

# Czechoslovakia 1968

BY PETR CERNY

What 'socialism'?

What 'human face'?

# Solidarity

# Introduction

## Interpreting the Czech Events

The Prague Spring of 1968 and the subsequent Russian invasion naturally enough provoked comments and analyses from both left and right. That an event of great significance had taken place was not in question. But people differed in their views as to what exactly was important about what had happened.

According to the media, a struggle was going on in Czechoslovakia between 'progressive democratic' forces — led by the 'good' Dubcek — and the old stalinist *apparatchiks* working for the 'bad' Russian imperialists. Dubcek, we were told, was the 'authentic embodiment of the Czech people's desire for economic and political freedom'. Their aspirations, one would have to conclude, went no further than a society like our own. As for the Russian invasion it merely confirmed the beliefs of the 'iron persons' of this world that the Russians were intrinsically wicked and that more should be spent on the armed forces, the police, etc.

Such simplistic analyses won't stand up to close inspection. The people who made the Prague Spring did not see events through cold war blinkers. Nor did they blindly follow Dubcek's leadership throughout. While accepting the welcome relaxation of totalitarian rule they made demands which stretched to the limits what the authorities were prepared to grant. Finally, the motives of the leadership that Dubcek personified were something far more complex than liberalism. So were the forces that engendered these motives

After twenty years of systematic attempts to destroy its political autonomy (spearheaded by repeated waves of terror) — and despite many residual illusions — the working class in Czechoslovakia still had enough resilience and self-confidence to challenge the ruling group on the fundamental question of who controlled the state, and to what end. Amid the apathy and privatisation which surround us, this in itself is ground for hope. The Czech events confronted the Western way of life with a genuine alternative, both as flimsy and as real as what happened in France the same year. The official response to this challenge has been to ignore it or to distort it, when it has not been to reduce the Prague Spring to an affirmation of the merits of bourgeois life. In fact what happened was a potential threat to class society, both East and West.

Distortions did not, of course, come only from bourgeois sources. To many Communists in the West the Czech CP represented a new 'humane' variety of socialism, of a kind they themselves had recently

taken to advocating. They identified with it and, for a while, were crestfallen when Russia invaded. But their despair was shortlived. Party after Party verbally condemned the invasion (a thing none had been prepared to do after the invasion of Hungary in 1956). Eurocommunism was born, loose-jointed and squinting. The various Communist Parties of Europe have ever since indulged in frantic twists and turns as they watched what was happening in two places simultaneously, and struggled to reconcile their twin allegiances to both the Russian and to the Dubcek style of leadership. Their commitment is to power, rather than to the aspirations of working people and that is the root of their problem.

The most skilled acrobatics have been performed by the Italian Communist Party (PCI). In the aftermath of the Russian invasion it afforded well publicised hospitality to Dubckite refugees. Jiri Pelikan makes regular broadcasts, writes articles and is generally recognised as the PCI's 'pet dissident'. This didn't prevent the PCI from sending a delegation to Prague to take part in the 10th anniversary celebrations of the 'liberation' of the country by the Russians! "Just a fraternal gesture," explained the PCI spokesperson.

The Eurocommunists claim to represent 'communism with a human face'. Yet a close inspection of their human rights record, of the way they imposed their party line, or of their treatment of dissidents speaks louder than any of their rhetoric. It should be enough to convince even the most politically naive. Again the PCI's behaviour provides the most useful pointer of the kind of activities the Czech Party might have got up to had Dubcek managed to consolidate his power. For the PCI is one of the very few organisations anywhere in the world which has managed to imprison left-wing dissidents, while not actually in power. Italian magistrates who are also PCI members are opening up files, enquiries and procedures for arrest on anyone who has expressed dissent from the parliamentary road to socialism and has been skilled enough to have that opinion heard. Imagine what would have happened to people like Toni Negri,\* or the many anarchists who have been arrested in Italy, if the PCI was in control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

What then did Dubcek stand for? In the simplest terms Dubcek was looking for a way out of the chaos of the Czech economy. His actions and those of his supporters in the period leading up to the Prague

Spring can best be explained if we recognise that he was trying to extricate Czechoslovakia from difficulties such as beset the Russian economy. All Communist Parties in power have to resolve an extraordinarily delicate dilemma. To maintain itself in power the Party must monopolise all decisions and reduce to a minimum the channels of communication between ordinary people. But in order to co-ordinate anything, let alone a complex industrial economy, effective communication is essential. Modern industry cannot be run solely on the basis of decisions imposed from above — be they made in the boardroom or by the Central Committee.

In Russia, as far as the economy is concerned, the Party bosses have chosen the path of caution. They have kept tight control and paid the price in terms of inefficiency. In Czechoslovakia the rulers sought to make their economy more efficient, both in terms of information flow (i.e. through greater application of the price mechanism and profit motive) and in terms of a wider variety of finished goods — while simultaneously maintaining the Party's hegemony over political power. Various moves were made to allow the market to determine what was produced. Scientists and technologists started speaking their minds freely and making new proposals.

The Dubcek wing of the Czech CP hoped that things would stop there. But the Czech people saw their chance. It is impossible to grant freedom of

speech to scientists and managers and not to others. And these 'others' proved more difficult to control. Each freedom granted led to huge pressure for yet other freedoms. People ceased asking for permission to be free. They simply ignored the old restrictions, acting as though they had never existed. For a while everything seemed possible as Dubcek feverishly struggled to keep control: the wildest hopes suddenly seemed realistic. If workers could gain control of Czechoslovakia, then why not in all of Eastern Europe? And even in Russia itself? And in the West, where the May events in France were in full swing?

But some people's hopes are threats to others. The Russians, learning from the different experiences of Yugoslavia and Hungary, knew that what was happening in Czechoslovakia had to be stopped. The revolution was put down before it had really got under way. And the leaders who had set off the experiment were being used to bring the people back to passivity.

After the invasion Dubcek became even more of a national hero. This man who had been loyal to the Russians all his life, this supreme representative of the 'new' method of controlling people's lives, was now the undoubted champion of those he was trying to control. He used their faith in him to bring them gradually, but inexorably, back into the fold.

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## The Rise of the Intelligentsia

In Czechoslovakia a clear mutation was taking place in the structure and ideology of the ruling stratum. Despite specific differences rather similar changes had taken place much earlier in Yugoslavia — and were to take place much later in China. The old hard-line *apparatchiks*, dogmatic and brutal, experts in the falsification of facts and in the manipulation of power, were gradually being pushed aside. Decisional authority was slipping into the hands of a technocratic elite which spoke the 'neutral' language of efficiency, rationality, science.

As the author of the pamphlet points out, the struggles within the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia were an attempt, in an advanced industrial country, 'to alter the legitimised sources of power'. Authority based on esoteric political knowledge and indoctrination was being replaced by authority derived from scientific managerial expertise. The author stresses the authoritarian nature of both tendencies, which he traces to a common Leninist parentage.

But, if one is not afraid of asking awkward questions, one can go even further. Were the Czech events a contemporary manifestation of a much more fundamental tendency? Was the Russo-Polish revolutionary Machajski right when — at the turn of the century — he claimed that Marxism was not the reflection of working class interests but the ideological vehicle for the accession to power of a new class, engendered by the rise of industrialism? Would the mass of the population, Machajski asked, again be enslaved by a new aristocracy of administrators, scientists, technical experts and politicians, whose 'capital' was — so to speak — education, and who would seek to gain office on the backs of working people? Was Machajski right when he predicted that the managers, engineers and 'radical' political office-holders would use Marxist ideology as a new religion to befuddle the minds of the masses, perpetuating their ignorance and servitude?

And is the new elite wider than even Machajski supposed? Are its roots to be found in modern culture — as well as in industrialism? And how does all this in turn influence prevailing beliefs and patterns of behaviour?

We obviously cannot answer these questions here, although we think a resumption of the discussion is long overdue. To this end we are publishing as a short postscript an article on *Machajevism* by Paul Avrich, which first appeared in the July 1965 issue of *Soviet Studies*.

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One can only speculate what might have happened in Czechoslovakia, in 1968, if the situation had really got out of control and if the invasion had not saved the hierarchy by making heroes out of villains. But there are certain hints. Just as in 1956 in Hungary, Workers' Councils began to be formed and showed remarkable resilience in the struggle. The future might have been with them — with ordinary women and men making their own decisions about their own lives, in unrestricted and non-hierarchical ways. And when that happens all the various bureaucrats (East and West) will feel the chill threat of real freedom, whilst the rest of us rejoice.

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### Footnote

\* A lecturer in politics at the University of Padua and editor of the magazine *Potere Operaio* (Workers' Power) in the early 70s. He has subsequently written widely (and turgidly) on the finer points of Marxism — trying to justify autonomous working class action on the ground that it fits into Marxist theory — rather than the other way round. Along with other ex-editors of this paper and a few others, Negri was arrested (1979) on the orders of the PCI magistrate Calogero and accused of being one of the ideological leaders of the Red Brigades, despite Negri's constant criticisms of their activities.

# Prologue & Epilogue to the Prague Spring

## Introduction

The bulk of this pamphlet is not history; it is a personal analysis of the nature of the Reform Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. For the libertarian, history is what people think and do. It is not the working out of some grand pre-ordained scheme, dominated by super heroes. The pamphlet says very little about what all those who were remote from the epicentre of political intrigue and bureaucratic string-pulling were feeling, saying and doing in 1968. Partly to rectify this omission and to give the reader an indication of how it felt to be an ordinary Czech citizen in a small town far from the capital both during the Prague spring and after the invasion, I have included a prologue and an epilogue.

The prologue is an extensively edited version of an article (*The Revival Process in Semily*), that appeared in the journal, *Literarni Listy* on June 27, 1968. It is by one of the outstanding journalists of that period Ludvik Vaculik, author of the *Two Thousand Words*.

The epilogue is a similarly edited version of another article by Vaculik, published on March 6, 1969 in the same journal, just two months before it was closed down. It was called *The Process in Semily*. The change in title is important, for in Czech, the word *process* means both process and trial. For instance Kafka's book *The Trial* is called *Proces* in Czech. If anyone wishes to read both articles in full, there is an excellent English translation in *Czechoslovakia, The Party and the People*, by Andrew Oxley, Alex Pravda and Andrew Ritchie (Penguin Press, 1973).

## Prologue: The Revival Process In Semily

On May 15, 1968 I discovered that Semily is a warm weary little town, where everyone goes slowly about his business. The strident slogans were strangely out of place on the asphalt square. "Dubcek, yes! Loskot, no! Freedom of speech! Svoboda for President! The Nation for Itself." I asked Mr. Hadek, the pale, thin young man who had invited me to Semily, whether Loskot was the first Secretary of the District Committee of the Communist Party. Yes, he was.

Hadek had invited me to Semily to observe a meeting of the Youth Club. He told me that there would probably be about nine hundred people there who would put questions to the leading district officials and, if need be, ask them to resign. That day, Loskot had written that the Conference of Secretaries had decided that no one should attend the meeting. The police too had sent a letter of apology, signed by the local major:

"Members of the National Security Corps of the district fully support the revival process, as they have already expressed in a resolution sent to the Central Committee of the CP Cz. (Laughter in the hall, later). Members of the Police are not afraid to appear in public to defend their work (laughter) ..."

The police, however, would only turn up after they had received a proper invitation, from an official organisation.

According to Hadek, the police had been officially invited by the Youth Club. I asked if the Youth Club actually existed. It turned out that it didn't... just yet. Mr. Hadek wanted my help in drafting its statutes. In fact, the club did exist. It just didn't have any statutes.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"Twenty-two."

"And how many people will come today?"

"About eight hundred."

Hadek had arrived at this figure because at a previous meeting, organised by the official Union of Youth, that many had turned up. The only trouble was that Loskot had parried every difficult question with the reply that it was an internal Party matter. People had laughed at him.

I worked at the statutes over coffee. Mr. Hadek wanted the Youth Club to be open to everybody, regardless of age or political affiliation. I worked this into the statutes. But I refused to work into them any statements that the Club would put up its own candidates in the elections.

"How many members do you have?"

Members were to be recruited at the meeting. I asked him what his father thought about it all.

"Nothing now. We've got this rebelliousness in our family. He's a communist. That's what he fought for."

At that moment Comrade Hadek came in.

"What do you think of what your son's doing?"  
"Well, what should I say? I think we've got this rebelliousness in the family!"

"Father is partly to blame for what went on. He can't say anything to me now that I'm trying to put things right."

"Well, yes. What can I say to him now?"

Comrade Hadek asked.

I wanted to know what Hadek and his friends hoped to achieve by their meeting. They wanted to force the resignation of the District Party Secretary, Loskot, and of the local Council Chairman, one Comrade Puturek.

As the sun was setting in a blaze of gold, cars arrived at the hall, which filled up with about eight hundred people. Workers and the local intelligentsia; men and women, old and young; parents with adolescent children; inquisitive people; guests from the neighbourhood. The lads got up on to the platform, where, at a long table, only two from the whole gamut of officials called to account were sitting: the District Prosecutor and the Secret Police Chief. Yes, they know their duty! Mr. Hadek, in a white sweater, stepped up to the microphone. The revival process in Semily had begun.

I was witness to a unique scene, for which history only provides the opportunity once every twenty years. I don't know if it wasn't rather a meeting in a Chinese Commune, or a happening. At times I was so embarrassed I wanted to crawl under a chair. But then I would laugh it all off.

Mr. Hadek opened the meeting by inviting all those who wished Semily well to join the Youth Club. Then, if there were enough of them, the officials wouldn't be able to ignore them next time "even though perhaps it isn't very pleasant for them." Before any questions could be put, Hadek's friend, Pepik Dohnal spoke up. To get things going he read the draft of a resolution in which there were demands for the District Committee of the Party to declare itself immediately in favour of Dubcek, for Puturek to resign, and for an investigation into his activities to be initiated, because the assembled citizens would not take part in any elections in which people like Puturek figured. The meeting was then supposed to vote for the draft resolution. But it didn't feel like it.

A candidate for the District Committee protested that the resolution was being submitted before the discussion. He apologised for various absences and then read the letter from the local police. People, meanwhile, kept on laughing.

Written questions from the floor were answered by Hadek. For instance:

"Why is the Communist Party in Semily at the tail end of the revival process, while in Prague it is at its head?"

"Because in Semily someone else must start it."

"How was it possible for Puturek to officiate at the May Day rally?"

"He probably thought that as we seemed to have democracy now he could get away with it."

"How many secret policemen were there in the hall?"

"Well, none have been invited."

The Secret Police Chief confirmed that he was the only one there.

"Good. Then we can all have a good old natter." Laughter.

Hadek then went on to opine that every dictatorship is filthy, and that it now depended on us whether we were to be a socialist or a bourgeois state. He personally inclined towards our remaining a socialist state, now that we already were one. But it was no longer possible for it to be under the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. That could be seen very easily in Semily. We therefore have to found an opposition.

Thus the evening wore on. I was asked to speak — twice. Me? Not likely! This way it was immensely more valuable.

Complaints were made about the investigation methods of the Secret Police. Tales of victimisation were heard: difficulties in finding work after release from prison, charges of nepotism, and petty vindictiveness by the local authorities. Party functionaries vainly tried to defend the Party against all this. Although they did it quite inadequately, the people were somehow not too prejudiced against them. The fact that they had come at all was, on the contrary, appreciated.

Given the mood and situation, if some official of the Party had gone there himself and dismissed the unloved dignitaries, the Party would have won a new authority in almost the same primitive way it had in 1945. Fortunately they have nowhere understood this at the District Secretariats. Fortunately they're defiant and resist, so that people are forced to reflect more deeply on how to make do with the Communist Party. If all the officials in all the Districts had quickly carried out as decent a putsch as the Central Committee of the Party had, this democratisation movement would never have got off the ground.

While the speeches were going on, people watched the Secret Police Chief. But, that whole evening, the person I watched most was the District Prosecutor, a small dark man, who constantly grinned into his sleeve as he enjoyed himself with his own thoughts.

The highlight for me came from Citizen Tomicek, a young worker, who in those cursed times hadn't got to university. His speech was a perfect rabble-rouser, as I remember them from pre-February times. (The reference is to February, 1948, when the CP seized power, P.C.). Allow me to quote:

'Dear friends, dear fellow citizens! We have had our martyrs. We have torturers among us. Today we often learn of the lives

of outstanding people, who have suffered a lot. The list of martyrs grows, their torturers remain unknown. Our dearest have gone from us. Murderers live among us. As if the Central Authorities knew nothing about them! And those who are known are being dealt with in an unbelievably slapdash way. We most certainly can't rely on the Security police, which for us means insecurity ... (applause) ... The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia must be seen as the criminal organisation it really has been. It must be excluded from public life, however prettily its present representatives get themselves up.<sup>1</sup>

I looked at the prosecutor. He was completely enthralled. Besides the Communist Party, Citizen Tomicek condemned the other parties too, which had compromised themselves under the rule of terror. He expressed the view that the next elections too would be a farce, but a less brazen one. But anyone who considers all communists bad — or all communists good — was making a great mistake.

'He who is really good will be recognised as such when the Communist Party has been deprived of its privileged position in a democratic way'. Loud applause.

Other speakers followed. People began to drift away. A grey careworn old man stepped up to the microphone. He was the father of the school headmistress, who had been responsible for the sacking of an earlier speaker. In sad detail he began to explain what his daughter had done ... what the regulations were ... his daughter hadn't done anything wrong. More people slowly left the hall. "It doesn't interest any of you" he droned on into the tired microphone, "but I must explain that my daughter ..." He persisted, alone. Even the platform began to thin out.

At last, when Hadek again put the resolution to the vote about 17 citizens were left out of the original 800. It was embarrassing, all over again. Thus ended the meeting which someone had to convene.

According to the latest information, Mr. Tomicek was assaulted in the Park, and Comrade Puturek is suing Mr. Hadek.

# Epilogue

## The Process In Semily

Why did I eventually return? It occurred to me that I had my own, purely personal reasons for going back there to have a look. No one invited me this time, and therefore no one expected me either. I got there on February 13, 1969, and looked for Mr Hadek, as he was the only person I knew. I hardly recognised even him, because since August 21 he had been growing a beard.

It turned out that everything had gone dead. Puturek was still carrying on, although Loskot had gone. Hadek had been taken to court by Puturek, lost the case, but then won on appeal. He had written an open letter to Puturek, but the Town Hall had confiscated the notice board. When Hadek had gone to enquire about it, there was some trouble and he was charged with assault. But the authorities had charged him under the wrong section of the law. So it all came to nothing. The Youth Club had been denied permission to form, because they had refused to join the National Front.

"I still think you made a mistake" I said. "How can you possibly work if you don't have an organisation? Or is being dragged from court to court and arguing with the cops good enough for you? It may be thrilling but it's not political activity."

"Surely you don't think there's anybody here who still goes in for politics do you?" Hadek replied. "Nothing happened here, either on October 28, or on November 17. And when Jan Palach died it was only us who held a ceremony. But otherwise...what do you think? Everybody is afraid. It looks to me as if the fifties are back again."

"But you were only ten years old then."

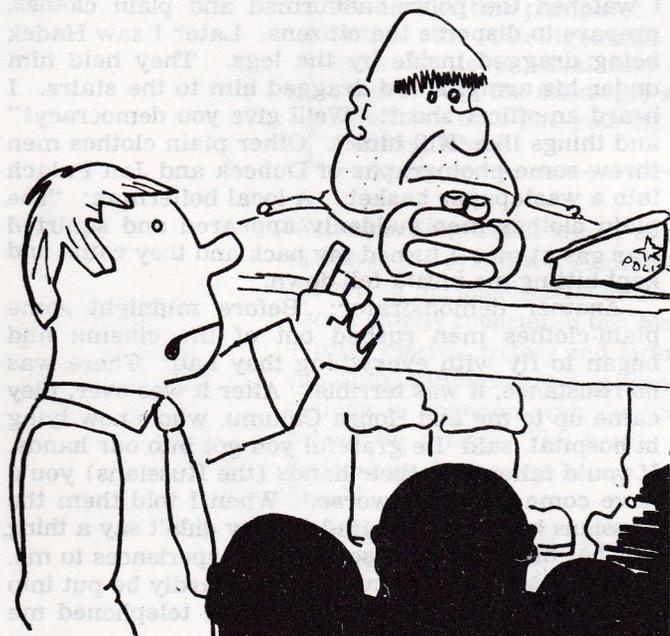
"I know. But I've heard about it from older people, and from my father as well. Hang on a tick. I'll just go and see if he's back yet."

Hadek returned almost shouting.

"What a fantastic chance! Tomorrow they're having an evening of friendship with the Russians! Expect that you won't be able to get in. It's by invitation only and reserved for strictly 'reliable' people."

I winced. I had a feeling that the evening would be extremely interesting.

The square was frosty, littered by high banks of swept-up snow. I went into a snack bar to have some soup. Not even the plain-clothes policeman knew me. Of course I didn't know him either, so neither of us knew who to watch out for. He couldn't have known who I was, because otherwise he would have seen that I was only killing time till the evening. Then the police major would never have got the almost myth-



ical report that he did, on return from his holiday, after the incident was over. The Major told me later:

“When I got back from holiday, I was informed that you had been behind it all here.”

When the tiny square suddenly grew empty and quiet it meant that everyone was in front of their television sets. Except that on February 14 they had a bad picture and one could hear Russian voices coming over the air. That's why a few people went out into the eleven degree frost to see if anything was happening. A crowd was gathering in front of the cinema.

I was worried. I had an invitation card but didn't know whether they would have a checking-in procedure. I saw that Hadek was also getting ready to set off. He had a roll of white paper under his arm. He promised me that he would only act within the bounds of the law.

The people attending the meeting were nearly all elderly. They preferred to stand hesitantly some distance from the cinema, rather than face the reception there. A voice called at them: “You haven't got much sense left either, have you granny?” Laughter around the square. I entered the cinema without too much trouble. Nobody was sitting. People, mostly old and in uniform, stood around chatting. More comrades arrived, apparently from distant places.

