parser with a large vocabulary. The game, along with the "Cosmic Information Service pilot registration card", cost 99 Czechoslovak crowns, while a movie ticket cost 10 crowns in 1989 (Czech Statistical Office, 2010). I have not been recover find any data about the actual number of copies sold, but the game became popular and its cracked version was circulating in the informal distribution networks (Pavero, 2010). The password that was supposed to unlock the game was to be broadcast on September 21, 1989. However, due to a programming error, the password remained in the memory buffer during the making of the master copy, which made the game

---

[10] The *Pionýr* organization was an organization for children and youth controlled by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

[11] According to Libovický, it was a game for the VideoGenie computer, but he does not remember its title. I have not been able to recover the title based on the genre and theme.

trivial to hack. The contest had to be cancelled, with Libovický explaining the matter in a Czechoslovak Television news broadcast. Winners were drawn in a lottery. A sequel based on a short story by Robert Merle was planned, but never materialized (Libovický, 2011).

…and what about that?! was developed by a group of students at the Electrotechnical University in Pilsen. They were inspired by *City of Robots*, a game that they finished very fast, having hacked the program.

> The game [City of Robots] was incredibly difficult. We played it in a team. On one computer, one of us was actually physically playing, on another one, somebody was running a disassembler and looking into the data structures. One would say: "I have three buttons in front of me, what should I do?" and we would look into the data to find the solution (Fait, 2011).

Whereas *City of Robots* was a fairly conventional text adventure, the "interactive narrative" (as it was dubbed by the authors themselves) *…and what about that?!*, released shortly after the Velvet Revolution, was based on a different concept. Instead of traditional verbal input or menu systems, the game was controlled using a cursor that allowed the player to navigate a piece of text. After the player pointed the cursor at a highlighted word and presses fire, the program could change the state of the game world and display another piece of text. Very similar to hypertext narratives and hypertext in general, the concept of the game was actually inspired by the context-sensitive help system of Turbo Pascal for MS-DOS (Fait, 2011). The main character is a journalist named Bob who has to write an article about Brazilian coffee. This inconspicuous assigment eventually helps him uncover a worldwide conspiracy. The game marries science fiction and satire and comments on the changes in the world after the fall of the Soviet bloc. The first part of the game takes place in Bob's office and resembles a hacking game: Bob is basically browsing news agency feeds. The second part is more of a conventional globe-trotting adventure realized as a branching narrative with a rudimentary world model.

In the summer of 1990, the authors of the game announced a contest, in which each of the ten fastest players could (and did) win a trip to France. Then they retreated into a farm in the Bohemian Forest, where they based their operations, coded the game for a number of platforms and started distributing them. The password was broadcast on September 3, 1990 by the Czechoslovak Radio. Around 1,600 copies were sold (Kohout, 2011), each for 106 Czechoslovak crowns. Although the first contestant sent his winning code even before the broadcast, because he had managed to hack the code, he was accepted as a winner. Two or three more out of the ten winners probably hacked the game rather than finished it (Kohout, 2011). In the end, project paid for itself and even made some money for its authors, partly thanks to the support from mainstream media who gave the game free publicity.

Fig. 5. The title screen and an in-game screenshot of *...and what about that?!* The illustration was drawn by Vladimír Jiránek, a prominent political cartoonist of the transformation era. The in-game screen reads: *"There is *terminal* on your desk, that connects you to the newest agency news reports and the paper's archive. The surroundings of the terminal are decorated with *messages*."* (Fait, et al., 1990)

Although *...and what about that?!* is a transformation-era game, its roots lie within the pre-1989 gaming culture centered around both the underground hobbyist scene and the computer clubs run by youth organizations. It also proves the popularity of the text adventure genre (and similar genres) at the turn of the decade.

Concluding remarks

The aim of this paper was to demonstrate the specific features, the creative charge and the communal nature of the Czechoslovak text adventures of the 1980s. In many ways, the text adventure scene was instrumental in bringing domestic games to Czechoslovak players. The story did not stop here. In the early 1990s, a few companies published text adventures commercially. But in their function as a "national genre", text adventures were soon replaced by graphic adventures – although graphic adventures are not purely text-based, they also contain large quantities of text. It is not surprising that one of the first commercially published Czech games for the IBM PC computer was *The Secret of Donkey Island (Tajemství oslího ostrova)* (Pterodon Software, 1994), a parody of Lucasfilm's *The Secret of Monkey Island* (Lucasfilm Games, 1990), from which it borrowed the main character Guybrush Threepwood, just like Fuka borrowed Indiana Jones.

This paper also attempted to propose a new direction in the research of computer and video games and interactive fiction. Too often, the study of these phenomena limits its scope to canonical, representative or "quality" texts and treats them as autonomous objects that somehow withstood the test of time. The games mentioned by this paper are obscure (at least on the international level) and more often than not lacking in both writing and design departments. But backed with historical research, these artifacts can tell us a lot about the

specific computing or gaming culture, about the potential uses and social functions of computer entertainment and digital narratives and also about the international flows of cultural information and technical knowledge. There is much more work to be done in this regard, both in the Czechoslovak context and in terms of a comparative approach. The adventure has only just begun.

Bibliography

Aarseth, Espen. 1997. *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature.* Baltimore : The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Badham, John. 1983. *WarGames.* 1983.

