



A Climate of Repression: Interview of Czech Republic President Klaus

On March 2-4, more than 100 scientists, many of considerable renown, attended a conference in New York, sponsored by the Heartland Institute, called the 2008 International Conference on Climate Change. Also in attendance were over 300 other delegates, including Vaclav Klaus, president of the Czech Republic.



Though he is not a climatologist or physicist, he was a featured speaker at the event for two reasons. First, he recognizes in the mannerisms and proposed public-policy recommendations of those trying to reduce global greenhouse-gas emissions the same noble-sounding goals and the same repressive political mechanisms as of the communists who so recently ruled his country with an iron fist. Second, he is a notable economist, formerly holding a position in the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, and he can speak with authority about how the global-warming alarmists are misusing data to justify their claims.

THE NEW AMERICAN interviewed President Klaus at the climate conference.

THE NEW AMERICAN: *Why did you come to the International Conference on Climate Change here in New York City?*

Vaclav Klaus: Well, I feel very strongly about it, not about global warming but for the discussion in principle. It's not a discussion about the climate; it's a discussion about human society; it's a discussion about freedoms; it's a discussion about human prosperity, especially in developing countries. That's the issue which has been a topic for my whole life. Global warming is just an instrument for influencing the future behavior of mankind. In this respect I am involved in the discussion.

TNA: *You come from the Czech Republic; you are familiar with what it is like to have freedom totally suppressed. How does freedom relate to this issue?*

Klaus: I am sensitive, maybe overly sensitive in this respect, but I listen to speeches of some global-warming alarmists — environmentalists in general. I hear sentences, ideas, which sound to me very familiar from the communist era.

Again there is someone who wants to orchestrate our life, again someone who knows better than the rest of us what is good for me, for us, and who tries to regulate, control, mastermind human society and in this respect there is a structural similarity with my experiences from the past.

TNA: *Are you also familiar with the way that statist systems will claim a scientific basis to justify their policies?*

Klaus: They are misusing science. Again, I say with the communists it was also science which was also misused as an instrument for influencing us. There was scientific Marxism at the time and now we have scientific environmentalism — it was the same.

TNA: *Very similar parallels ...*



Written by [Denise Behreandt](#) on May 12, 2008

Klaus: Yes, somewhat. I think that many people are misled by the argument that the debate about climate change is a scientific debate in the field of climatology. I don't think that is the case. What we are talking about is influencing human society, and in this respect it is much more about social sciences, my own field of economics, and not that much about the details of physics and other scientific disciplines.

TNA: *In that regard, one of the things that's been quite prevalent in this case is closing off scientific debate.*

Klaus: To close the scientific debate is again, a weapon against those who disagree. I know that there is no scientific consensus. There can never be scientific consensus in this respect. The closing of the scientific discussion is really a very dangerous way of looking at things and can have very unpleasant consequences for human society.

TNA: *Tell us about your concern on that level, the economic and social consequences of the policies which are being advocated.*

Klaus: As an economist — by the way, I have to stress that I wrote a book about it, *Blue Planet in Green Shackles: What Is Endangered, Climate or Freedom?* — my answer is of course freedom.

The book is more from the position of a social scientist and economist than from a position of a climatologist. I have just one chapter devoted to technical issues. I see the scientific discussion not as a climatologist, but as an economist. I can follow the significant literature, but I don't want to be someone who contributes to the scientific literature. Nevertheless, I can compare the two approaches.

As an economist, I have one relative comparative advantage. We are dealing with time-series data. So in this respect, climatology and economics are comparable and similar. In both fields it's a huge complex system and it's a system where you can't make controlled experiments. So the statistical theory, in our case econometric, is something very similar to the same discussions in climatology.

I've spent 10 or 15 years of my life doing mathematical modeling, statistics, and econometrics. I think I have some knowledge about how to deal with time-series data, which is the same story in climatology. This is my interest.

I see a misuse of data. I see a misuse of statistical techniques used to analyze the data, to interpolate and extrapolate the data. This is what bothers me as an economist. I'm really very unhappy with the simplification of analysis.

We, I mean economists, live in the world of cost-benefit analysis of a serious risk aberration discussion. The global-warming alarmists live in the world of precautionary principle — for me nonsense. I have never seen that principle in all the textbooks I have studied in my life.

Plus, as an economist I started to be really involved in this discussion when I discovered how irrationally discounting principles are used in the global-warming alarmism. That wasn't, by the way, the motivation for me to start writing the book. Originally I just wanted to write a short piece, a short article, about discounting — misuse of discounting in the Stern Report.