From outside came the sound of whistling. An air of anticipation filled the hall and we all took our seats. Opposite me were two policemen, a lieutenant and a second lieutenant. Next to me, an old civilian with a good natured, softish face. From outside: “Franta, don't go into the cinema, there's a stupid meeting there.” It didn't have much effect inside, where it was still all smiles and epaulettes.

“There's a big happening in Semily, and a strange smell coming out of the cinema!”

The lieutenant shook his head in disgust. “It's terrible what one little bastard like that can do.”

The civilian looked shocked. “Can't you see to them?”

“We could, but not just now.”

From outside: “Every sod in the cinema is hugging the Russians.”

The two police officers turned around angrily. The elder one asked me in exasperation “I ask you, is that polite?”

“No, it's rather vulgar.”

“That little brat, that bastard” they thundered. “We should lie in wait for him and throw him into the river from the bridge.” They raved on. “Or pour petrol over him and let him burn, like that idiot in Prague.”

One of the civilians wanted to know if there would be any trouble.

“Don't worry” the lieutenant said. “There are lads here from other places. Just wait and see if they dare do anything. We've got things under control.” He pulled the end of his truncheon out from under his coat.

The guests of honour arrived. The commander of the Soviet garrison, an employee of the Soviet Embassy, a member of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship Society, and a member of the Central Committee of the CPCz, who was also a Czech general.

Think back, friends, to your youth. You are sitting at a ceremonial meeting. All you have to do is just

clap. Nothing to worry about, nothing can happen. There won't be any changes that might disturb the calm ... Then a rowdy demonstration in the streets interrupts things, provoking in you a feeling almost of being threatened. Are we in Czechoslovakia? My God, is the last fruitful achievement of the whole of last year's revival process going to be the excitement of the brawl now brewing?

The Chairman welcomes the guests, and hands over to the Czech general. He speaks for a very long time, with long pauses between his sentences, so we have to look to see if he is still there. He must have been tired. The assembled company listened in silence. Not so much an attentive silence, more of a disciplined one. They probably didn't even understand all he said. But the opposition in the streets somehow made them attach more importance to it. ‘Our country has been through a tragic period ... begun with the post-January policies ... the leadership put the Party on the defensive ... it abandoned its position to forces that had been defeated once ... spies ... subversives ... criminal priests ... representatives of defeated classes ... Sik and Co just appealed to people's moods ... the intelligentsia just propagated existentialism and individualism ... the Soviets are not to blame ... it is the fault of the Party leadership ... it abandoned its class standpoint’. Etc., etc.

Outline of the Soviet speeches: ‘October 1917, the Red Army, the fist of the working class, the struggle against intervention, the War against Fascism, the Liberation in 1945, why we are here, the imperialist threat’. Etc., etc.

I left before the Soviet music ensemble began to play. The crowd outside let me through to the streets with the words, “What's this, another worker? Be careful we don't take your glasses off you, comrade!”

As I was writing up my notes Hadek came in. I warned him not to go out again as they were preparing to get him. Three-quarters of an hour later Hadek came back with bloodshot eyes, a cut lip, a swollen face and a caustic sense of humour.

“I thought you'd be pleased to hear you were right.”

A local factory worker in hospital, being treated for a broken nose: “Two civilians came out of the cinema, carrying a paper box. For a laugh I threw something in it. Suddenly two men dragged me inside ... they pinioned my arms and the civilian carrying the box held me by the neck. A policeman rushed up and hit me twice in the face. Then I felt a third blow ... then the civilian holding me by the neck hit me. I was kept in a room in the cinema and I watched the police, uniformed and plain clothes, prepare to disperse the citizens. Later I saw Hadek being dragged inside by the legs. They held him under his armpits and dragged him to the stairs. I heard an officer shout: “We'll give you democracy!” and things like ‘Kill him!’. Other plain clothes men threw some photographs of Dubcek and Jan Palach into a wastepaper basket.’ A local boilerman: “The plain clothes men suddenly appeared and squirted tear gas at me. I turned my back and they came and kept hitting me until I fell down.”

Another demonstrator: ‘Before midnight some plain-clothes men rushed out of the cinema and began to fly with everything they had. There was no resistance, it was terrible.’ After it was over, they came up to me and Honza Chlumy, who's now lying in hospital, said ‘Be grateful you got into our hands. If you'd fallen into their hands (the Russians) you'd have come off much worse.’ When I told them the Russians had protected Hadek, they didn't say a thing.

That night Hadek described his experiences to me. They are so terrible that they can hardly be put into words. While I was writing this he telephoned me

from hospital to ask me not to write about his battle with the police, so as not to jeopardise an objective investigation. And so I'll take up the story only at the point where it is practically over, due to a peculiar turn of events.

Hadek's story: 'When I came to, I was in great pain, because some big man was dragging me upstairs by my hair. They threw me into a hall saying things like "Here's the chief counter-revolutionary!" The cinema manager shouted "Beat him up, kill him!" While he was shouting a smaller man hit me on the nose. One of them started to pull my hair, and somebody else shouted "Pull out his hair!" Then somebody shouted in Russian: "*Nyebytie yevo, pizdy!*" (Stop beating him, you cunt! P.C.) Then the Russians made a circle round me, so that nobody could touch me any more.'

I would be very concerned if the relevant investigating apparatus was really so crude and corrupt as to thrust onto the table of its chief in Prague a note saying that in Semily it was all stage-managed by ... a certain comrade. So I'll drop my own personal anxiety on this matter. I have attempted to be as objective in my account as possible. But I have not been able to speak to the 'other side'. The police chief would only speak to me if I treated everything he said as confidential. He believed the only person qualified to make announcements was the press spokesman of the Ministry of the Interior. I tried to speak to Comrade Stinilova, of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship Society. Our conversation lasted just as long as it took to walk from the Secretariat of the Society to her front door. Although, as she said, she respected open enemies she couldn't see any point in our talking. First however, she asked me from whose flat I had just come. Why did she want to know, I asked. Why had I chosen Semily? Because it interested me as a type. She finished our conversation by saying that she loved the Soviet Union, just as some people love West Germany or the United States. I said that I didn't love West Germany, or America or the Soviet Union. Powers are powers and they don't inspire love.



# The Fall of the Prague Spring

“And the men who spurred us on,  
now sit in judgement on our wrongs,  
as the siren and the shotgun sing their song...”  
Pete Townsend and The Who, in *Won't Get Fooled Again*.

## The Invasion

The invasion of Czechoslovakia took place on the night of August 20-21, 1968. At 10pm that evening a special flight from Moscow was announced. The plane, a civilian AN-24 did indeed arrive. But no-one got out. The plane remained parked at the side of the runway. After an hour another AN-24 arrived. It disgorged a number of civilians who were warmly welcomed by the customs officials. At about 2am an unannounced military AN-12 also landed. It released an airborne unit of the Soviet Army. The occupation of the capital had begun. From then on AN-12's arrived at minute intervals, releasing the dogs of war into the heart of Prague.

The invasion itself had begun at 11pm when between 200,000 and 500,000 soldiers of the Warsaw Pact countries had crossed the Czechoslovak borders. The response of Alexander Dubcek:

“On my honour as a communist, I declare that I did not have the slightest idea or receive the slightest indication that anyone proposed taking such measures against us... I have devoted my whole life to co-operation with the Soviet Union. Now they do this to me! This is the tragedy of my life!”

The response of one Russian soldier:

**Rude Pravo, August 27, 1968:**

“It happened on Thursday, at the time we still talked to them.

“Kolya, what are you doing here?”

A 19 year old boy sitting on a tank barely recognised me. Never, in that prehistoric time that my visit to the Soviet Union has now become, had he seen such horror in my eyes. Finally he recognised me.

“Kolya, what are you doing here?”

“We had our orders. We came as friends.”

“As friends? But you are shooting!”

“I did not shoot.”

“What will Sasha your sister say, when you get home?”

“I did not shoot. They sent us here.”  
He showed me the magazine filled with cartridges.

“But others do shoot. Your people shot a 20 year old boy. I'm sure he loved you. We all used to love you. Kolya, we had peace here until you came.”

A thought occurred to me. “Kolya, what is counter-revolution?”

“It is when people disagree with Lenin.”

“And Kolya, do you love Stalin?”

“No, he was bad.”

“Novotny was just as bad. We didn't want him...”

“I don't understand. We received an order... They didn't tell us the truth... Why would they lie to us?”

Kolya couldn't understand. Earlier he had spoken with dozens of other people and had heard the same question:

“Tell me, why did you come, why?”

I stood there for about half an hour. And then I saw a terrible thing. Kolya turned his gun on himself and pulled the trigger.”

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The 'exact' reasons for the invasion are obscure. There are as many interpretations as there are interpreters.

One of the crucial factors was the forthcoming 14th Congress of the CP Cz. On June 1 the Central Committee had decided that it would call an extraordinary Congress for September 9, 1968. The main item was to be the election of a new Central Committee. The old one still had a hard core of unreconstructed stalinists who were resisting the technocratic innovations of Dubcek and the reformers. Preliminary voting had taken place to nominate delegates. It was clear that this Congress would turn into a rout of the dogmatists, the people who most vociferously supported complete adherence to the Soviet model of 'socialism'.

The draft statutes for the Congress were published on August 10, thus demonstrating to Moscow the reformers' determination to proceed with the meeting. The only public mention the Russians gave to it was a report, in *Pravda*, on August 20, that just over 25%

of the existing Central Committee would appear on the ballot.

The decision to invade had been taken at a Politburo meeting of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on July 16, 1968. At this gathering Breznev is said to have repeated remarks made to him in March (in Dresden) by the East German leader, Ulbricht.

'If Czechoslovakia continues to follow the January line, all of us here will run a very serious risk which may well lead to our own downfall.'

(Paul Tigris in *Czechoslovakia: A post-mortem*. II, Survey, 74-5, 1968, 114.)

As it turned out, the 14th Party Congress was held earlier than September 9. That it was held at all showed the extraordinary ability of people for large scale, co-ordinated autonomous activity. The fact that this activity was directed towards the holding of a Congress of the Communist Party revealed a deep level of confusion as to the exact role and nature of the CP Cz. The Dubcek leadership had been transformed overnight from a crew of politicians, external to the people, into symbols of 'the nation'. This symbolism was reinforced by the enormous wave of nationalistic solidarity created by the sight of armed aliens on the streets. The people were going to pay heavily for all this. Nevertheless, one day after the invasion, at 11.18 am, the Congress opened, in a factory in the Vysocany district of Prague.

This secret meeting took place under the guns of Russian tanks. It was so well organised though, that the only people who didn't know where it was were the Russians and open collaborators. Mishaps did occur: the Slovak delegation was stopped en route to the Congress and, ironically, one comrade Husak (current President of the Republic and First Secretary of the CP Cz.) was detained. On the same day the Russians had occupied all the buildings of the Communist Party District Secretariat in Prague. They certainly did not want to see the Congress take place, but even cameramen and photographers were able to find their way to the meeting thanks to the activities of the 'comrade workers'. According to one source the Congress was defended by the workers with containers of molten metal, ready to throw them onto tanks in case of an attempted occupation.<sup>2</sup> (Daniel Guérin, *The Czechoslovak Working Class in the Resistance movement*. London Bulletin, April 1969, No. 9. BRPF.)

Of course the 14th Congress was not the only sign of autonomous activity after the invasion. The Party, fearful of any activity not directly under its control, had decided that the best course of action was inaction. A statement issued on the day of the invasion carried the following passages:

'To all the people of Czechoslovakia:

To all our citizens!

We ask you to support the demands of the Government:

1) By showing, as you have often done in recent months, statesmanlike self-control and by rallying around the duly elected Czechoslovak Government which exists and in which, in April, you expressed your confidence.

2) By not allowing the establishment of any government other than the one elected under free and democratic conditions.

3) By encouraging those who work in our plants, cooperative farms and other enterprises to express their support for the Czechoslovak Government, in carrying out the commands of the occupation troops

and of the governments of the five Warsaw Pact countries.

4) By ensuring the maintenance of order, avoiding all spontaneous actions against members of the occupation armies (and by providing the population with the necessary food, water, gas, power and so forth.'

The last request was indicative of the post-invasion policy of the Dubcek leadership. Directly following the Russian occupation there was a widespread demand for an immediate and total general strike. In the above passage the government was cashing in on its popular support to ask the people **not** to carry out this threat. The general strike degenerated into tokenism. The leadership, unable totally to contain the people's frustrations, settled for two one-hour strikes, at mid-day on August 22 and 23.

Perhaps the most impressive display of autonomous activity was the improvisation of illegal radio and television stations throughout the country. The Russians knew (and so did the Czechs and Slovaks), that for an imposed regime to establish itself rapidly and efficiently it needs total control of the channels of communication. Keep the population in ignorance, divide by rumours and innuendo. Prevent any minor resistance becoming generally known and hence becoming general.

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At 8.15 on the morning of August 21 shooting could be heard over the air on Prague Radio as the Russians stormed the transmission centre. The announcer described the scene and declared his loyalties. The national anthems were played. Then....silence. Ordinary soldiers in the army 'requisitioned' military radio facilities; the audio-visual resources of factories and training institutes were expropriated, and innumerable nameless people provided shelter and transport for all this equipment, and food for those who would use it. Within 24 hours of the invasion improvised studios and borrowed transmitters were functioning throughout the length and breadth of the country. It is doubtful whether the state machinery functioning in 'normal' circumstances could so quickly have organised such an extensive network of radio transmitters. They were the nervous system that kept alive communal consciousness during that first week. They advised people where food could be had, who was in danger of arrest (and by whom), and which roads to take to avoid the occupiers. They announced the token general strikes. They suggested that the whole nation should simultaneously change the street names to confuse the enemy, that house numbers should be taken down, and that the occupiers should be ignored, and denied food and drink. The magnitude of this national self-activity can be grasped when it is realised that in 'normal' times there were only two radio programmes and one television channel. During this first week there were five radio programmes, three television channels, and as many as 19 different stations, broadcasting in 8 languages.

Of course Radio and Television were not the only sections of the media to be under effective 'workers' control' during that first week. Newspapers also appeared, as did numerous leaflets and proclamations, whilst their editorial offices were under occupation. How was it done? The papers were written in the factories. An eye-witness comments:

'On August 22 I had the idea of calling the print shop. Whereas previously a bottle of something was necessary to make them deliver and to finish the job within the time allotted — already long enough — now they were available — men and machines — for pamphlets, newspapers or whatever.

Now I understand why, in the history of the labour movement, printing workers are often spoken of with respect. Our printers not only did a perfect, rapid job, regardless of overtime, but what is more, by their calm, their endurance, their consciousness of purpose, and their courage they made it possible for all the regular newspapers to appear immediately after the second day, in spite of the fact that many printshops were occupied.'

(Guérin, *loc.cit*)

No mention of self-organisation would be complete without a mention of the journey undertaken by the Soviet transmitting station 'Zaria'. This had been dispatched from the Soviet Union by train: its destination Prague, via Slovakia. Word had leaked out that the transmitter also contained jamming equipment, to disrupt the clandestine stations. Its odyssey could have been out of *The Good Soldier Schweik*.

'The engine started and despite blocked stations and many unforeseen detours at last arrived somewhere. Then, increasing speed, it passed rapidly through several stations and continued without halting for a long while. When it became apparent that the train was going nowhere, on an abandoned line, after much shouting, it was put into reverse, only to come finally to a place where the line had been removed. The 'Zaria' transmitting station had to be carried from there by helicopter.'

(Guérin, *loc.cit*)

The railway workers claimed that they were only trying to be helpful. Things just kept going wrong!

Like any account of mass activity this one must of necessity be incomplete. Writers and documenters have always been more interested in what 'personalities' were doing, rather than in what was being done by millions of heroes, villains and just confused people who actually make history. One thing is certain. In the tumultuous week following the invasion the name 'Dubcek' underwent a transmutation. Now it stood for something amorphous, known as 'democracy'. Dubcek was transubstantiated into 'the very essence of the Czechoslovak spirit'. No one realised that by so doing the people were denying the truth that they (the people) were in reality this spirit, and that no man could possibly do what they themselves had to do. This attitude probably saved Dubcek's life. It certainly saved the Reform leadership, allowing it to stagger on for a few more months. But just as certainly it allowed the dismantling of the gains of the previous 6 months to proceed more smoothly. Dubcek, the demi-god, returned again to his people, only personally to subvert their new dynamic.

On August 27 Dubcek and the Chairman of the National Assembly, Smrkovsky, returned from Moscow. They had been kidnapped (and taken there) immediately after the invasion. It appeared at first as if the Russians had made an enormous blunder.

After the trauma of the invasion the Reform leadership was still intact. It was committed, at least on paper, to the implementation of its original policies. However, Dubcek carried back with him from Moscow a document that must go down with Chamberlain's Munich agreement as one of the most disgusting products of political expediency carried out in the history of Czechoslovakia. This only illustrates the futility of expecting 'supermen' (national or foreign) to solve anything for you.

To be fair, not all the reformists had signed. Showing great personal courage, Frantisek Kriegel, one of the reformers, had refused to do so. But he was the exception. The contents of the so-called Moscow Protocols were never officially made public. But they gradually leaked out.

The Protocols contained 14 points:

- 1) The course of political development in Czechoslovakia would be changed in accordance with the Soviet model of socialism.
- 2) The declarations of the 14th Party Congress were invalid.
- 3) Czechoslovak 'socialism' would be strengthened through press censorship.
- 4) The Czechoslovaks were to declare that there had been a counterrevolution. (The Czechoslovaks managed to get the word counterrevolution deleted from the final communique.)
- 5) The mass media would not speak or write against the Russians and their allies.
- 6) The Soviet security organs would be removed at the same time as the Soviet troops. (Soviet troops are still in Czechoslovakia.)
- 7) The Minister of the Interior, General Josef Pavel, was to be relieved of his functions, as he was not prepared to cooperate with the Soviet security organs.
- 8) Czechoslovak requests for reparations for damage caused during the invasion would be considered by a Commission of the Czechoslovaks and the 5 Warsaw Pact countries.
- 9) The international situation would be readjusted in accordance with the Bratislava agreement. (An agreement between the Russians and the Czechoslovaks, reached before the invasion. In it Dubcek had promised to curb the media and to ban certain organisations such as KAN, the club of involved non-party members, and K-231, a club of former political prisoners.)
- 10) The Czechoslovaks would issue a declaration that they had not asked the United Nations (and that they would not ask them) to discuss the invasion.
- 11) Ota Sik, economic planner and Deputy Premier, and Jiri Hajek, Foreign Minister, would be relieved of their functions.
- 12) A declaration would be made that the Czechoslovak-West German border was not prepared for defence, and that it therefore had to be secured by the Allies.
- 13) The results of the Moscow meeting would be kept strictly secret, and not published.
- 14) The friendship and alliance with the Soviet Union and other states in the socialist camp would be further strengthened.

Dubcek's function was to sell all this, which he did. He was then removed. That, in essence, is the history of Czechoslovakia between August 1968 and April 1969.

Of course this process did not proceed smoothly. It is only with hindsight that the tactics of the leadership became clear. A war of attrition had started, in which the shifts of power were difficult to perceive. An outright assault on the spring gains would have destroyed even Dubcek's credibility. Some advances were first made. But with every advance on one front, a corresponding retreat was made on another. Early advances were hailed as achievements. Then, as the energy required to wring even minor concessions increased, remaining stationary was hailed as a major achievement. The pressure continued to pile up. Finally just slowing down the rate of retreat came to be accepted as an 'advance'. Soon the only 'advance' possible was the insistence that the leading 'personalities' should not be put on trial.

Resistance came from below. Perhaps the three most significant examples of organised resistance were the change in attitude of the workers towards the workers' councils, the worker-student alliance and the Smrkovsky campaign. I don't intend to say anything more about the latter. All it illustrates is that the Russians were prepared to refrain from the complete destruction of an individual if there was still sufficient popular support for him. 'Spontaneous' protests too had considerable effect. Palach's suicide had a national impact. So did the riots that followed the defeat of the Soviet Union at ice hockey.

# The Workers Councils

Before the invasion the workers were suspicious of the imposed workers' councils. After the invasion these became symbolic of the advances made. The question of the councils also became mixed up with the defence of the leadership and of its policies. At the same time, some workers began to realise that the councils could be changed from what officialdom wanted them to be into something more approaching organs of workers' power. At this time there were 46 councils functioning. Another 140 were in their preparatory stages. However, all this was unfortunately clouded by the question of defending the Dubcek leadership.

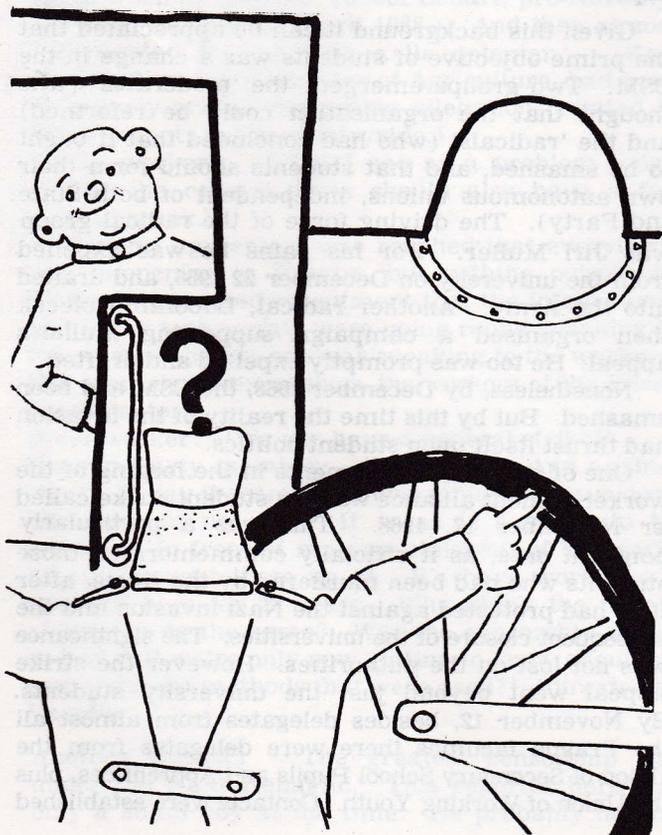
The behaviour of this leadership beautifully illustrates the process of 'minimum' retreat. In his address to the National Assembly on September 13, the Premier of the Republic, Cernik, announced the reintroduction of censorship. This was coupled with the promise that:

'We shall maintain the economic reforms and will revise the structural and institutional organisation of the economy... We shall introduce, as an experiment, Workers' Councils'.