Bechyně, Michal. 1989. Ještě jednou Didaktik Gama. *Mikrobáze.* January 1989, pp. 25-27.

Crowther, William and Woods, Don. 1976. *Adventure.* Multiplatformní : Freeware, 1976.

Czech Statistical Office. 2010. Průměrná hrubá měsíční mzda. [Online] June 7, 2010. [Cited: August 20, 2010.] http://www.czso.cz/csu/dyngrafy.nsf/porovnani/.

—. 2010b. Tab. 08.03 Počítač a internet v českých domácnostech. *Czech Statistical Office.* [Online] January 1, 2010b. [Cited: August 29, 2010.] http://www.czso.cz/cz/cr_1989_ts/0803.pdf.

Fait, František and další, a. 1990. *... a to snad ne ?! - ...and what about that?!* Multiplatformní : Fait, František, 1990.

Fait, František. 2011. *Personal interview with František Fait, Prague, April 26, 2011.* 2011.

Fismol, Petr. 2010. Seznam textovek. *textovky.cz.* [Online] listopad 30, 2010. [Cited: listopad 30, 2010.] http://www.textovky.cz/seznam-textovek/.

Fuka, František. 1987. *Indiana Jones 2.* Sinclair ZX Spectrum : Fuxoft, 1987.

—. 1990. *Indiana Jones 3.* Sinclair ZX Spectrum : Fuxoft, 1990.

—. 1985. *Indiana Jones a Chrám zkázy - Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom.* Sinclair ZX Spectrum : Fuxoft, 1985.

—. 1986. *Podraz III - Sting III.* Sinclair ZX Spectrum : Fuxoft, 1986.

Hrda, Stanislav. 1987. *Fuksoft.* Sinclair ZX Spectrum : Sybilasoft, 1987.

Juul, Jesper. 2005. *Half-Real: Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds.* Cambridge : The MIT Press, 2005.

Kagan, Jeremy Paul. 1983. *Sting II.* 1983.

Kohout, Pavel. 2011. *Personal Interview with Pavel Kohout, Prague, May 5, 2011.* 2011.

Kořenský, Pavel. 1987. *Podraz na Indiana Jonese - Stinging Indiana Jones.* Sinclair ZX Spectrum : PKCS, 1987.

Kristofferson, Lee. 1984. *System 15000.* 1984.

Libovický, Vít. 1989. *Město robotů - City of Robots.* Sinclair ZX Spectrum : Zenitcentrum Beroun, 1989.

—. 2011. *Personal Interview with Vít Libovický, Jesenice, 13. 4. 2011.* 2011.

Lucasfilm Games. 1990. *The Secret of Monkey Island.* IBM PC : Lucasfilm Games, 1990.

Madmax. 1989. *Indiana Jones a zlatá soška Keltů - Indiana Jones and the Golden Idol of the Celts.* s.l. : Madmax, 1989.

Meca, Daniel. 1989. Z domova. *Mikrobáze.* 1989, Vol. 1, p. 30.

Mikrobáze. 1986b. Programová nabídka Mikrobáze. *Mikrobáze 2/1986.* 1986b, pp. 58-81.

—. 1986a. Výsledky ankety Mikrobáze z roku 1985. *Mikrobáze, 2/1986.* 1986a, pp. 4-12.

Montfort, Nick. 2005. *Twisty Little Passages: An Approach to Interactive Fiction.* Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 2005.

Pavero. 2010. Město robotů - návod. *ZX-Spectrum games.* [Online] July 3, 2010. [Cited: Novemebr 30, 2010.] http://zx-spectrum.wz.cz/index.php?cat1=3&cat2=6&solution_id=mestorobotu_nv.txt.

Popovič, Anton. 1975. *Teória umeleckého prekladu.* Bratislava : Tatran, 1975.

Pterodon Software. 1994. *The Secret of Donkey Island - Tajemství Oslího ostrova.* s.l. : Vochozka Trading, 1994.

Rak, Patrik. 1988. *Podraz 4: Další příběhy Tima Colemana - Podraz 4: New Adventures of Tim Coleman.* Sinclair ZX Spectrum : Raxoft, 1988.

Roy Hill, George. 1973. *Sting.* 1973.

Spielberg, Steven. 1981. *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark.* 1981.

—. 1984. *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom.* 1984.

Švelch, Jaroslav. 2010. Context of Innovation in Metaphorical Game Design: The Case of Deus Ex Machina. [book auth.] Konstantin Mitgutsch, Herbert Rosenstingl and Christoph Klimmt (eds.). *Exporing the Edges of Gaming.* Wien : Braumuller, 2010, pp. 265-275.

Tokar, Tono. 1987. *Podraz IV - Sting IV.* Sinclair ZX Spectrum : Antok Software, 1987.

Tom&Jerry & Delphine soft. 1988. *Zakliaty zamok programatorov - Haunted Castle of Programmers.* Sinclair ZX Spectrum : s.n., 1988. .

UV Soft. 1988. *Přestavba - Perestroika.* Sinclair ZX Spectrum : UV Soft, 1988.

Znovuzrozeny, Zuzan. 1989. *Dobrodružství Indiana Jonese na Václavském náměstí v Praze dne 16. 1. 1989 - The Adventures of Indiana Jones in Wenceslas Square in Prague on January 16, 1989.* Sinclair ZX Spectrum, 1989.