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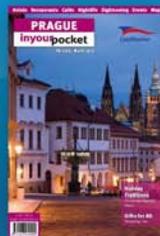
Kundera's hoax



Milan Kundera, who turns 90 today, famously started his "Book of Laughter and Forgetting" with a recounting of [Klement Gottwald's "harangue"](#) to hundreds of thousands of citizens on Old Town Square in Feb. 1948. Clementis (no first name given, but it is Vladimír) put his fur hat on the head of the hatless Gottwald, only to be airbrushed out of the picture four years later, after being found guilty of treason and hanged. How easily we forget the kindness of others, was the moral. Alas, it [apparently isn't true](#). Clementis, [as the original photo shows](#), had a hat on his head and probably didn't have another in tow to lend to Gottwald. In her 2002 book "The Art of Memory in Exile: Vladimir Nabokov & Milan Kundera," Hana Píchová wrote that Kundera was probably warning readers about their [tendency to accept the written word as though it were a photo](#). Whatever Kundera was up to, the real moral of his hoax is as old as the hills: Don't read fiction to learn about truth.

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