By October 24 the Government announced that it had decided not to implement its plan for 'workers' management'. On October 25, Dubcek announced that the Party would have to move faster towards 'normalisation', 'in order to create the conditions for a further advance in the creative activity of our nation!' (No comment, P.C.)

Both individually and collectively workers protested about this backdown on the part of the leadership. The metal workers pushed their demands furthest. They criticised the official model of workers' councils, asking for a greater proportion of workers to be on them. Acting spontaneously, workers continued to elect councils in defiance of the Government. The Pilsen Skoda factory and the Slovnaft chemical factory in Bratislava even managed to stage worker elections to the post of plant director. On January 9 and 10, 1969, Pilsen Skoda hosted a statewide meeting of workers' council delegates from some 200 different plants. The meeting elected a coordinating committee which eventually set up an association of workers' councils.

This pressure from below was reflected in the resolutions passed at the 7th Trade Union Congress of March 4, 1969, which supported the (already accomplished) formation of workers' councils. At the same Congress Dubcek made an appeal for moderation by the trade unions. The Russians were sufficiently alarmed by even this mild appearance of councilist practice to launch a verbal attack. On March 4 Pravda contained an article by one Sergei Titarenko, attacking the concept of workers' councils. He traced the idea of councils to 'anti-communist propaganda from the imperialist camp'. He warned that 'the demand to hand over

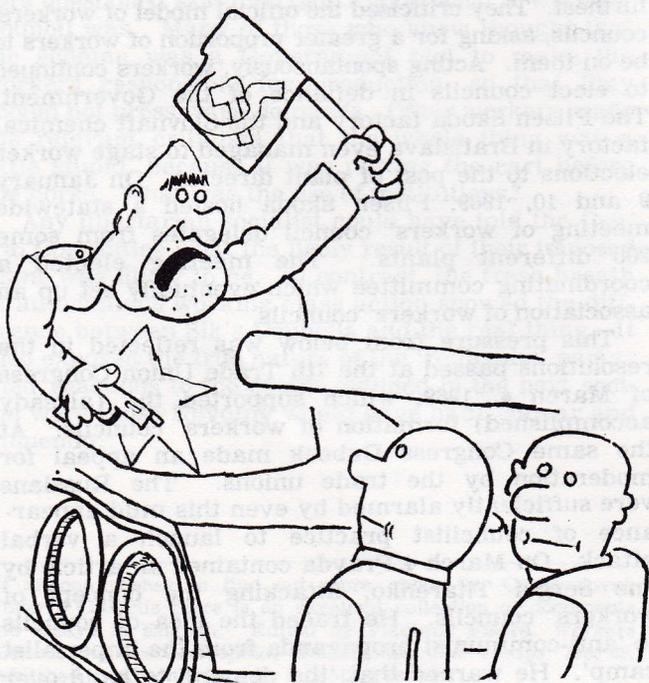


enterprises entirely to ownership-and-management-of-production collectives is particularly dangerous.' 'Anarcho-syndicalism is a step towards corporatism and fractionalism, towards degeneration and capitalism in socialist society.' Further 'it would undermine the authority of the Communist Parties.'

From April 1969 on the onslaught became more and more savage. The workers gradually became demoralised. The movement fragmented. The edifice of 'consumer communism' was being erected to increase the material well-being of the workers while destroying their political consciousness. The sustained pressure was in the end successful. On May 31 1969, Cernik could announce that the workers' councils were essentially 'an interference with the existing power structures in Czechoslovakia. The formation of councils would therefore now stop'. Stop indeed it did, as Husak pursued 'normalisation' with increasing vigour.

The workers' movement went through several characteristic phases in the post-invasion struggles. First a burst of militancy and some apparent victories; then a long defensive battle to maintain the positions gained, finally splits, demoralisation and apathy. Political concessions were withdrawn and replaced by economic concessions. This splitting, fragmentation and final defeat of the workers went hand in hand with the Party's success in eliminating autonomous political activity and enforcing a retreat into private life. Two years of stimulating private consumption, eliminating communal solidarity and burning up the country's foreign currency reserves to provide the material incentives, eventually resulted in 'normalisation'. However, it speaks volumes for the ability of the working class that a mere 6 months of comparative freedom gave them the strength to resist these pressures for nearly two years.

This disruption of working class spirit was mediated by the reformist leadership. Whenever the working class had the desire to act, they were implored not to by the very leadership they were seeking to defend. I am not saying that given the correct leadership things would have been different. The working class had the correct leadership: itself. Defeat only came when it chose to listen to a self-appointed leadership outside of itself.



# Students, Workers And The Prague Radicals

In that winter of 1968 there were desperate attempts to preserve the spirit of the Prague Spring. No account of them would be complete without a mention of the Prague radicals who, for a brief moment, achieved what the western left had only dreamed of in 1968: a worker-student alliance.

As in the West, some of the most articulate exponents of radical change in 1968 had learnt their politics at university. They had later brought their new found enthusiasm out onto the streets. As one might expect, the Czech students' union of the 1960's was a fossilised hierarchy. Known as the CSM, its function was to preside over the affairs of the nation's youth. In 1966 it boasted 1,055,000 members. This high figure was not unrelated to the fact that membership was compulsory for anyone wishing to proceed into higher education. Life was excruciatingly boring for a CSM member. It consisted of dull meetings, labour brigades and political indoctrination. The Party's handling of youth was heavy and clumsy. For instance, camping had been declared incompatible with the socialist view of life. It wasn't until 1964-65 that the CSM was allowed to sponsor camping trips!

Given this background it can be appreciated that the prime objective of students was a change in the CSM. Two groups emerged: the 'moderates' (who thought that the organisation could be reformed) and the 'radicals' (who had concluded that it ought to be smashed, and that students should form their own autonomous unions, independent of both State and Party). The driving force of the radical group was Jiri Muller. For his pains he was expelled from the university on December 22 1966, and drafted into the Army. Another radical, Lubomir Holecck then organised a campaign supporting Muller's appeal. He too was promptly expelled and drafted.

Nonetheless, by December 1968, the CSM had been smashed. But by this time the reality of the invasion had thrust itself upon student politics.

One of the decisive elements in the forging of the worker-student alliance was the student strike called for November 17, 1968. This was a particularly poignant date, as it officially commemorated those students who had been murdered by the Nazis, after they had protested against the Nazi invasion and the subsequent closure of the universities. The significance was not lost on the authorities. However the strike appeal went beyond just the university students. By November 12, besides delegates from almost all the Prague faculties there were delegates from the Union of Secondary School Pupils and Apprentices, plus the Union of Working Youth. Contacts were established

outside Prague as well.

Dubcek was apprehensive about what he considered to be provocative action. On November 13, together with several other reformers, he met the students and urged them not to demonstrate. As in all times of turmoil, confusion was rife. The strike happened almost by accident. As the student leadership agonised over whether to strike or not, an untrue rumour reached the provincial town of Olomouc to the effect that the Prague students were already out. The Olomouc students, spurred on by the fact that their town hosted a Soviet garrison of 1200 men, immediately came out. This fed back to Prague. On November 16 the agricultural students began a one week strike. This pressure from the 'ordinary' students forced the leadership's hand. A strike was called for all the Prague faculties, to begin on November 18. The strike call spread, and apprentices and school students throughout the country joined in. Eventually an estimated 60,000 students (out of a total of 92,000) came out.

Time and time again the inescapable fact of solidarity spreading out in a horizontal wave front makes the libertarian case without a word needing to be said. The atmosphere during this strike was unique. Strange things happened. A chamber orchestra visited the faculties to entertain the strikers. Food and cigarettes were brought by people of all ages. Schools and factories invited the striking students to come and state their case. Almost always the workers would declare their solidarity with the strike. Within four days a formidable horizontal network of students-schools-factories had built up. What could the Dubcek government do in the face of such popular action? They had to acknowledge it, but also to contain it. Eventually the Party line was formulated and (on December 21 1968) an editorial appeared in *Rude Pravo*. The resolution disapproved of the use of the strike weapon, but recognised the justice of the students' and their discipline. (sic)

The student factory contacts were the most hopeful fruits of the strike. At first, rather like in France in May 1968, students spoke at some factories. Other factories sent representatives to student meetings. This new relationship gave the students credibility (both in their own eyes and in those of many workers) when they began to approach the trade unions prior to their congresses.

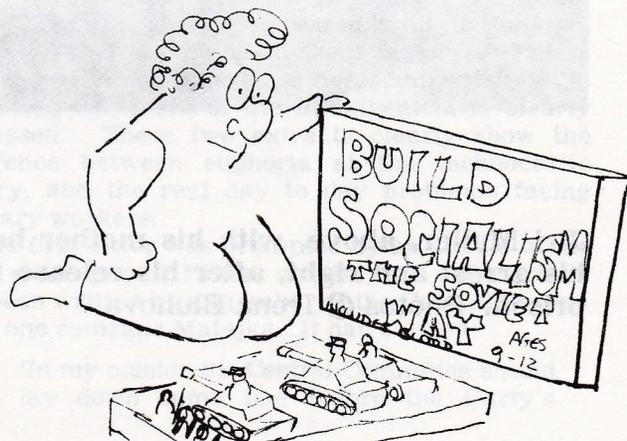
The largest union in the country was the Czech Metal Workers Union, with some 900,000 members. In this case the Government showed its stupidity by ignoring this union's Congress. Jiri Muller attended as the student delegate, and on December 19, at the Congress, he signed an agreement with the union on behalf of the students. This called for mutual support and solidarity, consultation, cooperation and exchange of information, defence of the media and other specific demands.

This agreement was rapidly followed by similar ones with the construction workers, engineers, timber workers, gas workers, printworkers, power station workers and the locomotive men. This was probably the high point of the student movement. Most of these alliances held through 1968-69. They were feared by the Party. But the slow grinding pressure of 'normalisation' throughout 1969, 1970 and 1971 ate into the enthusiasm. I am not going to give a history of normalisation. That is not the point of this pamphlet. But the fates of Muller and Holecek are highly significant.

In 1972 Muller was sentenced to 4 years, for informing people of their right to abstain in elections. He was kept in isolation, on a low vitamin diet. He

came out of prison with failing sight, his health broken. Holecek had always feared a car accident. In 1977 he was killed by a hit-and-run driver, later found to be an employee of the Ministry of Justice.

In this pamphlet I want to answer two main questions: What were the causes of the Prague spring? and what was the nature of the Dubckite Communist Party of Czechoslovakia? To answer I am going to have to talk about the origins of Czechoslovak leninism in the context of Czechoslovakia's own social history.

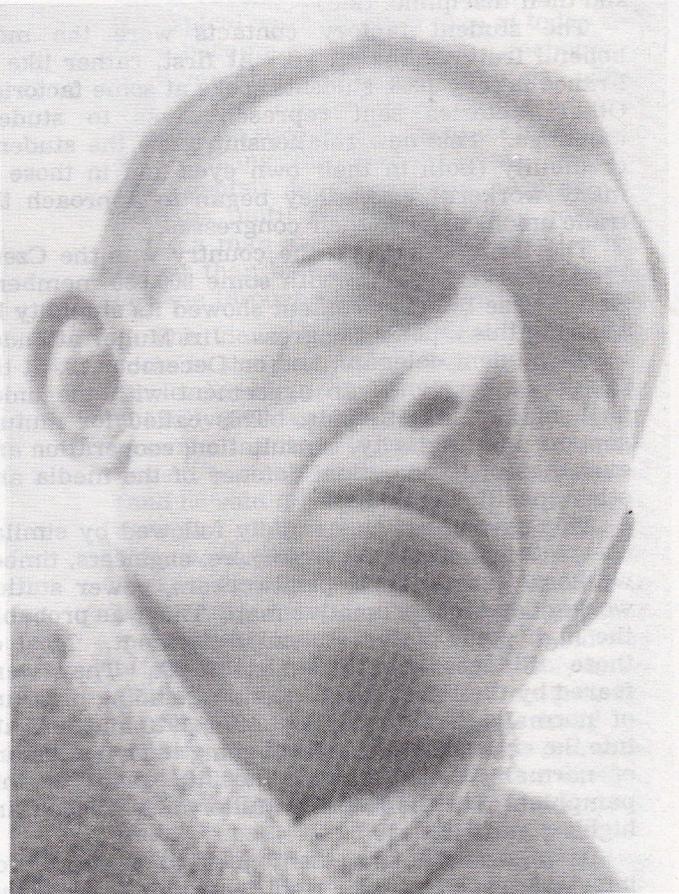




**The signing of the Co-operation Treaty between the Union of Mine-workers and the Students' Union in early 1969.**



**Jiri Muller, above, with his mother before his arrest and right, after his release from prison. Photos © Irena Bluhova.**



# The Czech Intelligentsia, the Leninist Tradition and the Party

'But on analysis of this concept (private property) it becomes clear that although private property appears to be the source, the cause of alienated labour, it is really its consequence, just as the gods in the beginning are not the cause but the effect of man's mental aberration.'

-K. Marx in *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe*,  
Vol III, p 91-92

## The Intelligentsia

In order to clarify the following discussion I should explain exactly what the term intelligentsia means to an East European. It is certainly not equivalent to intellectual. There are two overlapping usages of the term making an exact definition difficult. It is rather like the variations in usage and meaning of the western term 'middle classes'. First there is a sociological type of definition, based on 'external' criteria, the main criterion used being the possession of academic qualifications approximately equal to HND or above. This is the criterion used when figures are given by East European authorities on for example the proportion of the Party that are members of the intelligentsia. There is however another usage, and for the purposes of this pamphlet a rather more important one. In this sense the term refers to the self-image of a particular group in society. The main component of that self-image is that the intelligentsia sees itself as the only social stratum that is able to rescue the industrial, economic, scientific, and cultural life of the country through its unique ability for competent management. Another element of its self-image is that it has a rightful place in the leadership of society because of its potential to bring about a scientific/technological revolution.

In this chapter I would like to show how leninism can provide a suitable ideological framework for sections of the intelligentsia (particularly the scientific-technological intelligentsia) enabling it to use the structures established by CP rule for its own ends.

Just as Lenin adapted marxism to the needs, as he perceived them, of his Party and of the situation in which it found itself, so leninism itself can be adapted to changing circumstances. Stalinism is one such adaptation. The emergence of the Dubcek leadership in 1968 was another. It was the adaptation of a technocratic elite to the organisational framework of a Communist Party already in power.

In this chapter I will seek to show the origins and growth of this technocratism and to illustrate how, while finding itself in conflict with stalinism, it could nevertheless legitimise itself according to leninist principles.

The fundamental concept of leninism is that the dictatorship of the proletariat is expressed by the party of the proletariat, organised in a hierarchic command system. However, in a hierarchy it is not possible for the people who take orders to be the source of those orders. That is to say, the working class can only express its dictatorship by proxy, through the Party. However, the Party as a whole is not in a position to rule: many of its members are not in positions of power or authority. The dictatorship of the proletariat can thus only be exercised through the rulers of the Party: the Party apparat.

Within this framework there is room for many variants, all of which may rightly warrant the description of 'leninist'. The degree of centralisation can vary. So can the influence on (and in) the apparat of various sectors of the Party and of the state machine. Stalin 'developed' leninism to its ultimate degree of centralisation. The dictatorship of an individual was substituted for the dictatorship of the apparat, and one section of the apparat (the

security organs) was placed above all others. These were the 'deformations of marxism-leninism' referred to by Khrushchev and his successors.

This type of Party makes perfect 'sense' if its purpose is to enforce, from above, a programme of rapid industrialisation. However the revolution in Russia happened to be fought out under the banner of socialism. Lenin and his Party had to find a justifying principle for the continued exploitation of a population that was attempting to create new social and human relationships. He achieved this by establishing the principles upon which all leninist parties today legitimise their rule.

Lenin derived his marxism from Marx's Capital and Engels' *Anti-Duhring*. This marxism was based on a critique of political economy, and on the detection and formulation of laws leading to a universally valid economic determinism (the falling rate of profit, the growth of the reserve army of labour, and increasing immiseration leading to the final collapse of capitalism as a result of objective historical forces). Lenin absorbed all of this. And, in his own inimitable way, he added to it. The marxism he drew upon presented itself as the science of society and social development. It was the scientism inherent in this brand of marxism that allowed Lenin to use a strict determinism to deny any autonomous role to the proletariat. In *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* he argued that as the origin of all phenomena lay in physical matter, consciousness could only be a reflection of external, 'objective' reality. Thus the consciousness of the working class was limited to an awareness of the material conditions in which it existed. (That is why, of itself, the working class could only develop a trade union consciousness.) This in turn legitimised the revolutionary party, whose function was to supply the required political consciousness. The working class therefore had to be guided by those who knew how to interpret the laws of 'scientific socialism'. These people were of course the Party leaders. The vanguard of the proletariat was just that: a group that had acquired an esoteric view of history and an esoteric knowledge of the laws of social development.

The foundation of bourgeois rule is the private ownership of the means of production. Under capitalism the notion of private property was elevated into a fundamental principle of social organisation. It was the rationale used by the ruling class to justify its extraction of surplus value from the working class. Abolish private property and it would follow automatically so the argument ran that the root cause of alienation and of exploitation would be removed. Socialism would follow\*. The Bolsheviks, vociferous in condemning private property, created a new principle to legitimise their claim to run society on behalf of the working class. This was their collective ownership of esoteric knowledge.



\*\* We have shown elsewhere the fallacy of this argument. See *The Meaning of Socialism* published by SOLIDARITY.

# The Role Of The Intelligentsia

Whilst the general features of leninist legitimisation centre around the institutionalisation of esoteric knowledge, the structures associated with any particular leninist society will be co-determined by that society's own historical experience and the particular social relations prevailing within it. In Czechoslovakia, the intelligentsia had evolved its own unique relationship to society as a whole.

In Britain it would be rather silly to speak of the intelligentsia as a class, at least at the present time. The intelligentsia has little control over the instruments of production, or over the distribution of the product. It has little self-awareness, and seldom if ever attempts systematically to foster its own interests as a group. The role of the intelligentsia in Czechoslovakia, and its relationship to the rest of the population, were very different. A clear idea of the Czech intellectual has been given by a literary figure, Antonin Liehm, in his book *The Politics of Culture*\*.

The cultural intelligentsia began to play a significant role only after their dark prophecies came true and the economic consequences of stalinism gradually manifested themselves to all. Thus the Czechoslovak experience showed once again that, while the intellectual may orient himself quickly in complicated social situations and while he may be the first to sense danger and see possible solutions, his insights are wasted unless they are accompanied by political power. As long as the intellectual is out of touch with political leadership, his role is limited to that of a Cassandra. His time comes only after the masses have become convinced of the accuracy of his prophecies, In short, when it's too late.'

How did the Czechoslovak intelligentsia come to occupy a special role in the life of the community? After 200 years of Austrian domination the 19th century saw a reaffirmation of slavic national identity. Poets and intellectuals were one of the driving forces behind the new cultural nationalism of the Slavs. At first there was a search for the nation's cultural roots. The intellectuals rediscovered the oral and folk traditions of the peasants which had continued from the Hussite period. The growth of nationalism in the 19th century ensured the identification of the new Czech intelligentsia with anti-Austrian revolutionary activity. The 19th century intellectuals appointed themselves the 'soul of the nation'. This was a title earned in blood during the 1848 uprising in Prague. The cause of Czech nationalism, the subversion of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and demands for basic freedoms

\*This book has a fawning preface written by J P Sartre. Could the French and Czech intelligentsias be blood brothers?

became identified with the intelligentsia.

The 19th century was a period of intense economic activity. The Austrians imported the industrial revolution into the Czech lands. These were rich in coal deposits needed to drive the new factories. Bohemia became the industrial hub of the Empire. A national bourgeoisie did not arise indigenously. It was implanted from the outside by the Austrian rulers. In this context demands for political rights also became demands to control the resources of the country. They were anti-bourgeois demands, in the sense that they conflicted with the interests of the Austrian bourgeoisie.

The interests of the new working class and of the intelligentsia met at several levels. First at the crude level of nationalism. Secondly in demanding basic freedoms. Thirdly at the level of cultural identity. And finally in opposition to the horrors of industrialisation. All of this resulted in common opposition to the Austrian bourgeoisie. It is no wonder that during the 19th century very strong links were forged between the intelligentsia and the new Czech working class. These links were continuously reinforced by the fact that industrialisation was being carried out by alien rulers.

By the beginning of the 20th century the intelligentsia had come to occupy a unique position in Czechoslovak life. This is the background against which institutionalised marxist-leninist dogma could provide the apparatus for sections of the intelligentsia (especially the technological managerial intelligentsia) to coalesce from an amorphous stratum into something very close to a class, able to function in its own corporate interests within the organisational framework of the Communist Party.

By the 1930s Czechoslovakia was a modern industrial capitalist republic. In 1930 48% of the population derived their livelihood from industrial production, construction, commerce, and transportation. 35% lived off agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, and 17% were in other occupations such as army, police and the professions. (From Taborsky, *Communism in Czechoslovakia 1948-1960*, p.351.) Considering the Czech lands alone, the percentage of the population dependent upon industry would be higher still for even today Slovakia has a predominantly agricultural economy. Even during the depression of the 1930s Czechoslovakia was still among the first seven nations in Europe, in terms of the absolute volume of its exports.

# The CPCz \* And The Intelligentsia

In the 1946 general elections the CPCz won 114 out of 300 seats. During the next two years the Party governed in coalition with the Social Democrats, taking over key ministries such as Defence and the Interior. In 1948 the break with the old order was graphically symbolised by the death through defenestration of Jan Masaryk, son of Thomas Masaryk, founder and first President of the bourgeois republic. In February 1948 the Communist paramilitary 'people's militia' came out on the streets. The coup d'etat was complete.