That was my original ambition and when I wrote the piece and wanted to publish it as an article. I discovered there is no publication useful for it, so I started to extend it. Originally the idea was to make it a short booklet, and then it became a book.

But the discounting discussion is a crucial part of it. This is something the climatologists do not discuss.



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TNA: *What would implementing some of the drastic or even moderate so-called proposals of the global-warming alarmists mean for the people of the Czech Republic?*

Klaus: Well, I don't want to distinguish the Czech Republic from other countries. The Kyoto Protocol will have a minuscule impact upon the climate. It's almost difficult to find statistical significance of the Kyoto Protocol. Nevertheless, the costs are very, very heavy, and I don't think it's very smart to do that.

On the other hand, for me, "economy" is about economizing, it's about saving, it's about rational behavior, so I don't mind some saving of energy — that's the last thing I would criticize.

Nevertheless, to *a priori* introduce the targets for limiting the use of energy without knowing how to increase [the efficiency of that same energy] is for me a joke for the next several generations in the world — I don't want to speak for the most developed countries within the world. For the undeveloped, economic development will still be based on fossil fuels. And to stop it is definitely impossible.

TNA: *But as an economist you could see very definitely a negative impact in many ways on human society?*

Klaus: That is quite clear. As an economist ... I know that when there is economic growth — the growth of income — that the people pay more attention to all kinds of environmental issues, including the climate.

So, I am absolutely sure that just as spontaneous [activity and cooperation] will solve the problems, it's not necessary to mastermind society from above as the global-warming alarmists basically try to do.

TNA: *Do you see encouraging developments in Europe with regard to rolling back the onslaught of the alarmists' trend of the last few years?*

Klaus: I am afraid that it will be difficult. Nevertheless, this is the task for all of us to do it in the future. However, I am afraid global-warming alarmism will continue marching on, and we will get on the slippery road to serfdom, to use the phrase from [economist Friedrich] Hayek's terminology. This is what we once experienced in our country, and I don't want to experience it again.

TNA: *We appreciate your coming here to share with us here at this conference. Any last comment?*

Klaus: I must say I was just asked by the Czech press agency what was the net contribution I got here. I said, "Well, even with all my strong views, I must say I was slightly reinforced in my views by seeing so many very competent scientists — their speeches, their presentations." It was slightly better than I expected.

It's About Freedom

The following is excerpted from an address by President Vaclav Klaus to the International Climate Conference in New York City on March 2-4, sponsored by the Heartland Institute.

First, I would like to thank the organizers for this important conference, for making it possible and for inviting one politically incorrect politician from Central Europe to come and speak here.

A politician, as was just mentioned, who in spite of his views on climate, was two weeks ago reelected as president of his country. And the point is that everyone in the Czech Republic knows my views on climate change. I am, I think, a living demonstration of the fact that politicians can be elected with such views on climate change....

I know it's difficult to say anything interesting and new after so many speeches and discussions here.



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But when I look around, there are not many speakers from former communist countries here. As an economist, I always try and find my comparative advantages.

Each of us has his or her experiences, prejudices, preferences. The ones that I have are quite inevitably connected with the fact that I have spent most of my life under the communist regime. A week ago I gave a speech ... at the Prague Castle commemorating the 60th anniversary of the 1948 communist putsch in the former Czechoslovakia. One of the arguments there quoted in all the leading newspapers in the country the next morning went as follows: "Future dangers will not come from the same source. The ideology will be different. Its essence will nevertheless be identical. The attractive, pathetic, at first sight noble idea that transcends the individual in the name of the common good on the one hand, and the enormous self-confidence on the side of its proponents about their right to sacrifice the man and his freedom in order to make this idea reality on the other."

Yesterday morning I read the excerpts from the Czech press and I discovered that the chairman of the Czech Green Party dramatically criticized this statement of mine. I think it's very good that he understood it.... [Laughter from audience]

My central argument was, "What is endangered, climate or freedom?" My answer is clear and resolute. It's our freedom, I may also add, and our prosperity....

In spite of their public roles, [global warming's exponents] maximize their own private ... good, power, prestige, career, income, and so on.

I am afraid there are people who really want to stop the economic growth, the rise in the standard of living — though not their own — and the ability of man to use the expanding wealth, science, and technology for solving the actual pressing problems of mankind, especially of the developing countries.

The climate alarmists believe in their own omnipotence; they believe in knowing better than millions of rationally behaving men and women what is right or wrong....

I am afraid we have to restart the discussion about the very nature of government and about the relationship between the individual and society. Now it concerns the whole of mankind, not just the citizens of one particular country....

To sum up, it is not about climatology. It's about freedom.

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