

Jan Werich (Czech : (Jan Vrch) ; 6 February 1905 -- 31 October 1980) was a Czech actor , playwright and writer

Between 1916 to 1924 , Werich attended `` reálné gymnásium " (equivalent to high school) in Klemencová Street in Prague (where his future partner

He studied law at the Charles University Law School from 1924 to 1927 , from which he made an early departure to begin his artistic career and forge on

His collaboration with Jiří Voskovec and Jaroslav Ježek lasted for more than 10 years

Their partnership was a platform for their numerous left - wing political satires

The trio 's work took inspiration from Dada , with its love of the absurd , a reaction against bourgeois values and the horrors of World War I

In the years leading up to World War II and the closure of Czechoslovak theatres , Werich , Voskovec and Ježek were forced into exile in the United States

Werich returned to his homeland five years later , and started a partnership with Miroslav Horníček

He also worked with famous puppeteer Jiří Trnka to write modern fairy tales

With his new partner Miroslav Horníček at his side , he re-staged many of the plays he had created with Voskovec in the 1930s but set them in the political

Jan Werich appeared in such films as Býl jednou jeden král (English : Once Upon a Time There Was a King) , which was released in 1955 , and made

The 1960s were a peak in Werich 's career

From the creation of the ABC Theatre he moved to the City Theatres of Prague and then to the Musical Theatre of Karlín and Nusle

Werich was originally cast by producer Harry Saltzman to play Ernst Stavro Blofeld in the 1967 James Bond film You Only Live Twice

Upon his arrival at the Pinewood set , both producer Albert R

Broccoli and director Lewis Gilbert felt that he was a poor choice , resembling a `` poor , benevolent Santa Claus "

Nonetheless , in an attempt to make the casting work , Gilbert continued filming

After several days , both Gilbert and Broccoli determined that Werich was not menacing enough , and recast Blofeld with Donald Pleasence in the role

Jan Werich signed the pro-reform manifesto 2000 Words in 1968

After the Soviet invasion of 1968 , he and his wife immediately fled to Vienna along with many other Czechs at the time

After long deliberations he realized he had to go back , saying that his `` home was his castle " and realizing that if he stayed abroad he would never work

He returned to Czechoslovakia in early 1969

Werich met with Voskovec for the very last time in Vienna , Austria in 1974

He had limited opportunities to perform in public until his death in 1980

His last public appearance was in Prague 's Lucerna in 1977

He did not sign the Charter 77 proclamation , organized by Václav Havel , but in the end he succumbed to pressure from the Communist authorities and

He later claimed he was tricked into signing and that he did not really know what his signature was for , as the original attendance document signed open

Werich died on October 31 , 1980 , at the age of 75

(in cooperation with Jiří Voskovec) Vest Pocket Revue - 1927 Smoking Revue - 1928 Si pořádni zařídí (Having a Spree) - 1928 ; based upon Nebe

- 1931 Golem - 1931 Caesar -- 1932 Robin zbojník (Robin Hood) - 1932 Svět za mřížemi (A World Behind Bars) - 1933 (script collaboration also with

Nebe na Zemi (Heaven on Earth) - 1936 ; based on Fletcher 's The Spanish Curate Rub a líc (Heads or Tails) - 1936 ; later made into the Svět patřící

There were not enough stories however and so it was renamed and other stories were added - some of them has been previously published and some a