The assumption of power by the CPCz resulted in structural changes in the economy and created a new framework for the evolution of social relations between various strata of the population. The most significant factors leading to the fruition of reform communism in the late 1960s were set down during this period. First, the economy was reorganised along typical Soviet command lines. We shall see the consequences of this later on. Secondly, science and technology grew and played an increasingly important role in the maintenance and development of the economy. Having inherited an established industrial base, there was no need to carry out primitive accumulation. Instead the CPCz had to supervise a 'scientific-technological revolution'. Thirdly, the historical relationship between the working class and the intelligentsia would have to develop within the new political framework.

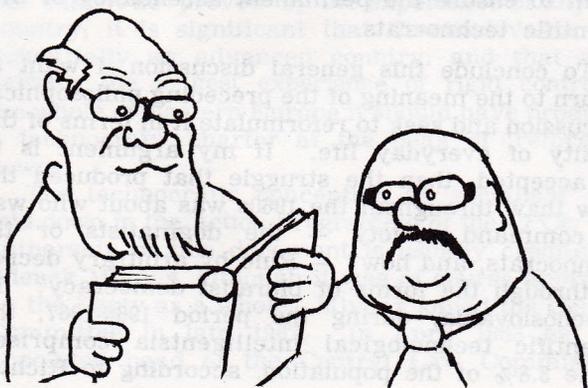
The essence of this framework was the institutionalisation of knowledge. This was an area that the intelligentsia understood and could take advantage of.

Various conflicting interests could be detected in this situation. The sort of knowledge that the Party was attempting to institutionalise — the esoteric, quasi-religious 'understanding' of historical development by the Party leadership — was incompatible with the free development of scientific and technological influence and expertise. The institutionalisation of knowledge *per se* begs the question of "What sort of knowledge is to be used as a criterion

\* This Communist Party developed within this framework of established capitalism. The Party has always been a 'mass' party. From its inception in 1921 until the last contested elections (in 1946) its share of the popular vote was always such as to ensure that at least 10% of the representatives in the National Assembly were Party members. It has always been among the 4 largest parliamentary parties.

The Party originated from a split within the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party. In the unrest following the first world war the Social Democrats opted for the parliamentary road. The 'left' faction of the Party put forward a resolution attacking the role played by leading Social Democrats in the formation of the Government. The crisis came when a general strike was called in 1920. During this, the workers began to organise revolutionary committees. Not only did the Social Democratic Party predictably fail to support the revolutionary committees, but it actually sided with the forcible breaking of the strike. This was too much even for the left faction and an open split ensued. In May 1921 the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCz) was accepted as an affiliate of the Third International. The long marriage with Moscow had started. Between 1925 and 1929 there were various purges as the Party rid itself of the 'undesirable' influences likely to mar the new marriage. The Party remained faithful to the Stalin faction in Moscow. During the 1930s it carried out all the twists and turns that allegiance to Moscow demanded.

In other words, from quite early in its history the CPCz followed the stalinist variant of leninism. When it seized power in 1948 it began to implement its stalinist conception of 'socialism'.



for the assumption of power?" The Party's answer was of course: marxism-leninism. In the 1950s an all out offensive was carried out by the Party to enforce this line. The slightest deviation from orthodoxy led to ostracism or worse. These were the years, to use the Party's jargon, of the 'class offensive'. In the 1960s the intelligentsia was to relabel them the years of ideological dogmatism. The suffering, the humiliation and the sterility of those years were a powerful springboard for the changes brought about by the technological intelligentsia in the 1960s.

The net result of the 'class offensive' was the virtual collapse of the economy, and the isolation of the Novotny leadership. By 1962, with the economy in ruins, the need to rethink economic and political strategy was obvious, especially to Novotny, whose survival now depended on introducing some coherence into the anarchy of the plan. Dogmatism had failed. The only viable alternative, or so argued the intelligentsia, was 'rational', 'scientific', 'competent' restructuring of the economy.

If the apparat's claim to legitimate rule were to be broken, a convincing counter platform had to be argued, and argued within the categories of marxism. In 1965, the ideological commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, together with the Presidium of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, commissioned a sociologist, Radovan Richta, to start an analysis of the 'scientific technological revolution' and of its implications for the evolution of 'socialist' Czechoslovakia. The results were published in 1967 in the book, *Civilisace na rozcesti* (Civilisation at the crossroads). This was to be the ideological platform of the scientific technological intelligentsia.

Before examining the main points of *Civilisace*, some explanation of the nature of a ruling CP is called for. It may appear that there is a contradiction between my contention that there was a struggle between the ideological apparat and the scientific intelligentsia, and the commissioning of the platform of the scientific intelligentsia by appointees of the Central Committee. The Party however is not a homogeneous ruling stratum, with a common aim, identifiable to all its members. The Party as such does not represent a ruling stratum because the bulk of its members are not in ruling positions. It is however the organisational form utilised by any contender seeking power. By 1965, large sections of the Party's controlling organs had been won by the technological faction. The hard apparatchiks from the 1950s were discredited and were fighting a rearguard action just to survive.

This use of the C.P. by different groups for their own purposes is reflected in the change in social origin of the membership. In 1946 58% of party members were workers, 13% farmers, 9% intelligentsia and 20% white collar workers. By 1965 the figures had changed to only 39% workers, 6% farmers, 32% white collar workers and 23% intelligentsia.

Richta opens his work by stressing 'an analytical contrast between the industrial revolution and the scientific-technological revolution'. His first thesis is that the main consequence of the scientific revolution is the transformation not only of labour power, but of all productive forces, into a continuous, mechanised process of production. Previously man had been the chief agent in the production process. Now 'he stands alongside it'. In effect, Richta claims, labour power (and the working class) is no longer the decisive factor in the growth of the

productive forces in society. It has been replaced by science and the classes possessing knowledge. (*Civilisace*, p 27-28).

For Richta, Science has a distinct character that sets it apart from other types of activity, including labour. It is this character that distinguishes a society based on science from one based on industry:

'Science owes its new status primarily to its exceptional power of generalisation. In contrast to other products, a scientific finding is not consumed through use. On the contrary, it is improved on — and then it costs nothing. Moreover, science possesses a peculiar growth potential. Every finding is both a result and the starting point for further research; the more we know the more we find out. This intrinsically exponential quality of the growth of scientific knowledge distinguishes it sharply from all traditional activities of the industrial type.'

(*Civilisace*. p 217.)

The main conclusions of *Civilisace* were that:

- 1) the scientific technological revolution cannot be led by the working class
- 2) social stratification in the new society will inevitably emphasize the dominance of the professional and technical classes and
- 3) the production and maintenance of a highly trained research elite, supported by a large technical staff, must define the attributes of a new ruling class.

However, Richta is a good socialist and a communist to boot. He professes a desire for the classless society. His solution to this apparent contradiction is to elevate the working class along with science. For Richta, 'the only solution will be to make professionals of us all'. The classless society will be achieved by a fusion of the working class with the scientific managerial class.

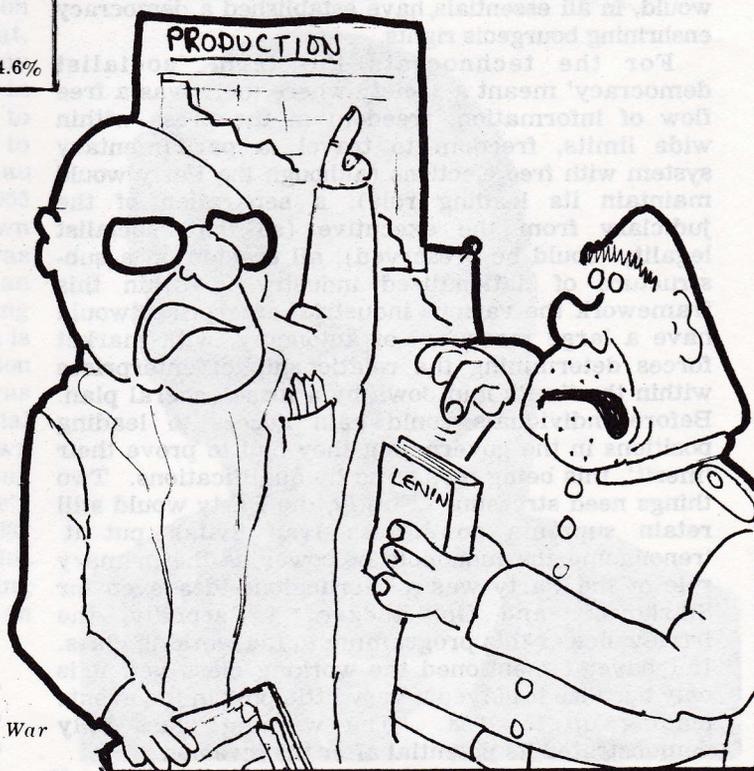
The struggles within the Party during the early and middle 1960s can therefore be seen as an attempt to alter the legitimate sources of power by replacing the possession of knowledge derived from political indoctrination by that obtained from scientific managerial expertise. What the struggle was **not**, was an attempt to destroy the Party as a hierarchically organised body holding the ultimate authority over society. The struggle of the 1960s was a struggle between two factions claiming to exercise power in the name of the Party. This offensive by the scientific technological stratum was accompanied by profound political and economic changes. The encouragement of market forces in the economy, the imposed workers' councils, the easing of censorship, and the relaxation of travel restrictions were all consequences of this struggle. Finally, the Action Programme of the Communist Party was the organisational platform that was meant to ensure the permanent ascendancy of the 'scientific' technocrats.

To conclude this general discussion, I want to return to the meaning of the preceding philosophical discussion and seek to reformulate it in terms of the reality of everyday life. If my argument is to be accepted, then the struggle that produced the slow thaw throughout the 1960s was about who was to command society — the dogmatists or the technocrats, and how? — Rule by arbitrary decree or through the forms of pluralist democracy? In Czechoslovakia, during the period 1966-1967, the scientific technological intelligentsia comprised some 3.8% of the population, according to Richta.

According to Krejci\*, 4.6% of the population were in direct control of the means of production during the same period (for breakdown, see table 1.). There is no doubt that the 4.6% included the 3.8%, ie. that the scientific 'technological intelligentsia was in direct control of about 83% of the total means of production. It was armed with a political programme that had the support of the people, and it had found an ideology that justified its existence and its control. Moreover, it could trace the development of this ideology from the preceding imposition of stalino-leninism. At a deeper level still, it could present this ideology as a reversion to authentic marxism.

**PERSONS IN DIRECT CONTROL OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION IN 1966/67**

1. Directors & deputy directors in industry, construction & agriculture	14,085
2. Directors & deputy directors in other branches of state sector	1,710
3. Chairmen of farmers' co-operatives	6,463
4. Divisional managers in industry, construction & agriculture	36,262
5. Divisional managers in other branches of the state sector	4,402
6. Other managerial and supervisory personnel in production	28,997
7. Directors of retail shop units	67,267
8. Directors of hotels and other accommodation units	3,028
9. Directors of restaurants and catering services	33,203
10. Directors of communal service units	3,681
11. Directors of building and housing co-operatives	717
<b>Total:</b>	<b>199,815</b>
Percentage of total population expressed as percentage of number of households:	4.6%



\* Krejci, J., *Social Change & Stratification In Post War Czechoslovakia.*

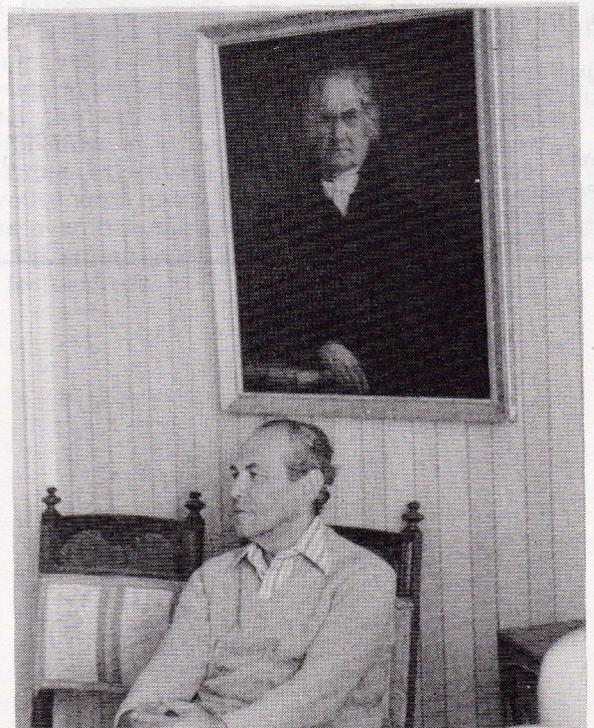
# The Economics of Liberalisation

'Another reason favouring the restoration of the market is sociological in nature. The diversity of human interests is related to the social division of labour which, in a broader sense, also includes the relations of ownership. Socialism has abolished private ownership of the means of production, but it has not abolished the social division of labour, whether in its technical, social or natural meaning. Specialisation of producers is a basis of the division of labour according to professions. The nature of modern production requires a division of labour among those who manage and those who are managed, a difference between mental and physical labour.'

Radoslav Selucky, Prague, 1968. (English version, *Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe.*)

I now want to consider why Novotny and the ideologues were forced to make concessions to the technocrats. To do this we will have to discuss the economic pressures that had built up, the problems they posed, and why — given the ideological set-up — the economic solutions led to political reforms that would, in all essentials, have established a democracy enshrining bourgeois rights.

For the technocrats the term 'socialist democracy' meant a society where there was a free flow of information, freedom of the press within wide limits, freedom to travel, a parliamentary system with free elections (although the Party would maintain its leading role), a separation of the judiciary from the executive (so that 'socialist legality' could be preserved), all erected on a sub-structure of nationalised industry. Within this framework the various industrial enterprises would have a large measure of autonomy, with market forces determining the relationship of enterprises within the limits laid down by a loose general plan. Before individuals could gain access to leading positions in the government they had to prove their 'merit', this being measured by qualifications. Two things need stressing. Firstly, the Party would still retain supreme power: as Ivan Svitak put it 'renouncing the monopoly of power as the primary role of the Party was a sacrilegious idea even for Smrkovsky and Goldstucker.\* Secondly, the irrelevance of this programme to the working class. If I haven't mentioned the working class yet, it is only because it played a very little part in the events leading up to 1968. The working class only demonstrated its potential after the invasion.



**Prof. Goldstucker**

\*Smrkovsky was Chairman of the National Assembly (Parliament). Goldstucker was Chairman of the 1968 Writers' Union. He is now a professor at Sussex University.

The ideas and programme of 1968 did not arise in a vacuum. Their roots can be traced back to the consequences of implanting stalinist methods into Czechoslovakia in 1948. From the 'liberation' until 1948 Czechoslovakia was a social-democratic republic based on a mixed economy. The government was a coalition of the CP, two social-democratic parties and two liberal/conservative parties. Two Czech historians have given descriptions of the economy at that time. (J. Flek and J. Goldmann, *Dvouletka a první petiletý plán* in *Prispevky k dejinam Komunisticka Strany Ceskoslovenska*, 1965, p.430. The two year plan and the one and five year plan. In Contributions to the History of the CPCz.)

'The enterprises were not yet entirely isolated from the market by a system of fixed wholesale prices. Their activity was guided by signals coming not from their superior organs but from the market. These continuously tested both the necessity and the efficiency of the production of goods. By the same token the Czechoslovak economy was not completely isolated from the world markets by a "Chinese wall" of fixed internal prices and monopoly foreign trade organisations. Because of this, even economic pressures from the outside were able to work in the direction of increasing efficiency and technical ability ... The responsibility of enterprises for the maximum efficiency of economic management was specifically stipulated, even in the legal norms valid at the time. "National enterprises should be guided by the principles of business enterprise management". This was not just a formal, legal directive. On the contrary, according to the ideas current at that time, no other type of economic management was conceivable. Categories such as costs, yield, prices and profits were still fully operative. They served as a basis for enterprise decision-making and for evaluating enterprise activity. The commodity character of production was not in question. Moreover, precisely in order that the principles of rational economic management could be thoroughly applied, various systems of intra-enterprise economic management were being introduced or expanded.'

Here were the seeds of the economic plans of the reformers. In fact the first five-year plan brought about by the 1948 stalinist regime drew heavily on the principles and priorities outlined above. The main emphasis lay in the production of consumer goods and in achieving a balanced trade with both the East and with Czechoslovakia's traditional western markets. The plan brought about a centralisation in decision-taking. But it also provided scope for the enterprises to react to directives and perhaps modify them: the so-called counter-planning principle. In other words, economic enterprises still had considerable independence.

The relative flexibility of the economy contrasted with the rigor mortis of political life. This situation continued until 1950-51. It is interesting to compare this fairly stable system of economic management with the ominous political developments. As early as 1946-47 the Party Chairman, perhaps taking a leaf from Stalin's book, could still talk of the possibility of developing 'socialism in one country' — in this case Czechoslovakia. He attempted to define a specific 'Czechoslovak road to socialism'. By 1947

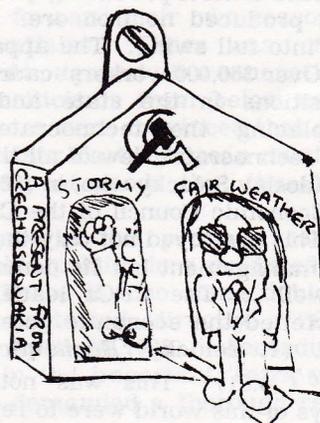
the post-war friendliness of the 'alliance against fascism' was wearing a little thin. The West was growing suspicious of Stalin, and Stalin wanted to sever the closer ties. By July 1947 the Soviet Union had come out against the Marshall Plan. Two months later the Cominform was ferociously denouncing American imperialism. The European communist parties were 'advised' to harden their lines. This spelled a reversal of the policies of the CPCz. On July 4 the Party had voted in favour of Czechoslovak participation in the Marshall Plan. Two days later Gottwald was summoned to Moscow, for a meeting with Stalin. The policy was changed, almost overnight. Later Gottwald is reported to have said: "I have never seen Stalin so furious. He reproached me bitterly for having accepted the invitation to participate in the Paris conference. He does not understand how we could have done it. He says that we acted as if we were ready to turn our back on the Soviet Union". (Quoted in *Communism in Czechoslovakia* by Taborsky, p.20.)

During the hardening of international relations in the period 1947-49, the Party consolidated its position as 'the leading force in the country'. It took over control in February 1948. During the next few months a flood of new members joined. In November, the CPCz was the largest communist party in the world outside the Soviet Union. Amongst the new recruits there were of course the opportunists and careerists, many in lower and middle management. As far as they were concerned very little had changed with the Party's assumption of power. In fact their authority in the enterprise was, if anything, enhanced.

The Party became large and 'unwieldy'. It contained too many people of conscience, veterans from the resistance and the Spanish Civil War. In August 1948 a screening of Party members was ordered. This resulted in the loss of 107,133 members and in demotion of a further 522,683 members. An even greater purge was launched in 1950 with the departure of a further 411,643 members. This policy of reducing Party size continued throughout the 1950's (see Table II).

#### MEMBERSHIP CHANGES in the CPCz: 1948-1960

	Members	Candidates	Total
Nov. 1948			over 2,500,000
May 1949	1,788,381	522,685	2,311,066
Aug. 1950			1,899,423
Feb. 1951	1,518,144	159,299	1,677,443
June 1954	1,385,610	103,624	1,489,234
Jan. 1958			1,422,199



After the 1950 purge the unholy twins of *proverka* and *cistka* (screening and expulsion) became a regular feature of Party life. The net effect was a complete change in Party membership. By 1953 only 1.5% of Party members were of pre-war vintage; 91% were post-war entrants, 7.5% of Party members had joined as a result of the incorporation of the social-democratic party in 1948. (Taborsky, p. 27.)

Who did the Party consider should be applying for membership? 'Party organisations may not and must not leave ... admission to the Party to chance, or let it proceed automatically. The (Party organs) are directly to designate workers, technicians ... and the best people among the intelligentsia. We want them in the Party'. (*Rude Pravo*, April 13, 1951). In other words, in addition to the dogmatists and ideologues, there was during this period a great influx of technically qualified people. The forms of 'market socialism', the stress on parliamentary government and the emphasis on a rationalised industrial base that were to be so characteristic of the reform politicians of the 1960's took the form they did because the people who put them forward were, by and large, the 'mayflowers' of 1948. Their experience of industrial management had been shaped in the period of the mixed economy. Their concepts of qualification and expertise had been carried through-out the 1950's in a dormant form.

Before this bourgeois seed could flower however the terrible years of glacial dogmatism were to be endured. The break with preceding patterns of economic management came in 1950 and 1951. In February 1950 the targets for the five year plan were substantially increased. The priorities of production changed from consumer goods to investment. A year later, under the impact of the Korean war, Soviet pressure forced Czechoslovakia both to change the structure of its industry and to step up its rate of growth. In the original plan heavy industry was supposed to have grown by 70%; in the final plan the figure was to be 130%. The pattern had to change from one centred on consumer goods to one with a greater emphasis on heavy machinery (armaments, investment goods) and metallurgy. These structural alterations implied the conversion of the Czechoslovak economy into a war economy. Attempts to fulfil the new targets created fundamental instabilities. Inflation increased, living standards fell, and both agriculture and light industry were virtually ruined.

In 1951, to cap it all, the Soviet command system was introduced in full. This was at a time when the trials had unleashed a wave of terror. Forcible collectivisation was in full swing. The muddles and insanities that all this wrought are too numerous to list. To give one example, Czechoslovakia was directed to become a steel-producing power despite the fact that it produced no iron ore. The 'class offensive' went into full swing. The apparat was in the ascendant. Over 350,000 workers' cadres assumed managerial positions in the state and economic apparatus, replacing the technocrats and the managers. The technocrats' view of all this has been expressed by Radoslav Selucky who, in 1968, was to be adviser to the Economic Council of the Czechoslovak Government: 'This destroyed not only the rationality of the previous management but its democratic (sic) character as well ... The CPCz leadership quite deliberately forfeited the economic potential of the middle classes'. (R. Selucky, *Economic reforms in Eastern Europe*, p.81) This was not a mistake that the Seluckys of this world were to repeat in 1968!

One might summarise the first 4 years of stalinist rule by saying that in 1947 Czechoslovakia was a country with a western type social-democratic political system and a mixed economy. By the end of 1952 it was a miniature copy of the Soviet Union with an artificially transplanted Soviet command system.

How did the working class react to all this? In 1953 the workers had not yet suffered 20 years of depoliticisation and almost unimaginable alienation. They exploded. This was to be their last large-scale demonstration of autonomous activity until 1969. The events of 1953 were an entirely working class affair. There were no technocrats, writers or intellectuals standing on their backs. The spark was the monetary reform of June 1, 1953, carried out according to the instructions of Soviet experts.

A new crown was introduced at an exchange rate of 5 old crowns for one new one,\* for cash balances worth up to 300 crowns of the new currency. This would apply to all claims resulting from employment (including pensions and other social benefits) and all claims by government or industrial enterprises. For all other claims, (e.g. the conversion of private savings, etc.,) the exchange rate would be 50 old crowns for one new one.

As soon as the news was announced riots broke out in many parts of the Czech lands, in Bohemia and in Moravia. According to *Pilsen Pravda* the riots began when workers walked out of the Lenin works (a former Skoda arms factory), destroyed factory machinery, sacked the Town Hall, burnt the Russian flag and trampled on pictures of the leadership. It is difficult to work out exactly what happened from official accounts but troops clashed with the demonstrators. There was shooting and 6 workers were reported killed in Pilsen. According to the same source there were also riots in the Moravian cities of Ostrava and Brno. Reports later filtering through to Vienna stated that some of the most serious fighting occurred in the town of Liskovec, in Moravia. Workers attempted to burn down the Town Hall and seize the Communist Party offices. What exactly happened in Liskovec will probably never be known, but there was talk of sporadic gun fire from the town as late as June 4, 1953. The situation wasn't 'under control' until about June 7. On that day Vice President Zdenek Nejedly issued a statement in which he admitted that the currency reform had 'met with open resistance and condemnation in the first few days, but the nation is beginning to understand that it means a good future'.

The nation 'understood' so well that on June 22 the Trade Unions were ordered to send 4,000 of their best officials down the Ostrava coal mines to 'halt the disastrous drop in coal output'. Imagine the sight, 4,000 trade union officials in a coal mine. Evidence from Prague Radio on June 30 suggested widespread passive resistance. Epidemics of 'severe flu', 'rheumatism', etc., would strike whole factories overnight. The Trade Unions recommended to the government that they should issue a decree penalising workers for absenteeism and job-changing.

The decree was issued on June 19, 1953. On July 6 it was rescinded by the government, also on Trade Unions' recommendation. I can guess that the response of the workers to the decree was so strong that they made it unworkable.

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\* At the time of writing there are about 20 crowns to the pound sterling.

The inability of the technological intelligentsia to see anything significant in autonomous working class activity is shown by the fact that Selucky could write of the period 1953 - 1958: 'That except for a group of intellectuals no major reform or protest movement emerged against the stalinist system'. (R. Selucky, op. cit. p.82.) The Party leadership, however, was not so blind. It had been warned by the events of the summer of 1953 that the workers would tolerate so much and no more.

Between September 1953 and the beginning of 1956 attempts were made to eliminate the economic imbalance created by the first five year plan and the transplantation of the Russian command system. This was done within the framework of the system itself. To some extent it was successful: the years 1953 - 1958 witnessed the biggest increase in the standard of living since the war. Investment policy was aimed at achieving a more equitable relationship between consumption and accumulation. In fact one of the main reasons why an explosion did not occur in 1956 comparable to those in Hungary and Poland was this improved economic situation. But this did not last long.

The first signs of stress in the unbalanced economy began to appear in the late 1950's. A decline in the effectiveness of investment capital, expressed as a rise in the capital-output ratio, became discernable. Even though this trend became a common feature in all the East European countries, by 1965 Czechoslovak capital was the least productive in the whole of Comecon (see Table III).

To counteract the growing inefficiency reforms were implemented in 1958 - 59. The reform package consisted of (1) a strengthening of the long-term (15 year) and medium-term (5 year) plans, at the expense of short-term ones (1 year); (2) a partial decentralisation (mainly in the field of investment) from the Ministries to the production units; and (3) providing incentives to producers to accept optimum plans instead of overfulfilling low ones.

The attempts at economic decentralisation proved particularly interesting. What happened was an increase in the size of the local bureaucracies. So-called economic production units were created by the amalgamation of enterprises. This was supposed to allow the development of efficient organisation within strong enterprises. The growth in the capital-output ratio was to be fought by combining the interests of the enterprises with effective investment. The idea behind the linking of the material interests of the enterprise with the fulfilment of optimum plans was that disproportions in the central plan could be eliminated at the level of the enterprise. The stress on long-term plans was to ensure that the long-term interests of the enterprise would not be subordinated to short-term gains.

The reform collapsed within 3 years. This was mainly due to the impossibility of getting this essentially rational technocratic solution to work within

the framework of an otherwise unaltered command system. However, the economic crisis was accelerated by other factors which stemmed from the nature of the system.

Since 1948 the Czechoslovak economy had grown more and more dependent on trade with the East. All plans hinged on forecasts of trade development extrapolated from the existing situation. In 1961 the structure of this trade was severely disrupted by the Sino-Soviet split. The production programmes of the machine industry for instance had been based on orders from the Soviet Union and China. During the Khrushchev period the Soviet Union had already unexpectedly changed its economic priorities several times, e.g. from agriculture to chemicals, to consumer goods etc. The consequence for Czechoslovakia was that the targets of decisive branches of industry, metallurgy and machine manufacture, had to be altered several times. Following the Sino-Soviet split all of China's original orders for machinery were cancelled. These events totally destroyed the assumption that long-term plans and production programmes could remain stable. Directives kept coming down from on high ordering enterprises abruptly to change their manufacturing schedules, thereby ensuring completely chaotic relationships between producers and consumers.

Another factor, not quite so external, was the totally unrealistic nature of the Third Five-year Plan (for 1960 - 65). It was based on a 15 year forecast of economic development covering the period 1960 - 1975. The essence of the plan was an expansion of capital and labour to be made available to metallurgy and heavy industry. It was quite beyond the capacity of the Czechoslovak economy to provide the wherewithal for such investment. As soon as the first difficulties appeared, caused by changes in external economic conditions, unrealistic investment levels and the weather (seriously: the winter of 1962 - 63 was particularly harsh), the Party reacted by cancelling the plan. It then reverted to the centralistic methods of the early 1950's.

A third factor is relevant to the development of the political ideas of the technocratic reformers. It was central to their belief that there could be no meaningful economic reform (meaningful in their own terms, i.e. of achieving an economy where technical expertise was the sole criterion of promotion) without political reform as well. With the adoption of the Third Five-Year plan and the reorganisation of the economic units, the power apparatus, (in the form of the Politburo of the CPCz) decided to carry out a 'verification of the population's political and class reliability'. The effect on the technocrats was cogently put by Selucky

'A prerequisite to the success of the reform was a return to rational and business-like decision-making on the basis of economic calculations and technological criteria. The political purge excluded tens of thous-

### Capital-Output Ratios for the Comecon Countries 1950 - 1965

	Czechoslovakia	USSR	Bulgaria	GDR	Hungary	Poland
1950-55	2.61	1.77	1.86	1.28	4.04	2.75
1955-60	3.14	2.53	1.92	2.70	2.84	3.68
1960-65	14.28	3.83	3.89	6.02	3.65	4.62

ands of experts from participating in management and decision-making. Those who had been excluded once before (in the early 1950s) from the management of the Czechoslovak economy and had returned to the management apparatus at the time of moderate de-stalinisation were now eliminated for the second time. Many others departed with them...If the reform promised a measure of technocratisation of the Czechoslovak economy, the goal was torpedoed by the political decision of the power centre. This political act of the neo-stalinists strengthened the conviction of the authors of the subsequent economic reform (1964-68) that the economic system could not be altered without a reform of the political system'.

Given this economic background it is scarcely surprising that the reform programme should have emerged from a nucleus of economists. The Party was deeply worried by the collapse of the five-year plan. They were open to proposals. But they wanted somehow to reform the economy while leaving their monopoly of power unchallenged. An impossible dream.

In 1963 a 'working group of experts' was formed in the Economic Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science. Their leader and spokesman was Ota Sik. When talking of the Prague Spring it is important to bear in mind the sort of people who provided the impetus for the whole reform movement. They were the economists, the managers, the experts. And they provided the sort of proposals that you would expect of such people. They dressed this up in the rhetoric of socialism, although in their mouths the words took on very different meanings. They used terms like 'workers' councils' and 'the principle of self-administration'. They attributed to these forms a very different content to what a western libertarian would ascribe to them. If we are seeking a clear view of what the Prague Spring meant we must not get lost in the euphoria produced by hearing our favourite words being used. What did those in power mean by these words? How were they to be used as tools for recuperation? How were they to divert the population's very real desire for change?

Sik is a central figure in the evolution of the Reform Movement. As a member of both the Central Committee of the Party and of its Economic Commission he was able to argue the case for his vision of reform from the very power centre of the apparatus. Initially the proposals were discussed at closed meetings of experts. They made explicit the latent conflict of interests between the technocrats and the apparatchiks. Where the reformers spoke of a 'new system of planning' the Old Guard spoke of an 'improved system of management'. The clash was between those who wanted a new system, and those who wanted to salvage the old one. The need for some type of reform was accepted by everyone but there were differences in the type of reform envisaged. The conflict became open at the 13th Congress of the CPCz. The original proposals of the reformers are summarised below (op. cit. p.86) The final programme was a compromise. It is useful however to see what exactly the later proponents of 'stalinism-with-a-human-face' were advocating, in the realm of economic ideas.



**Prof. Ota Sik**

## The Main Principles of Sik's Reform Programme

- 1) The plan, as an external mechanism of the functioning of the economy, must be supplemented by a restoration of the market as an internal, self-regulating mechanism.
- 2) In the future the plan should determine only the basic macro-economic development on the basis of an analysis of the developing trends of technology, production, economic requirements and overall social needs.
- 3) The enterprises must be granted a measure of autonomy. This will enable them to react to changes of production conditions and to the market. They must therefore not be subject to limitations in the form of imposed plan targets.
- 4) The plan directives will be replaced by economic regulation. The central planning organ shall optimise economic proportions, manage and regulate the redistribution of enterprise incomes, regulate credits, interest taxes, depreciation, etc., through legal norms. These norms will be identical for all enterprises. Equal rights shall be applied to unequal subjects.  
The legal norms must be stable and applicable over long periods so that the enterprises may be guided by them in deciding their own future.
- 5) The relationships between the enterprises and the organs of state lose their respective status of subordinate and dominant. Relationships will be defined by law which will stipulate the rights and responsibilities of both, and will grant enterprises the right to act in their own interest and to undertake any steps which are not in conflict with the law.

6) The Ministries should lose their *raison d'être* as directing bodies. The specialised ministries should be abolished because their functions (coordination of prospective plans, of investment, etc.) will be taken over by enterprise associations.

7) Foreign trade will be tied to production. The concept of the monopoly in foreign trade will be revised. Foreign business transactions will be devolved to the enterprise associations, or to the enterprises themselves.

8) The enterprise associations will not replace the Ministries in the sense that they would become command organs to the individual member enterprise. It is rather a matter of association, aimed at achieving or promoting the economic goals of a group of enterprises. Membership should not be obligatory. The enterprise should have the right to choose its partners, to enter the association or to leave it according to its own interests and needs.

9) In principle there should be three kinds of prices:

(a) **fixed prices**, (set and controlled by the centre) for basic raw materials, foods and products;

(b) **limited prices** (the centre will determine the top and bottom limit of their movement);

(c) **free prices**, will emerge from supply and demand relations or from an agreement between supplier and customers.

10) The criterion of enterprise activity should not be the fulfilment of plan targets but the size of their gross income. The use of this income (after deductions of payments due) will be determined by the enterprises themselves.

11) In order to restore competition, even with the high degree of monopolisation of domestic production, the entire economy must be gradually confronted with world markets. A transition to convertible currency is a long-range assumption.

12) A prerequisite of reform is a change in the level of wholesale prices which must reflect objective price relations both between branches of the economy and within them.

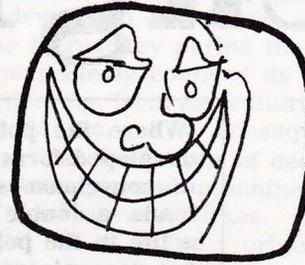
13) Levies must be introduced on basic funds and there should be restoration of the active role of capital in creating values allowing rational economic calculations to be made.

14) The level of wages and salaries should depend on the gross income of the enterprise. The state should only guarantee the minimum basic wage.

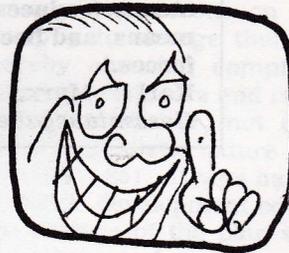
15) The complex criteria of the effectiveness of economic management should prevent the current growth in the productivity of labour being paralysed by a decline in the productivity of capital.

This quote from Selucky lays bare the reformists' conception of a 'socialist' economy. No mention of any possible mechanisms to ensure 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'. No talk of the abolition of wage labour. No hint that the domination of 'man over man' was to be replaced by 'the administration of things'. All we have is a dreary programme aimed at restoring the role of capital in creating value, linked to plans for increasing the productivity of both labour and capital. After the

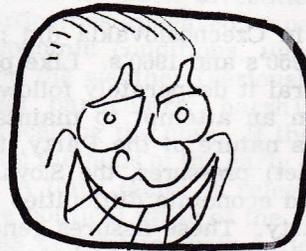
sterility of stalinism and the collapse of the command economy, all the technocrats could offer was this dog's dinner of reform. It is worth pointing out the similarities between this type of reform and some of the 'solutions' proposed in the West, to cope with its own economic difficulties. It should come as no surprise that Sik and his friends have slotted happily into comfortable niches in the West.



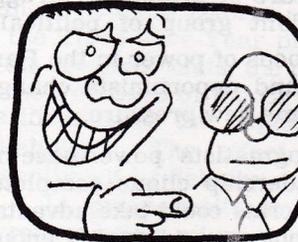
REMEMBER  
THOSE OLD  
IDEOLOGIES,  
FRIENDS?



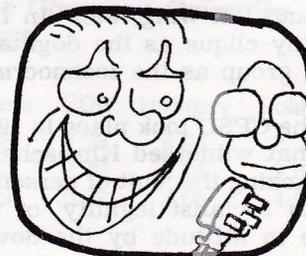
THAT YOU  
COULD ONLY  
USE IN  
ONE BLOC!



NOT ANY  
MORE  
FRIENDS!



HERE'S  
NEW  
TECHNOCRATIC  
RATIONALISM  
SOME KINDA  
MOUTHFULL, I KNOW



BUT IT  
PLUGS IN  
ANYWHERE  
THERE'S  
POWER!

# The Political Background

**'Where the political state achieves fully developed form, Man not only in thoughts, in consciousness, but in reality, in life, leads a double life, heavenly and earthly, a life in the political community in which he recognises himself as a communal being, and a life in civil society in which he acts as a private person, treats others as means, reduces himself to the role of a means, and becomes the plaything of alien forces.'**

Karl Marx, in *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 1/1, p 584

The political leadership in Czechoslovakia did not make the history of the 1950's and 1960's. Like political leaderships in general it desperately followed and reacted to events, in an attempt to maintain itself. The heterogeneous nature of the Party, the external (particularly Soviet) pressures, the Slovaks, groups of intellectuals and economic difficulties all helped to fracture the Party. These fissures generated unstable factions which separated and merged according to the demands of the moment. It is a mistake to view the seizure of power by the Dubcek wing as the fruition of years of principled struggle by a dedicated, closely-knit group of politically-motivated liberals. The locus of power in the Party fluctuated as careerists and opportunists changed sides to take account of some new pressure.

It was only after the dogmatists' power base had been eroded, and the leadership clique completely discredited, that the technocrats could take advantage of the growing desire for change and muster enough muscle to topple the moribund supporters of Novotny. Here I should explain my terminology. The existence of two poles within the Party during the years 1964-68 has produced a variety of descriptive labels: liberal and conservative, right and left wing, etc. In this text I refer to the Novotny clique as the dogmatic wing, and to the Dubcek group as the technocratic wing.

The 20th Congress of the CPSU took place in 1956. This was the Congress that witnessed Khrushchev's famous secret speech attacking the 'cult of personality' and the 'violations of socialist legality' of the Stalin era. This change in attitude by the Soviet Party heralded a thaw in the internal life of most East European countries — an event often given the misleading title of 'de-stalinisation'. The major

exception to this was Czechoslovakia. Of all the East European Stalinists the Czechoslovak ones were pre-eminent in imitating Stalin's practice. Czechoslovakia witnessed the bloodiest show trials, lasting a full four years between 1950-1954. They took place in two main waves; those of the 'bourgeois nationalists' (directed against the leadership of the Slovak Party) and those of the 'Titoist-cosmopolitans' which resembled other anti-semitic purges throughout Eastern Europe. The latter were climaxed by the execution of the Secretary-General of the CPCz Rudolf Slansky.

The pre-war Communist leader and first President of stalinist Czechoslovakia was Klement Gottwald. He was both General Secretary of the Party, and President. On his death the posts were split: Antonin Zapotocky assumed the Presidency, whilst Antonin Novotny became General Secretary. On Zapotocky's death, in 1957, Novotny also became President of the Republic. His rise through the Party hierarchy was facilitated by his role in the preparation of the trials. He used the trials as a ladder to ascend the apparat.

Novotny was the classic apparatchik. His only claim to power was his dogmatic insistence on applying the principles of marxism-leninism as taught by the grand master, Stalin. Novotny was a child of Stalin and continued to apply stalinist methods throughout his career. Obviously, any criticism of Stalin was dangerous to Novotny and his group. The attitude of the Party leadership to the Khrushchev 'revelations' was one of nervous apprehension. They thought, or rather they hoped, that it was a temporary phenomenon. Their tactic was just to wait, not giving too much publicity to the changed Soviet line, hoping it would go away.

What passed for dissidence during this bleak period was the minimum adherence possible to the Soviet line, plus some pressure from students and

intellectuals. The workers were divorced from the whole political charade. The absence of working class pressure allowed the leadership to deal easily with any extra-Party opposition. Within the Party itself there were disagreements as to the response needed to Khrushchev's line. They surfaced at the Central Committee meeting of March 1956. These initial splits in the top echelons of the Party heralded the factions that later developed, leading to the eventual triumph of the technocrats. In other words, the 'reform group' was generated right from the start, from factions high in the Party apparatus. Its subsequent programme bore all the hall-marks of this parentage.

In 1956, however, the dogmatists emerged triumphant both at this Central Committee meeting and at the special Party conference called in June. Their only response to pressure from Moscow was some backtracking on the question of the trials. This was done in typical stalinist manner. The Soviet Union was in the process of improving relations with Yugoslavia and therefore found it a trifle embarrassing to have prisoners in its sphere of influence charged with 'Titoist cosmopolitanism'! Thus Slansky, who had been executed on this very charge, was proclaimed to have invented — along with Beria — the anti-Yugoslav allegations. Novotny and the dogmatists 'de-stalinised' themselves in this way by painting Slansky as the arch-stalinist. A Review Commission was set up. Predictably, no action resulted.

The intellectual opposition, mentioned earlier, came from the writers. At the second writers' conference of April 1956 authors such as Ladislav Mnacko openly criticised stalinist cultural practices and demanded change. Because these protests were isolated (and let's face it, a miner wasn't all that concerned whether or not it was forbidden to discuss the merits — or shortcomings — of Kafka) and because they had little relevance to the daily experiences of the workers, the dogmatists were able to deal with them easily enough. The official position of the dogmatists was expressed by Novotny in a report in *Rude Pravo* (29 January 1957). In this he condemned 'the ambiguous word "de-stalinisation" which only stood for the idea of weakening and giving way to the forces of reaction'.

The whole period 1956-1960 was characterised politically by the supremacy of the dogmatists. Collectivisation was accelerated. There was a clamp-down on writers and students. This ascendancy was consecrated in the New Constitution of 1960. The expulsion of the technocrats, mentioned in the previous chapter, has to be seen in the light of this hymn to dogmatism. The 1960 Constitution declared that Czechoslovakia had attained socialism. The transition to communism would follow shortly. The name of the country was changed from 'The Czechoslovak Republic' to 'The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic'. Czechoslovakia thereby became the first of the 'people's republics' officially to reach 'socialism'.

The essence of the new constitution was formally to model the whole pattern of social organisation more closely on the Soviet one. The Party and the governmental administration were welded closer together. The Party was officially declared to be the 'leading force in society and the state'. Novotny himself stressed (*Rude Pravo* April 17 1960), that the function of the constitution was to "cleanse our state of various marks of birth of the past, e.g. liberal pseudo-democratic principles of the division of power, comprehensible in a transitional period". The years, culminating in the publication of the new constitution, were the high point of dogmatist rule.

De-stalinisation and Soviet pressure did not just fade away, however, as the dogmatists had hoped. The 22nd Congress of the CPSU took place from October 17-31, 1961. At the 20th Party Congress Khrushchev had secretly denounced Stalin. His condemnation at the 22nd Congress was open and undisguised. Soviet opinion was shocked when Stalin's body was removed from the Red Square mausoleum. His statues were pulled down and every town which had been named after him was re-named. An anti-Party group of die-hard 'stalinists' was discovered in Moscow. The fact that Khrushchev was using tried and trusted stalinist methods did not matter. 'De-stalinisation' was now official Party policy. This, together with the economic difficulties, was the mixture that led to the destruction of the dogmatists' power base in Czechoslovakia and from there to the technocratic coup d'etat. The question of 'de-stalinisation' was to force Novotny to open the Pandora's box of the trials.

The occasion was the 12th Party Congress of December 2-8, 1962. If there can be said to have been any one time which marked the beginning of the end for the dogmatists, it was this Congress. Although this was not apparent at the time. By 1962 a number of forces were merging which would lead to the fracturing of the dogmatists' power base within the Party. As late as 1961 Novotny was resisting demands for a comprehensive review of the trials. In a speech to the Central Committee he proclaimed (cited in Victor Valen, *Czech stalinists die hard*, Foreign Affairs, 43:1, 1964, 22) that 'demands for a review of the trials are irresponsible and unjustified'. The reasons for Novotny's resistance are clear enough. His supporters in the Party would have had to face some pretty unpleasant settling of accounts if their parts in the trials were publicised. Novotny himself needed all the support he could get. Moreover, he was heavily compromised by the trials and was an astute enough politician to realise that any review could not be limited to the trials alone. As so many of those responsible were still active in the Party, it would prove to be the issue which the technocrats could exploit in a counter-purge of the dogmatists.

There were other forces at work in addition to the economic difficulties and to pressures either from within the Party and from Moscow for a review of the trials. These contributed to the general feeling of factionalism and divisiveness that saturated the atmosphere leading up to the 12th Party Congress. By 1962, life for the ordinary people of Czechoslovakia was dominated by a shortage of consumer goods, long queues for basic commodities such as meat and dairy products — which were also in short supply — and the poor quality of any manufactured goods that did manage to reach the shops. Where the necessities of life were concerned, the workers were hardest hit. They put forward their own reasons for this dismal state of affairs. There was, of course, general resentment against bureaucratic bungling, but specific criticisms from below now also surfaced. The workers were convinced that economic commitments to other East European countries were draining the country of goods that the Czechs themselves needed.

Evidence of this pressure can be seen in the innumerable publications produced defending official policy. There is also some dubious evidence that workers protested directly. (*Christian Science Monitor*, April 20, 1963). According to this report, workers in the important Tatra works in northern Bohemia demanded a thorough review of all intra-

block trade. Shortages were also blamed on the alleged shipment of goods to under-developed countries, especially Cuba. The panic administrative measures introduced by the dogmatists only made matters worse. Even the Party rank and file was antagonised by the re-shuffling of manpower, arbitrary dismissals, the relocation of 'superfluous' labour and the disruption of output produced by the overall economic slowdown.

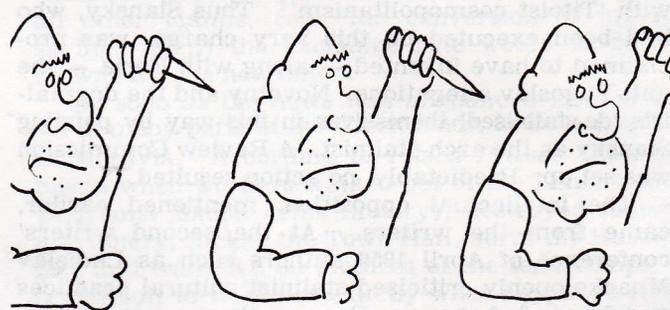
On top of all this, the Party leadership was faced with a resurgence of the 'Slovak problem'. This was one of the most important of the pressures acting upon them. In spite of the 'socialisation' of Czechoslovakia, Slovak nationalism stubbornly refused to give way to the interests of 'proletarian internationalism'. The first Republic had suffered from what was known politely as 'minority problems'. The German and Hungarian problems were elegantly solved by the Stalinists by means of the forcible repatriation of those particular minorities to their 'motherland', together with the confiscation of all their property. In 1930, the number of Germans in Czechoslovakia was 3,207,000, or 22.3% of the population. In 1950, the figure was 165,000, or 1.3% of the population. (*Social Change and Stratification in Post-war Czechoslovakia*, Jaroslav Krejci, p6). The 4 million Slovaks, however, formed an integral part of the 14 million strong state and could not be disposed of so conveniently. During the First Republic Slovak nationalism was fuelled by the dictats emanating from Prague, coupled with what the Slovaks saw as a disregard for their own specific problems. The establishment of stalinist rule not only failed to eliminate these grievances, it added to them.

During the war, the Slovak Communist Party had maintained a completely separate existence. The main co-ordinator of the anti-nazi resistance in Slovakia had been the Slovak National Council; an alliance of 'anti-nazi elements' including the Slovak CP, liberal parties, and the Slovak Social Democratic Party. Moscow had opposed this coalition but, not having the muscle to impose its views, had been ignored. This was the background to the Slovak uprising against the Germans in 1944. This again had been opposed by the Russians. The uprising resulted in a specifically Slovak government with a Presidium containing 3 Social Democrats and 3 stalinists (the so-called **Slovak Board of Commissioners**). The policy of the Slovak Party had, moreover, been in opposition to that of the Czech Party. During the war, the Slovak Party had sought incorporation of Slovakia into the Soviet Union, as an autonomous Slovak Soviet Socialist Republic. Stalin soon disposed of the idea. After the war the Slovaks, trying to make the best of their union with the Czechs, tried to establish a federation, within which the Slovak Party would be independent and able to negotiate with the Czech Party on an equal basis.

This, though, did not accord with the plans of the Czechoslovak Party. The notion of a rival authority to Prague just did not tally with the idea of a rigidly centralised economic and political system. The 1948 Government destroyed all specifically Slovak institutions such as the Slovak National Council and the Slovak Board of Commissioners. Next, it was the turn of the Slovak Party itself. The role of the Party in the anti-nazi resistance was attacked. This was followed by an assault on the leadership. As a climax came the trials, purges, imprisonment and execution of most of the pre-1948 Slovak Party leadership, on charges of 'bourgeois nationalism'. Vladimir Clementis, the Foreign

Minister of Czechoslovakia, was just such an old Party member. He was executed in 1952. The Slovak Party was then taken over by quislings such as Karol Bacilek and Viliam Siroky, who could be trusted to support their soul brothers in dogmatism in Prague. In the early 1960's the Slovak Party jumped at the chance offered by the 22nd Congress of the Soviet Party to rehabilitate the first wave of victims in the Slovak Party. This allowed them scope to press for other, more nationalistic demands. Once the tiger of nationalism had been aroused against the dogmatists, something had to give. This unlikely alliance of Czech technocrats and Slovak nationalists was indeed too much for the dogmatist leadership, particularly when there was a power struggle within its own ranks.

Perhaps the fundamental rule of the politics of manipulation is that those who manipulate are just as likely to find themselves manipulated. In the corrosive atmosphere of power politics, the man at the top has always to be looking over his shoulder for possible rivals. Novotny was no exception.



One of the possible defence mechanisms open to the dogmatists would have been to ditch Novotny, making him the scapegoat for their common mistakes. The technique is an old one, beloved of Stalinists. It would not have been too difficult: Novotny was the colourless arch-apparatchik. His utter inability to convey anything intelligible during public speeches was legendary. The innumerable cock-ups, misquotes and generally idiotic public babblings of Comrade Novotny would fill volumes. Following the Sino-Soviet split, one malicious Czech rumour had it that in order to show the Chinese that they were not alone in having a Chairman whose thoughts could be put into a book, Novotny was delegated by the Central Committee to publish a collection of **his own** original thoughts. Two months later the Central Committee was presented with an elaborately bound red leather volume, bearing the stamp of the Presidency. It contained a single, blank sheet.

By contrast, the Number 2 in the Party, Rudolf Barak, was a sociable, outgoing character. Known for his interest in modern art, he was generally a more popular figure. Though politically indistinguishable from Novotny, the latter's replacement by Barak would have served to distract Party pressure from the economic collapse, Slovak nationalism and the general level of popular discontent. Barak had in fact been appointed to the forementioned Commission, set up in 1955 to look at the question of the trials. This position had allowed him access to the sensitive archives covering the relevant period. He was therefore in a position to collect material that would, to say the least, be highly embarrassing to Novotny. In 1960 Barak had been Minister of the Interior. This job, which entailed responsibility for all internal security organs including the secret police (STB), meant that Barak could have built a power base from which to challenge Novotny.

In June 1961 Novotny began to move against Barak. He transferred him from his post as Minister of the Interior to that of Deputy Premier. Barak had by this time enough support within the Party for this move to provoke open dissent. Evidence of this support and of the possibility of a coup against him, pushed Novotny into open war with Barak. He was stripped of all his posts and arrested in February 1962. The basis for these measures was outlined in a speech by Novotny in Bratislava. He accused Barak of plotting to seize power. The charge was never officially laid, however, because of the memories it dredged up from the past. Moscow was in all probability opposed to such a transparently concocted scenario for a show trial. In fact, an Albanian article attacking Barak (cited in W. Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Dispute*, 1963, p74) implied that Barak had Soviet support against Novotny, and actually predicted his arrest and trial. Very strong pressure was probably brought to bear on Novotny to abandon the political charge and any plans he may have entertained for a show trial. Novotny wasn't going to let Barak off though. He was tried in secret on April 17, 1962. The charge was embezzlement and misuse of Party funds. The trial lasted 3 days. The result? A fifteen-year prison sentence.

This little affair meant that the dogmatists were certainly not a united bloc within the Party: even after Barak's imprisonment sections of his supporters campaigned on his behalf. In his speech to the Central Committee Plenum of April 12, 1962, Novotny referred to an 'insignificant minority of Party organisations dissenting from the decision against Barak'.

Having looked at some of the factors dividing the Party, we can now look at the 12th Congress itself. The point of convergence for all the factions, with the exception of the Novotny clique, was a re-examination of the trials. The dogmatists were internally divided over the Barak affair. Novotny could not resist the pressure. He could, however, attempt to minimise the effects of the review. Outwardly, the Congress was drab and doctrinaire. Novotny polemicised against the Chinese, attempting to mask any concessions wrung from him, in a flow of dogmatic nonsense. In the crucial statement on the trials, Novotny used Barak as a scapegoat, thereby neatly reversing Barak's plans. Novotny admitted that 'anti-Party' methods had been used in the previous practices of the CPCz, leading to 'violations of socialist legality'. He then went on to accuse Barak of withholding from the Politbureau information which he had obtained from the 1955 Commission, with the intention of using it to his own advantage later, rather than seeing that justice was done. (This little bit of double-talk provides an interesting insight into the technique of blending truth with lies so that an undecipherable amalgam is produced.) It is true that Barak withheld information from the Politbureau: it is also true that this was probably done for personal advantage. The material Novotny was talking about, however, was his own personal files. This being the case, the last thing Novotny would have wanted was to 'see justice done'. It was discovered later (*Reporter*, June 5, 1968) that Novotny had confiscated some of Barak's files after the latter's arrest; presumably those containing information about Novotny himself. He then announced:

"The Central Committee has decided once more to investigate in detail the political trials from 1949-54, to draw fundamental

conclusions from them, and to write a definite conclusion to the matter...a Commission of the Central Committee is studying in detail all materials from the archives of that time and is drawing conclusions chiefly regarding Party activity, the activity of leading Party and state organs and also conclusions regarding individual cases...We propose to the 12th Congress that it instructs the new Central Committee within 4 months to deal with, and conclude all remaining instances of political trials of the period of the personality cult."

(*Rude Pravo*, December 5, 1962).

This major concession was to have all the consequences that Novotny had feared. At the time, however, Novotny could still attempt to reinforce the dogmatist position in the Party. He concluded his speech with the following instructions: 'The basic viewpoint for the selection and distribution of cadres must continue to be their political awareness and loyalty to the cause of socialism ... we have to oppose a non-political attitude towards the needs of society.'

Here the demarcation lines (between the dogmatic and the technocratic-rationalist view of the nature of 'socialist' society) were being drawn. The upheavals and factionalism within the Party, the worsening economic conditions, the shock and revulsion stirred by the revelations over the trials, the resurgence of Slovak nationalism, and the coalescence of a definable technocratic group within the Party around Dubcek, Sik, Mlynar and Smrkovsky all served to show that the days of ascendancy of the dogmatists were drawing to an end.

The Party Congress concluded on December 8, 1962. A year later the dogmatists had lost their undisputed control of the Party. The chain of events leading to Novotny's replacement as First Secretary by Dubcek (on January 5, 1968) had well and truly started.



1962-63 was the watershed year, the year of defeat for the dogmatists and of ascendancy for the technocrats. By the end of 1963 the shift in the balance of power within the Party had become irreversible, or at least as far as internal Czechoslovak pressures were concerned. Only the application of a major external force could alter it (and that, in fact, is what happened — in the form of Russian tanks.) By 1968 other forces were also at work, the gradual growth of working-class consciousness. In the absence of those Russian tanks this in itself would have made superfluous the need for a Party (or a Dubcek).

Let us turn now briefly to the events of 1963. This was the year the intellectuals revolted. One cannot minimise the part played by the mass pressure of all segments of the intelligentsia in the successful wresting of control of the Party from the dogmatists by the scientific-technocratic stratum. I would go so far as to propose that the history of Czechoslovakia from 1962 to 1969 showed the scientific-technological intelligentsia to be the political arm of the intelligentsia as such. To quote a liberal commentator:

'The continuation of the pressures and circumstances, constantly publicised by the intelligentsia against a Party leadership increasingly fearful of losing control, forced concession after concession from Novotny. A great part of the intellectuals' strength lay in the fact that most of those engaged in the battle with the Party leadership were themselves Party members.'  
(Galia Golan, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement*, p 22).

In December 1962 the journal of the Czechoslovak Writers' Union *Plamen* (Flame) carried an outright attack on the dogmatists. The editor, Jiri Hajek, wrote:

'The instances when we have solemnly renounced dogmatism are numerous, and we are nearly world champions as regards proclamations against it ... yet dogmatism still exists ... I could provide further evidence to the effect that our specifically Czech dogmatism not only goes on living and in security, but that it has recently been flourishing more than ever before.'

Throughout the first half of 1963 a barrage of criticism against past policies was opened up by papers such as the Writers' Union weekly *Literarni Noviny*, the cultural weekly *Kulturni Tvorba* the illustrated weekly of Czechoslovak women *Vlasta*, and the Slovak Writers' Union monthly *Pohlady*. Criticism even crept into the Party press. On January 11, 1963 the Slovak Party daily *Bratislava Pravda* carried an article by a Slovak academic, Ladislav Szanto, advocating the abolition of any bar to non-party people occupying leading positions in the economy. The value of non-communists in the building of socialism was honoured in the Party theoretical journal *Nova Mysl*. These outbursts produced only a cautious and defensive response from the dogmatists.

One man, Radoslav Selucky really pushed his luck. One of the most outspoken and articulate of the technocrats, he saw very clearly the lines of demarcation of the developing ideological battle within the Party. In *Kulturni Tvorba* of February 7, 1963, he published a piece which blew the minds of the dogmatists and in fact provided the frame of reference for the entire technocratic-dogmatist debate. In it he coined a neat phrase that summed up the feelings of the technocratic economists: 'the cult of the plan'.

Alongside the cult of the personality, the cult of the plan was denounced as one of the main reasons for the economic crisis. If the cult of the personality was to be abandoned so too should be the cult of the plan. Novotny was not able to rely on the tried and trusted methods of stalinism. The cult of the personality had been too thoroughly discredited. He made a feeble speech in which he accused Selucky of 'attempting to introduce chaos and anarchy into the Czechoslovak economy, under the guise of criticisms of past shortcomings'. (*Rude Pravo*, March 24, 1963).

A Central Committee Plenum of the CPCz was called for April 3, 1963, and the Slovak Party held a plenum on April 7-8. The results of these meetings were not made public but, nevertheless, filtered down to the Party rank and file and thence to the general public. The first heads to roll were those of Karol Bacilek and Bruno Koehler, both founding Party members. Bacilek was the First Secretary of the Slovak Party and a member of Presidium of the CPCz. Koehler was a Czechoslovak Party secretary. Bacilek had been Minister of State Control (1951-52), then Minister of National Security (1952-53). Koehler had been in charge of Party cadres. Their sensitive positions had allowed them to play key roles in the preparation and execution of the trials.

In addition, the Slovak Party carried out a minor purge of its top personnel. The Number 2 man in the Party in 1953, Pavol David, was dropped. The Slovak Party had, until this time, been run by Novotny's stooges Siroky and Bacilek. Novotny himself attended the Plenum of the Slovak Party in order to protect, as best he could, 'his' men in the apparat. Siroky was charged with 'violations of legality' and quietly demoted. After the Plenum had taken its decision to sack Bacilek, Novotny is reported to have stormed out of the meeting without even waiting for the election of Bacilek's successor. This turned out to be none other than the future star and latter-day-saint: Alexander Dubcek. Dubcek took Bacilek's place as head of the Slovak Party. Along with this he inherited a place on the Presidium of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

By the end of 1963 Novotny had been forced to compromise in all areas just to remain in power. A principle of collective leadership emerged, with Novotny very much in the background. Recriminations over the rehabilitations had been the catalyst for the collapse of the dogmatists and the rise of the technocrats.

# Critique of the Action Programme

'It is not important who will rule us and in what way, it is important that there should not be rulers and ruled. The question of whether or not to join the National Front will show very clearly the level of critical thinking among student representatives, and also our understanding of, or conversely illusions about, the regime under which we live ... To rephrase the West German students' declaration, I would say: "Only the most stupid oxen choose their own butcher.'

Jiri Muller, letter to the SVS (Czech Students' Union), April 1968.

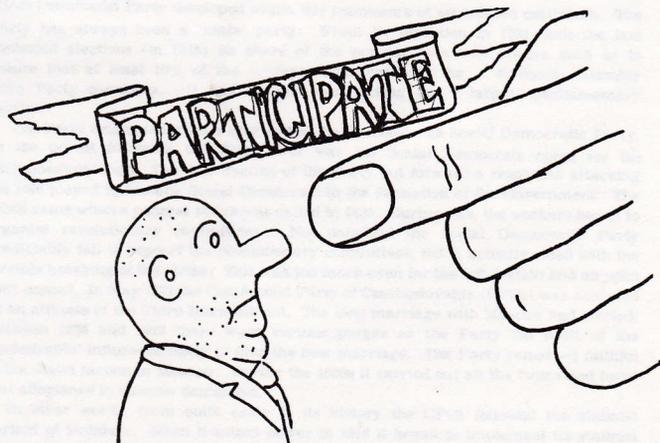
I have tried to give a picture of the economic and political background that led to the fragmentation and final dissolution of the dogmatists' power base within the Party. I do not intend to give a blow-by-blow account of the intrigues, or of the factions and groups that did battle over a variety of issues between 1964 and 1968. If anybody is interested, a good account already exists (*The Czechoslovak Reform Movement*) written by the liberal Galia Golan.

The end result of these struggles was the takeover by Dubcek of the post of First Secretary of the CPCz. on 5 January 1968. We can judge this technocratic party both by its main policy document, and by how it sought to implement its policies. In the eyes of this party the main problems confronting the country were how to radically restructure the economy along rational-technocratic lines, and the building of a political superstructure that would consolidate this 'Czechoslovak road to socialism'. In my opinion the ultimate beneficiaries of all variants of Bolshevism are the technocrats and the new managerial stratum. While this cannot be 'proved' by the experience of any one country, it is significant that Czechoslovakia was industrially an advanced country, and that after perhaps the longest experience of rigid control in the whole of Eastern Europe it should have produced the technocrats' charter at the peak of 'reformist' power.

The technocratic conception of 'socialism' was laid down in the Action Programme of the CPCz. The authorship of this document is usually credited to Zdenek Mlynar, although it was of course approved by the Party as a whole. Mlynar joined the Central Committee in late 1967. In April 1968 he was appointed head of the Central Law Commission.

The Action Programme was adopted at the plenary session of the Central Committee held on 5 April 1968. (The version I have chosen to quote from is the translation provided by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation in their 1970 *Spokesman Pamphlet No 8*.) The preamble describes the technocrats' view of 20 years of dogmatist rule. There is criticism of 'the grave shortcomings ... and deformations of socialist principle which are known as the personality cult'.

On the positive side, socialism has been achieved. 'Antagonistic classes no longer exist and the main feature of internal development is becoming the process of bringing all socialist groupings in society together.' In order to lay the foundation of a rational economic order, the Party sketched the outlines of a pluralist society, where conflicts could be worked out on a lower level, to be arbitrated upon later by the Party.



These ideas are developed in more detail as the Programme unfolds. 'Socialism can only flourish if scope is given for the assertion of the various interests of the people and on this basis the unity of all workers will be brought about democratically. This is the main source of free social activity and the development of the socialist system ... Therefore the Party will strive to provide scope for making use of all the workers' political and social rights, through political organisations and trade unions ... and will work to improve the working conditions of the workers.'

In this opening section it is implied that under 'socialism' there will be a social division of labour, but with a more rational and 'democratic' superstructure run by competent leaders. In its acceptance of the need for 'correct leadership' (in this case technocratic rather than political) the document doesn't differ greatly in style from various trotskyite programmes. It is just as legitimate an offspring of leninism as they are.

The heart of the document is in the sections entitled '**To develop democracy and eliminate equalitarianism**', '**The leading role of the Party, a guarantee of socialist progress**' and '**For the development of socialist democracy, for a new system of the political management of society**'. It is here that the managerial nature of the proposed reforms becomes explicit. It is impossible not to draw the conclusion that for these reformists socialism equals technocratic rule. These parts of the programme outline the development of a form of parliamentary democracy together with the need for higher labour productivity. Labour productivity will be increased by the introduction of financial incentives based on efficiency, qualification and the social importance of the work. If one accepts all this, it is not difficult to argue that a highly-qualified director of a productive enterprise is doing work of far greater social importance than an unskilled labourer in an unproductive factory!

The document goes on to stress that not only the productivity of labour but also the authority of the managerial stratum must be reinforced. 'The Party will strive to link the democratic principles with expert and scientific management and decisions ... We want the remuneration of people to depend on the **social importance and effectiveness** (my emphasis) of their work ... The principle of actual achievement raises the technical standard, profitability and productivity of labour, the respect and authority of the managers responsible, the principle of material incentive. It stresses the growing importance of all workers.' 'We want to make it clear that honest work for society and efforts to improve qualifications must not only be duly remunerated, they must also enjoy respect.'

The next few sections outline how the demands of the technocracy, the leading role of the Party, and forms of parliamentary democracy could be blended to produce something that would satisfy all demands, except of course those of socialism. The Party is seen as having a **more** active role than ever, its links to the technocracy reinforced.

'The Party cannot turn into an organisation which would influence society **only** (my emphasis) by its ideas and programme. It must develop the practical and organisational functions of a political force in society.'

In a sentence that must be unique in 'socialist' writing the programme practically defines democratisation as being synonymous with having a close relationship to science!

"The democratisation of Party life means the strengthening of work contacts between the Party and Science. In this line we shall make use of consultations and the exchange of opposing and contrary views, since the role of science does not stop at preparing analyses and documents. It should continue on Party grounds, by observing the processes evolved by the various resolutions, by contributing to their materialisation and to the control of the correctness of the resolutions in practice."

We appear to have come full circle: the revolt against dogmatic 'scientific socialism' producing socialist scientism!

The political framework for the technocratic reorganisation was to have been some form of elected assembly dominated by the Party.

'Measures taken by the Party will be aimed at enhancing the role of elected representative bodies in the State.'

'The system of socialist democracy, the State, social organisations and the Party as the leading force purposefully endeavour to bring out the differing interests and attitudes of working people.'

However, lest we forget, 'the development of democracy must proceed hand in hand with strengthening of a scientific and professional approach to social management.'

The Action Programme allows itself to be critical of the practices that resulted from dogmatism:

'in all these fields there are too many things souring the life of the people, obstructing professionally competent and scientific decision-making, and encouraging highhandedness.'

This phrase makes sense when it is realised that although the technocrats had overall control of the Party, there were still enclaves of dogmatists: men such as Bilak and Indra, who later that year would provide the reasons for the Soviet invasion. Not so much an invasion, more an invitation. Never mind, though. April 1968 was still the time of technocratic dreaming.

In a stressed paragraph the architects of the Action Programme say:

'The main thing is to reform the whole political system so that it will permit the dynamic development of socialist social relations, combining broad democracy

with a scientific highly qualified management, strengthen the social order, stabilise socialist relations and maintain social discipline.'

This is an important passage in understanding the thinking of the "reform" communists. Beneath the socialist window-dressing a picture emerges of a stable, disciplined society, led by a respected, highly qualified clique of technocrats, legitimised on account of their 'scientific' knowledge and endorsed by universal suffrage. The political forms of this parliamentary-type democracy were to be worked out in the National Assembly and the National Front, under the leadership of the Party. Dissenting opinions would of course be allowed. But they would have to be channelled through the appropriate representative group of the National Front. The role of the National Front in the future political life of Czechoslovakia was clearly outlined.

'The CPCz considers the National Front to be a political platform which does not separate the political parties into Government and opposition. Possible differences in viewpoints of individual component parts of the National Front, or divergence of views as to the policy of the State, are all to be settled on the basis of the common socialist conception of the National Front policy.'

The formation of political forces striving to negate this concept of the National Front, to remove the National Front as a whole from political power, was ruled out as long ago as 1945.'

The familiar framework of 'appropriate channels' was being constructed which could and would smother dissent in cotton wool, rather than brutally liquidate it. The political basis for admittance to the National Front was also laid down. Here again the line of succession from dogmatism to technocracy reappears under the umbrella of 'marxism-leninism'.

'The CPCz considers the **political management** (their emphasis) of the marxist-leninist concept of the development of socialism to be a precondition for the right development of our socialist society. It will assert the marxist-leninist concept as the leading political principle in the National Front, and throughout our political system.'

The document is vague as to the exact relationship between the socialist parliament and the Party, though it stresses that "the Party regards the National Assembly as a socialist parliament with all the scope of activities that the parliament of a democratic republic must have."

The authors of the Programme have, however, read their Marx. They are aware that a 'socialist democracy' must offer the possibility of a far greater flowering of the human spirit than is possible in any bourgeois system. How they combine this idea with their technocratic charter provides a wonderful insight into the workings of the technocratic mind.

'Opposition to all tendencies to suppress the criticism and initiative of the people cannot be guaranteed if we do not ensure constitution-based freedom of speech and all political and personal rights of all citizens, systematically and consistently, by all legal means available. **Socialism cannot mean only liberation of the working people from the domination of exploiting class relations, but must make provision for a fuller life of the personality than any bourgeois democracy.** (their emphasis) ... Public opinion polls must be systematically used in preparing important decisions and the main results of the research must be published.'

In other words, the participation of the people in the active running of society was to be through public opinion polls, which would guide the decision makers, thus 'deepening democracy' and introducing a "socialist" element into it. This freedom of expression might of course permit the dissemination of "bourgeois" views. But the Party was ready for this. "Bourgeois" deviations are of course unscientific, given that the Party's position is, by definition, guided by science. So the Party can write that it "realises that ideological enemies of socialism may try to abuse the process of democratisation... It is possible to win over people for the Party only by struggle based on the practical activity of communists for the benefit of the people, on truthful and complete information, and on scientific analysis.'

The single lasting 'achievement' of the Action Programme, the only part of it that has not been 'normalised' by the post-invasion regime, is the one dealing with the Slovak problem. As I have sought to show, Slovak pressure was one of the important determinants in the triumph of the technocrats. The net result was a constitutional amendment turning the country into a federated republic of two equal States: the Czech lands under the leadership of the Czech Communist Party, Slovakia under the leadership of the Slovak Party. Each now has its own National Assembly, with powers to decide on local issues. All national issues are decided by the National Assembly of Czechoslovakia, under the leadership of the CPCz. In 'normalised' Czechoslovakia today, 1968 is celebrated as the 'year of federalisation'.

The political program outlined above was the child of the economic pressures outlined previously. In order to make sense of the Action Programme, with its emphasis on science in the political sphere, we have to look at the economic base, and at the all-important role of bureaucratic rationalisation.

The plan outlined by Sik at the 13th Party Congress had its main points incorporated in the Action Programme, ie. the concept of a socialist market, the stress on economic efficiency, the imposed workers' councils, the praise for competent and authoritative management, with a 'free' trade union movement able to negotiate the rate of exploitation. The overall economic philosophy was that 'the confused system of protectionism is creating conditions under which ineffective backward enterprises, managed in an unqualified way, may exist and are often given preference. **It is not possible to blunt forever economic policy by taking from those who work well and giving to those who work badly** (their emphasis). It is therefore necessary to objectivise value relations, so that

differences in the incomes of enterprises should really reflect actual differences in the level of their economic activities. Nor is it politically correct for the consumer to pay indefinitely for inefficiency by means of prices, taxes, and indirectly by different forms of siphoning off of the means of effective enterprises.' (their emphasis)

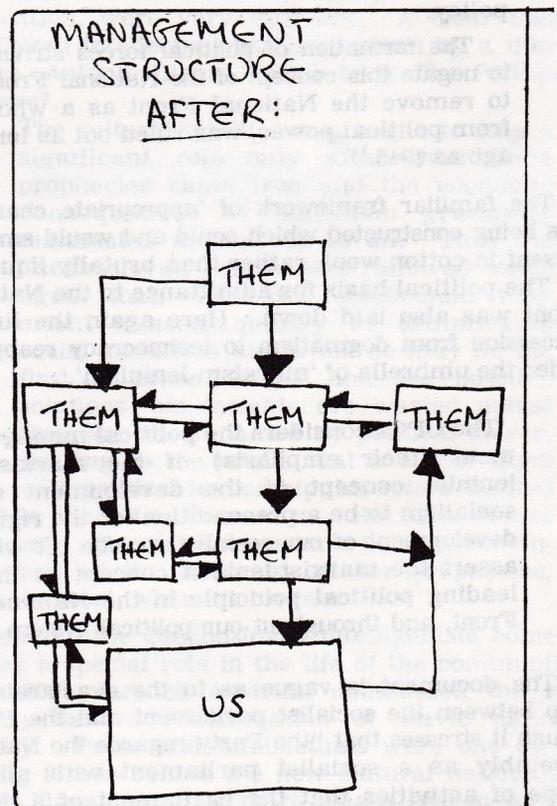
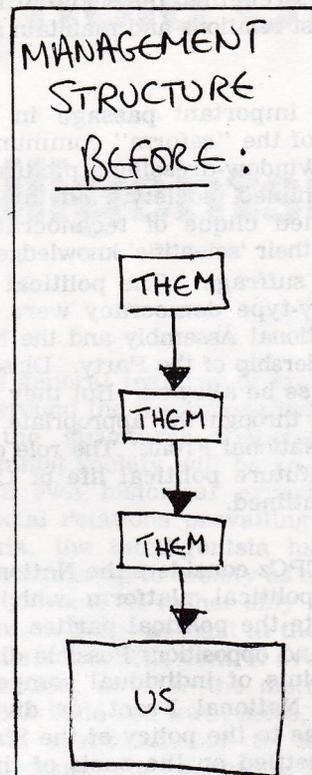
Efficiency was to be achieved by technology and increased productivity. In this economy, the trade unions would function like their Western counterparts as 'friendly' policemen. 'The central function of the trade unions should be to defend with increasing emphasis employment and working interests of the workers ... and to be important partners in solving all questions of economic management.' Implicit in this statement is the acceptance of the notion that the interests of the workers need to be defended. Against whom? Against the workers' State? At a local level, of course, the Unions would negotiate with management. But who exactly is the management? Well, there would be the enterprise director, his well qualified managerial staff, and in addition the newly instituted workers' council.

As we shall see later, these particular 'councils' were not that popular with the workers. But in the minds of the technocrats they were necessary window dressing for their 'new form of socialist democracy'. To quote the Action Programme again 'There arises the need for democratic bodies in enterprises, with specific rights concerning the management of the enterprises. Managers and head executives ... would be accountable to these bodies for the overall results of their work. **These bodies must become a direct part of the managing mechanism of the enterprise** (my emphasis) and not a social organisation. They cannot therefore be identified with trade unions'.

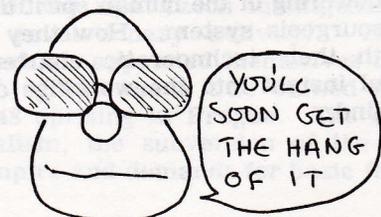
In other words, the type of Workers' Council thought up by the Action Programme would be a sort of elected board of directors. Just in case any workers got the wrong idea as to the relation of the Council to the qualified manager, the Programme goes on to specify that: 'The proposed councils naturally in no way reduce the indivisible authority and responsibility of the leading executives in managing the enterprise which, together with their qualifications and managing abilities, is the basic condition of successful enterprising.'

The above quotes illustrate the essentially technological nature of the platform of the Reform Party of Czechoslovakia. The Action Programme is clearly the manifesto of the technological intelligentsia, with some 'socialist' window dressing. After Novotny though, it was a breath of fresh air to the intelligentsia. The workers? Let me quote from a worker's letter to *Literarni Listy*, published on 30th May 1968, on the subject of the Action Programme:

'There is a little bit about free enterprise, a bit about abolishing the old system of directors, and giving the concern some autonomy. This does not help you solve anything... in actual fact, the only thing that is happening is that we can write a little bit more now.'



BILLY BUREAUCRAT SAYS:



# Pre-emptive Recuperation. The Workers and the Party: January – August 1968.

**“The worst thing of all would be for the state to legislate about self-management, to make it compulsory. One cannot force anybody to be free, just as you cannot order the people to manage themselves in the factories starting from tomorrow. Just imagine it : “manage yourselves, or else”. Petr Pithart, Literarni Listy, August 1, 1968.**

## Workers’ Opinions

When talking about the workers’ councils a sharp distinction should be drawn between the pre- and the post-invasion Councils. The former were imposed by the technocrats. They were hollow vessels, allowing exploitation to continue. The latter were moulded by the working class to unite its own purposes.

What was the mood of the working class in March and April 1968? For twenty years attempts had been made to break any working class political autonomy. All horizontal contacts had been discouraged. Only official inter-group relations (via the vertical communication channels of the Party and trade unions) were sanctioned. Given this background the emptiness of the Action Programme’s call for workers’ councils was obvious. One month later Sik had to modify his original plans. The formalised councils had to develop flesh and blood. (Ota Sik, in **Rude Pravo**, May 22, 1968.)

For the technocrats to consolidate their hold, their ideology had to penetrate the psyche of the working class. Technocratic ideology stressed the ‘unity’ of the working class and the intelligentsia, the establishment of a classless society through the ‘transformation of the working class,’ and the leading role of the intelligentsia in guiding and managing society during the transitional period. Two views of this technocracy began to crystallise out in the April period. The first was an almost total acceptance of this ideology. The letter published below was written — significantly — by a print worker, a person who would be in almost daily contact with the intelligentsia. The second, more hopeful, view was expressed in discussion by a group of workers at the main Skoda factory, in Pilsen. Distrust of the working class hero, Smrkovsky, and of leading members of the intelligentsia is clearly expressed. These two extracts clearly show the difference between euphoria at the technocratic victory, and the real day to day problems facing ordinary workers.

The first letter was prompted by an article in the trade union paper, **Prace**, on March 8. The article had been written by a member of the Central Committee, one comrade Matejka. It had started:

“In my opinion the Central Committee should lay down some line before the Party’s

Action Programme is worked out, so that this anarchic democracy should at least be brought within reasonable bounds. Some writers and some members of the intelligentsia are making a direct attack on the working class. Time is on their side at the moment. I'm afraid that they may begin, in their confusion, to make suggestions other than those that are strictly necessary, and in this way strengthen their positions.'

Ladislav Anđel, member of the Works Committee at the Mir printing house, Prague, replied in **Literární Listy** (March 28, 1968)

'So the Central Committee should lay down some kind of line! Haven't there already been enough of them? I was under the impression that a line had already been laid down by the fact that we have all together, and with no intention of reversing the process, decided to finish building socialism, and that any other question can be freely discussed, since there can never be too much democracy or freedom. No one has the right to give freedom as a prize or take it away...

With his demand for a regulation of what he calls "anarchic" democracy Comrade Matejka is surely showing that he is afraid of a reactionary about-turn. He fails, doesn't he, to see the situation clearly? In the past 20 years our working class has matured a great deal politically. Today it knows exactly what it wants. This knowledge has been paid for dearly in the past. This makes it all the more precarious. If today socialism can be understood in its real meaning, i.e. democracy and freedom, then we are definitely in favour of socialism. The handful of people who, even today, have a vested interest in turning the clock back, has been thinned out over the last twenty years. It has still further decreased in size during the present events. To underestimate people's desire for socialism is basically to show a deep distrust of them. This is foreign to socialism. Without trust in people socialism must remain a utopian dream.

I've recently been systematically following all the most important things in the daily press, radio and television. Nowhere, without exception, have I yet found so much as a line, nor heard so much as a word, about writers and intellectuals attacking the working class. I'd like to know when and where it was. On the other hand, I've heard many brave statements which openly defended the rights and interests of the working class. It's a shame that the working class didn't express its solidarity with the writers at the same time. Their words would surely have carried some weight last October.

What exactly does comrade Matejka mean by "time is on their side at the moment"? I think time is, at last, on the side of freedom and democracy within the framework of socialism. It is on the side of all our citizens, the working class included. It is also, of course, on Comrade Matejka's side. It's on their side as a result of the pressure of public opinion and the

decisions made by the progressive part of the Central Committee. If Comrade Matejka still talks about 'disorientation' today he's presumably one of those people who still feel disoriented. Obviously for the whole of 20 years people like this haven't been keeping track of affairs with their own minds. They have believed everything they have been told. They will probably have to reconcile themselves to the sad fact that they will stay "disorientated" for ever.

At last, everybody in Czechoslovakia knows where he wants to go. The big problem will now be the long drawn out discussions as to how we get there.

Even with the best will in the world, I can't understand what, according to Comrade Matejka, the writers and part of the intelligentsia are suggesting or what they're asking for. It seems to me it's just what all of us want and what we're all asking for: democracy and freedom. What position is it that they want strengthened? Had they been willing to further their own interests by prostrating themselves in a servile way before the forces which reduced our nation to moral decay and complete passivity, they could, of course, have strengthened their own positions a great deal under the old regime, because of their importance to the nation and their capabilities. But on the contrary, they were willing — and they were among the few who were — to risk their positions in society. They certainly weren't seeking to strengthen them.'

How can we define what we mean by the working class both now and in the future? What will the working class consist of when, in the distant future, the scientific—technological revolution will be complete? When the typical working class man of today will have become an engineer or a technocrat, ie, a member of the intelligentsia, which will in fact be composed of the working class or its successor? This fact alone must surely bring the working class and the intelligentsia together today. Or are we perhaps, until the end of time, going to judge a man according to his social origin rather than by looking at the man he has become through changing social conditions?

The views I am criticising have deep roots in the past. A certain group among the leadership of the CPCz has apparently not fully lived up to its tasks. They haven't grown out of their workers' overalls. They haven't become what Ernst Fischer called (and he said it a long time ago!) "the engineers and architects of modern marxism". They were just pathetic men who serviced the machinery. They proved unable to develop it and to use their own intelligence to keep abreast of the changing world and of our needs. And the fact that they knew this made them jealous of the progressive intelligentsia. That is why, perhaps unconsciously, they sowed discord between the intelligentsia and the part of the working class which was rather similar to them and wasn't capable of independent and progressive thinking. So dogmatism and mediocrity won the day.'

The world changes with amazing speed. In the interests of socialism, it's becoming vitally necessary to select new methods of doing things, especially in the sphere of political ideas and behaviour...

In this letter progress, freedom and democracy are seen as a product of technocratic rule. Dogmatism and blindness are identified correctly with apparatchik rule. This view of the relationship between the intelligentsia and the working class was not however very widespread.

More typical was the sort of discussion that took place at the Skoda factory. An account was given by Ludvik Vaculik in *Literarni Listy* (April 4, 1968.) The day before, a congress of workers had been organised in Prague and addressed by the 'iron man' of the reform movement, Josef Smrkovsky. This was the 'Reichstag' referred to below by one worker. About 20 workers took part in the discussion, including six Party members, a worker who had left the Party because of 'the high cost of subscriptions', and an old Social Democrat.

**Older Worker:** 'It all seems to me like a plot against the working class. Who was Smrkovsky referring to when he spoke about provocateurs?'

**Non-Party worker:** 'Goldstucker is, well...let's say a wise man. And he was wronged. Let's at least give him that much! Kohout and Prochazka (both writers) I respected. But some of the answers were just given for effect. At times it seemed as though they were like cheapjacks, quite willing to sell you rotten apples. You lot (referring to Vaculik, himself a famous reporter) should be more patient with us. You may be able to understand this democracy quickly. But it'll take us longer. Whenever a worker joins a discussion on the radio, there are immediately six others trying to get on top of him. That creates a very bad impression. And these Reichstags, like yesterday in Prague, are a bad joke.'

**Another worker:** 'They want to give us democracy using undemocratic methods. They force Lenart to speak when he was ill.' (Josef Lenart, pro-Novotny, had been replaced in April 1968.) 'And they almost interrogated Mestek with a lie detector.' (Karl Mestek, Novotny's Minister of Agriculture, had been intensively grilled concerning allegations related to developments in the countryside.)

**Young worker:** 'What I see as a problem today is that the conservatives should also have a full right to speak.'

General agreement was reached that everything was happening in Prague, but nothing outside it. Workers expressed resentment that the intellectuals and Party technocrats were going round speaking to the students but no-one was speaking to the workers. For example, to themselves, the workers at the Pilsen Skoda factory.

**Older worker:** 'We can have a general strike!'

**Woman Party member:** 'For what? And against what? Today it seems as if everything we have done has been of no use! It is as if I ought to be ashamed, in front of my own children, of the world I have brought them up in. We have worked our guts out here for 20 years. Why didn't the people at the top do the same? Was the censorship really so bad that we're only now getting to know about the sort of fascist methods that were used?' (directed at Vaculik)

**Another worker:** 'The greatest censorship was under the First Republic. This reporter here was only a small boy at the time. He probably doesn't

know about the blank spaces that used to appear in the papers. (This section is a little contradictory, I know, P.C.) He doesn't know that the present censorship took care even of those blank spaces, so that he couldn't see at all what had been going on.'

**Non-party worker:** 'I was expecting this. And we should be thankful that it has come as it has. The Communists introduced their system without consulting anybody. If we had functionaries like Zapotocky there would already have been a strike! The students talk because they're organised. We aren't. The trade unions? Well, that's just a cover-up for the Party!'

**This worker went on to criticise the leading role of the intellectuals in the democratisation process. He then spoke of the corruption in the factory. Here he blamed the economic management: 'All those people who came and went and talked to us now have positions in departmental management and in the Ministry. And we have to stay here and clear up the mess after them! We were told we would be making 400 locomotives a year. We are making 70. Wasted investment! Who in the general public knows that all the women workers get a month's unpaid holiday a year? And go take a look at the scrapyard: all the work that's been thrown out there! They built a railway system for the cranes, and then they took it down again. Who's responsible?'**

**Another worker:** 'The Communist Party. They set up the system.'

**Yet another worker:** 'How can you blame Lenart and Novotny for this?'

**Former Party worker:** 'Don't give me that. From the moment Novotny got to power we've been robbed! We were robbed of our output, our wages. But we put up with it, because socialism should have made up for it. And today? The intellectuals are swine because it was they who helped to make the losses. The so-called new economic system is a swindle. It is based on the assumption that the same people will stay on at the top. After all, dog don't eat dog. When a worker messes something up, it's he who pays for it. Who pays for the losses in foreign trade? And for the losses caused by the fact that the whole of production is moving in completely the wrong direction? How can I believe that in five years' time it won't be even worse? I can't believe it, just because all sorts of writers and a certain Smrkovsky are mixed up in it all. Why don't people speak for us too? And why did Sik just talk to a closed group of functionaries, and as usual leave us in ignorance?'

Instead of declarations about democracy, workers need to know what it'll be like when they have shorter working hours. People who work in offices will look forward to it. But those who do piecework will earn less.'

**Old Social democrat:** 'Less time, less money! What do you expect? The intelligentsia, without whose plans and ideas the workers cannot produce anything, has failed.... We can only put our suggestions in a working class way. People who have studied should translate these into a language which would make it possible for them to be put into practice. And it's their duty to arrange things so that (the apparatus) doesn't get at the workers.'

This debate bears the hallmarks of authenticity: a collection of workers who had all lived through the 1950's and 1960's; a mixture of different views, different degrees of mystification; the gradual groping for solutions; suspicion of 'them' (including the intelligentsia and the old guard apparatus); fears, mingled with a feeling of awakening; above all a critical faculty that will not allow people easily to accept the ready-made solutions offered by the new

leadership.

What were the technocrats' 'workers' councils'? Would they, by their composition, be able to mutate into genuine organs of workers' power? Or were they just an extension of the technocrats' control mechanism? From 20% to 33% of the members of the Workers' Councils did not work in the enterprise concerned but were nominated by the state. (J. and V. Fisera, **Cogestion des entreprises et économie socialiste: l'expérience Tchécoslovaque, 1967 - 1970**) They tended to be experts of various kinds, representatives of the Central Bank, or nominees of the Central Administration. As far as the occupational structure of the councils was concerned, over 60% of the members were technocrats.

OVERALL COMPOSITION OF THE WORKERS' COUNCILS BY PROFESSIONS:

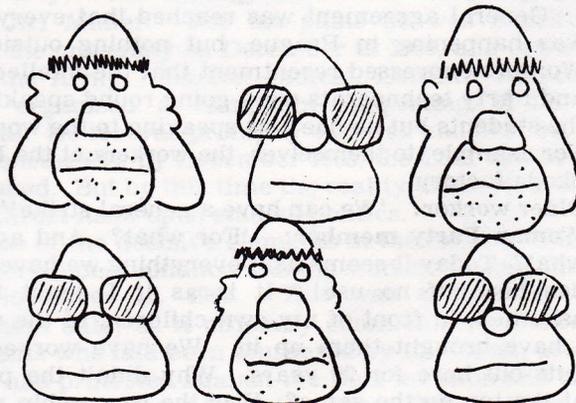
Engineers and technicians:	62.3%
Workers:	20.0%
Administrative Employees:	10.6%
Scientific Research Workers:	5.1%
Other categories:	2.0%

Source J. and V. Fisera, p54. \*

It is clear that such Councils, instituted by the Party, would be almost useless as organs of workers' power. But the seed had been sown. As 1968 proceeded a debate developed among some workers as to the nature of the Councils, and indeed as to whether the technocratic form outlined above was all that useful. It is difficult to find accurate information but Galia Golan (**Reform Rule in Czechoslovakia, 1968-69, p.44**) talks of some workers demanding more power for the Councils, such as the right to control the daily running of the enterprise, or even the right to appoint (or dismiss) the Minister of Economic Affairs.

Such views however could only have been voiced by a very small proportion of the working class. The general attitude between January and August 1968 was one of passivity, suspicion and ignorance. The definitive statement of working class attitudes towards Government-imposed Workers' Councils can be gathered from a survey carried out by the trade union paper **Prace**, published on August 13, eight days before the invasion. Nearly half the unskilled workers questioned said they didn't know what a Workers' Council was. Many of those who knew thought that the scheme was a Government plot to make the workers responsible for production, so that they should not press wage demands. Other workers made the relevant criticism that the whole thing was a little stupid, because it was putting the cart before the horse. What was the use of institutions?

Any libertarian socialist could have told the Central Committee what the likely result of their imposed plans was likely to be. In contrast, the fresh breath of autonomous working class action showed the difference between Sik's Councils and the real thing. It also exposed the true nature of the 'reformist' party: their reactions to the events outlined in the next section were those Novotny would have had: smear and innuendo.



HIDDEN IN THIS PICTURE OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE IS A REAL SOCIALIST. CAN YOU FIND HIM? NEITHER CAN WE.

\*If anyone wishes to find out more about the Czechoslovak Workers Councils there is an excellent collection of documents and essays in English. Edited by Vladimir Fisera. *Workers Councils in Czechoslovakia: Documents and essays 1968-69*. Published by Alison & Bushby in Motive series.

# The Workers' Committees for the Defence of Press Freedom

It is frequently forgotten by the traditional left that 'bourgeois freedoms' were not generously handed down by the bourgeoisie. They were often the result of years of struggle. British history illustrates this well enough. The right to free assembly, universal suffrage, freedom of movement and above all the freedom to disseminate information, would have been unthinkable without the courage and sacrifice of the anonymous men and women who made up the Chart-ist and early trade union movements. In that sense, bourgeois freedoms are workers' freedoms, the very minimum starting point for the construction of socialist freedom.

Despite the assurances given by the Action Programme of the CPCz, press freedom in Czechoslovakia, in April 1968, was still a fragile flower. It was handed down from on high, and could therefore be plucked from on high, too. In fact as late as June 17, 1968, at the meeting of the Central Committee, Mlynar, the architect of the Action Programme, suggested that certain forms of censorship should be maintained as an 'administrative tool for press coordination'. (Sbornik, Systemove zmeny, p41). It is ironic that he was opposed by Husak, the current First Secretary and President of Czechoslovakia.

In April, Alois Indra, (later one of the leading collaborators with the invasion forces) was the first Czech politician to attack the greater freedom of the press. He accused it of disorienting readers, of inciting nervousness. The People's Militia, the armed wing of the Communist Party, threatened to use their guns on certain sections of the press. They made the press a target for their own fears. The militia was made up of 'trusted' Party members, usually factory workers who had served their apprenticeship in the Party during the 1950s.

The workers' committees for the defence of press freedom were spontaneous responses to these threats. The first committee was set up by the second shift at the Ostrava Nitrogen Works. Its declaration, published in *Nova Svoboda* on April 25, stated:

'The suppression of censorship has played a very important part in the rapid development of the political life of Czechoslovakia in the direction of democracy...But there are other voices, similar to that of Indra in his recent speech, which are saying that the democratisation process has dangerously invaded the frontiers of the CPCz.

'All this is happening in a situation in which censorship has been suspended but not abolished, in which no guarantees of the freedom of the press exist apart from the benevolent attitude of Comrade Dubcek and other progressive comrades on the Central Committee...'

'It is now extremely urgent that workers' committees for the defence of the freedom of the press be created, as a basic civil right. These should go on existing for as long as censorship, in the form of the Central Publications Board, is not abolished, for as long as the freedom of the press is not explicitly guaranteed by clear laws which would make it possible to prosecute anyone who wished to jeopardise this freedom in any way whatsoever.'

This call from the Ostrava workers was immediately taken up by other groups of workers in Moravia, by the tram workers in the Borubsky depot, by members of the Socialist Work Brigade, by the metal workers of Liskovec, by the workers' collectives from NHKG in Ostrava, and by the workers of the Vitkovice Iron Works. At the end of May the initiative spread to Bohemia, to the Novy Bor glass works, to Pilsen Skoda and to the Prague shipworkers. According to *Reporter* (June 28, 1968), hundreds of voluntary collectives for the defence of press freedom sprung into being within a month as a result of horizontal contacts between workers.

There had been no support from the political apparatus. The driving emotion behind the committees was working class suspicion of the government, the 'workers' government' of Alexander Dubcek. According to the *Reporter* article, a certain Stanislav Vystavel, a worker on Kuncice NHKG committee (NHKG is a heavy industry combine) said 'We want to see the government's hand. We want to see whether a fair game is being played. And that can't be done without freedom of the press.'

Before the movement became too widespread the authorities attempted to kill it at its place of birth: in the Ostrava Nitrogen Works. The methods used, at the height of the 'Prague Spring', were, to say the least, interesting. They will come as no surprise to those of us who have no illusions about Bolshevism. But they may come as a shock to those who believe that by 1968 the Party had been 'restructured'.

Within hours of the first committee being formed, the Chairman of the Works Committee of the Communist Party, a certain comrade Simek, had been around the factory telling everyone that a criminal was behind the setting up of the new body. The authorities had lost no time. They had checked out the record of one Lumir Balicka, one of the organisers of the committee. Comrade Simek informed his 'comrade workers' that the so-called workers' committee for the defence of the freedom of the press had been founded during the second shift by someone who, in 1966, had undergone sixteen months 'corrective custody'. Balicka had been sentenced under Clause 109 of the Criminal Code which was even then discredited. The charge had been 'seeking to leave the country illegally'. Simek failed to mention either the clause or the charge!

The Security Police had then been called in and a thorough investigation of the 40 workers on the committee began. The police dug up all they could in the backgrounds, for smearing purposes. Four 'hardened criminals' were 'discovered'. One was supposed to have stolen unrefined sugar. Another had had a joy-ride in someone else's car. A veritable

Mafia! The 'democratic machinery' was activated. A report went to the local Party, from where it was sent to the regional Party. From there it reached Prague. Vilem Novy then gave vent to his views at a Central Committee plenum.

'While I am on the subject of the press and the mass media, allow me to express my surprise and to ask what the setting up of a so-called Committee for the Defence of the Press really means. Who's doing it? And why? And against whom? On Sunday, I learned from the television that Comrade Indra, a secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, is jeopardising the freedom of the press. I think this is absolute nonsense and very dangerous.

'Why should the Party and some of its representatives want to restrict the freedom of the press once this has been achieved? To encourage the idea that someone is again preparing to muzzle the press is tendentious. It engenders confusion and mistrust. It seems to me that what is needed in some places is much more a Committee for the Defence of the Party, for the defence of the socialist system against increasingly audacious reactionary attacks.'

So now you have it! At the height of the Prague Spring, autonomous working class self-activity not sanctioned by the Party is an 'audacious reactionary attack'. Luckily workers concerned about basic democratic rights were not taken in by this ridiculous demagoguery.

# The Working Class Advance

The period April-August 1968 witnessed an increasing awareness on the part of the working class. The awakening after a 20-year sleep was of course slow and marked by uncertainty and confusion. There is ample evidence that the increasingly combative postures of the trade unions, during this period, were forced on the leadership by pressures from below.

Discontent was expressed at works meetings, and even through unofficial strikes. In the period 1964-67 isolated strikes had been reported in the trade union newspaper **Prace** (Work). However, from about March on, a rash of short strikes broke out. They were usually prompted by 'economic' grievances, such as the organisation of production lines, or poor wages and working conditions. Sometimes they had an underlying 'political' colour, seeking the sacking of particular managers who had been identified too closely with the Party. One of the main differences between these strikes and preceding ones was the fact that in the militant atmosphere created by freedom of the press, the strikes could be reported in a sympathetic manner, thereby giving scope for other groups of workers to learn what was going on. This is crucial. The previous policy had meant that workers in one factory found it almost impossible to contact those in a neighbouring one, except through the hierarchic Party and trade union machines.

An example of the sort of pressure now being exerted was the one-hour 'wildcat' in an electrical instrument plant in south Bohemia. Following economic reorganisation, a policy had been worked out which was favourable to the enterprise association, but unfavourable to the workers at the particular plant. A strike committee wearing red armbands was formed. The workers demanded autonomy from the enterprise association. A settlement was reached. **The management agreed to restore the original schedules and to negotiate further details with workers' representatives.** Such demands, whilst not revolutionary in themselves, showed that the immediate interests of the workers in controlling conditions at work, could not be totally recuperated by Sik's 'workers' councils', arriving from on high. The press reaction was interesting. **Prace** published an account of the strike on March 27, 1968: (The strike) 'is a further step in the democratisation process which thus spreads from the field of politics into that of economics.'

On April 12, according to Czechoslovak television, another strike in Bohemia forced the resignation of a plant manager and his chief engineer. Sometimes the mere threat to strike was sufficient. **Prace**, (April 24 and May 3, 1968) reported that a strike threatened by electricians at Prague International Airport had brought the Transport Ministry to heel. The working class saw the trade union movement rather than the Workers' Councils as the main channel for exercising pressure and control. This reflected both the nature of the workers' councils and the content of 20 years of 'socialism'.

This rise in worker combativity during April and May produced certain official responses. The trade unions had just elected a new leadership, which partly

reflected the growing militancy. Karel Polacek, the new Czech trade union boss, declared that 'I approve of strikes if the workers' rights are impaired'. (Press Conference, March 22, 1968). The Slovak Union boss Vojtek Daubner declared that he supported the workers' rights even to engage in political strikes, such as a strike in defence of the freedom of the press. (**Rude Pravo**, March 22, 1968). Dubcek himself, however, waited until June before deigning to comment. He was lukewarm, describing strike action as 'the maximum method of exerting pressure'. (**Rude Pravo**, June 19, 1968).

From January until March 1968 the trade union movement was seen as performing the same functions as it always had, i.e. acting as a transmission belt for Party directives to the workers. Pressure for a change in the nature and functions of the trade union movement began building up from below. On January 13, 1968 **Prace** carried a report by the ROH (the equivalent of the TUC) Chairman, Miroslav Pastyrik. It outlined what he considered to be the role of the unions. This was 'unconditionally to serve socialism by rallying the masses around the regime's economic program through propaganda and education, and so contributing to the strength of ideological unity.' The masses, however, refused to be 'rallied'. Instead they piled up pressure for the removal of Pastyrik. A committee at the Kosice Iron Works sent in a resolution declaring it 'was high time that Pastyrik resigned.' At the lowest level of the trade union apparatus discontent was also mounting.

Party members of the Usti nad Labem Regional Trades Council called for changes in the ROH leadership, as did a group of chairmen of ROH Works Committees in Prague. It was not hard to understand the sudden surge in 'militancy' from these junior officials. They were being pressurised from the shop floor. One union leader complained to the Central Committee Plenum in April that in many plants communists had 'lost control'. Workers were (horror, shock) through their own initiative replacing trade union functionaries and even whole shop and plant committees. (**Rude Pravo**, April 7, 1968). The top leadership of the ROH was demoted in March. The new Chairman, Karel Polacek, was hardly an inspired choice and 70,000 workers threatened to strike when they heard of his appointment. Polacek won over the workers by adopting 'liberal' positions, and appearing to resist the post-invasion demands. He was quite happy, however, to enter Husak's Party Presidium of April 1969. According to one report, he admitted that he had merely permitted his name to be used for certain 'initiatives' on the part of the movement. (Galia Golan, **Reform Rule in Czechoslovakia**, p61).

The new leadership proved incapable of 'reforming the trade union movement' (which of course cannot be reformed). But they took some of the sting out of grass roots pressure. The main demands that had filtered up were for:

- 1) democratic elections at all levels, including the election of the ROH Chairman.
- 2) leaders to be exclusively responsible to the membership, i.e. subject to control from below.
- 3) more information to be made available to the lower organs of ROH.
- 4) decentralisation in favour of the grass roots organisation, making them more amenable to control from the membership.
- 5) the lower organs to be freed from directives and supervision from higher trade union organs.
- 6) the grass roots organs to have final responsibility and authority to decide their own affairs.
- 7) local bodies to have a share in deciding national

policy by a downgrading of the status of the ROH Central Council and Presidium and an upgrading of the status of the grass roots organisations.

8) federalisation of the trade union movement along national lines, with autonomous Czech and Slovak ROH organisations. The ROH Council was to unify the whole movement in dealing with the state and with foreign trade union centres and for protecting the overall interests of the union.

(see **Prace**, March 12, and the Draft Program, **Prace**, July 5).

This 'democratisation of the trade union movement' was, however, to be carried out within the framework of the traditional one Factory—one Union concept. Even though the programme was 'radical' in form, its implementation took place within strictly defined limits. The one union for one factory rule meant that there would still exist, at the grass roots, an unwieldy 'mass organisation' of the type the Party favoured. The Trade Union Congress of June 18-20, 1968 strongly condemned attempts at organising according to what it called 'narrow interests, which split and weaken the trade unions.' Dubcek supported the position taken by the union leadership. At the same Congress he issued a call for a unified movement. Unions outside the ROH would not be legal. The trade union leadership within ROH, both at grass roots and higher levels, would remain dominated by Party members. During the whole period, the leadership of the trade unions remained fairly constant, after the initial purge of old guarders.

Not all workers accepted this framework. The railwaymen provided a test of the reformists' attitude to independently organised unions, outside the control of ROH.

The existence of the Union of Czechoslovakia Railway Workers automatically precluded the formation of any other union in the railway industry, in view of the one-factory-one-union clause. A Federation of Loco Crews had, however, just been formed. By the end of April, when it applied to join ROH, it had 24,000 members. The application was rejected. The Federation then imposed an overtime ban which crippled some sections of the railways. By-passing ROH, the railway management began to negotiate directly with the new Federation. ROH retaliated by discriminating against individual Federation members, denying them rooms at their resorts, spas and recreation centres, and access to ROH cultural or social funds, etc. At the same time ROH applied pressure on the management to stop negotiating with the Federation. The Federation became isolated. As a last resort, it applied for registration as a social interest group. (After the invasion this application was turned down.)

The Federation finally proclaimed itself an independent trade union. This attracted a lot of interest and support amongst workers. As the paper **Lidova Demokracie** put it in March 1969, the workers saw this as a test case for democratisation. Even though the union was 'illegal' an open confrontation was avoided.

Let me summarise the growth of working class organisation and activity during the Prague Spring. The working class tended to view the officially proposed Workers' Councils with suspicion, sensing that under the circumstances they might turn out to be just another instrument of exploitation. Pressure from the workers led to a partial break of the trade union movement from the state apparatus and to the adoption (at least on paper) of a new, more democratic trade union structure.



## Appendix:

# What is 'Makhaevism'?

Reprinted from *Soviet Studies*, July 1965, Vol XVII Number I

If you want to know more about Jan Waclav Machajski (and can read French) we recommend *Le Socialisme des Intellectuels*, published as a pocket edition by Editions du Seuil (27 rue Jacob, Paris 6) in 1979. The book consists of an anthology of texts by the old Polish revolutionary, selected, translated and presented in a most interesting and informative way by Alexander Skirda (author of such books as *Kronstadt 1921: Proletariat contre Bolshevisme* and *Les Anarchistes Russes et les Soviets*). Of particular relevance are the texts in which Machajski, arguing that marxism is the 'religion of a new ruling class', deals with certain of Marx's writings in which Marx legitimises the higher value (and hence higher remuneration) of intellectual labour power. Machajski sees in this a basic mechanism whereby an important part of the surplus value extracted from manual workers is redistributed to the order-givers in society. He sees in the acceptance of marxism by so many 'radical intellectuals' an investment in a privileged future.

For a well argued, much later vindication of Machajski's views, see *The Road of the Intellectuals to Class Power* written by two dissident Hungarian revolutionaries (G. Konrad and I. Szelenyi) and also first published in English in 1979. The last chapter of this work — which perhaps says far more than it intends to — will be of particular interest to readers of this pamphlet. It deals with subdivisions within the intelligentsia, and with the struggle between its political and economic wings, dubbed respectively the teleologic and empirical revisionists. Don't let that put you off, though. It really is an exciting work!

WHEN the *Short Course* history of the Communist party was published in *Pravda* in 1938, it was accompanied by a decree which emphasized the role of the intelligentsia in the construction of Soviet society. The decree bitterly condemned the 'Makhaevist' belief that the intellectuals — party officials, factory and farm managers, army officers, technical specialists, scientists — were an alien breed of self-seeking men who had nothing in common with the worker at the bench or the peasant behind the plough. This hostile attitude towards the intelligentsia, declared the decree, was 'savage, hooligan and dangerous to the Soviet State'.<sup>1</sup>

A number of *Pravda* readers, puzzled by the strange expression 'Makhaevism', wrote to the editors asking them to explain it. (Some readers, it seems, confused 'Makhaevism' with 'Machism', the philosophy of the Austrian physicist Ernst Mach, which Lenin had severely

criticized thirty years earlier.) In a scathing polemic, *Pravda* replied that 'Makhaevism' was a crude theory which slandered the intelligentsia by branding them as the new exploiters of the workers and peasants; its adherents were 'aliens, degenerates, and enemies', whose slogan was 'Down with the intelligentsia!'. Vehemently denying that the intelligentsia constituted a new class of oppressors, *Pravda* asserted that the intellectuals and the toiling masses were 'of one bone and one flesh'.<sup>2</sup> Yet *Pravda's* barrage of vituperation merely thickened the mist of confusion surrounding the term 'Makhaevism', which, by the 1930s, had become little more than a convenient epithet for intellectual-baiting. But what, in fact, was 'Makhaevism'? Who was its originator, and what influence did he have during his lifetime?

Jan Waclaw Machajski was born in 1866 in Busk, a small town of some two thousand inhabitants, situated near the city of Kielce in Russian Poland. He was the son of an indigent clerk, who died when Machajski was a child, leaving a large and destitute family. Machajski attended the *gimnaziya* in Kielce and helped support his brothers and sisters by tutoring the schoolmates who boarded in his mother's apartment. He began his revolutionary career in 1888 in the student circles of Warsaw University, where he had enrolled in the faculties of natural science and medicine. Two or three years later, while attending the University of Zurich, he abandoned his first political philosophy (a blend of socialism and Polish nationalism) for the revolutionary internationalism of Marx and Engels. Machajski was arrested in May 1892 for smuggling revolutionary proclamations from Switzerland into the industrial city of Lodz, which was then in the throes of a general strike. In 1903, after a dozen years in prison and Siberian exile, he escaped to western Europe, where he remained until the outbreak of the 1905 revolution.<sup>3</sup>

During his long term of banishment in the Siberian settlement of Vilyuisk (in Yakutsk province), Machajski made an intensive study of socialist literature and came to the conclusion that the Social Democrats did not really champion the cause of the manual workers, but that of a new class of 'mental workers' engendered by the rise of industrialism. Marxism, he maintained in his major work, *Umstvenny rabochi*, reflected the interests of this new class, which hoped to ride to power on the shoulders of the manual workers. In a so-called 'socialist' society, he declared, private capitalists would merely be replaced by a new aristocracy of administrators, technical experts, and politicians; the manual labourers would be enslaved anew by a ruling minority whose 'capital', so to speak, was education.<sup>4</sup>

In evolving his anti-Marxist theories, Machajski was strongly influenced by Mikhail Bakunin and by the 'economists' of the 1890s. A generation before the appearance of *Umstvenny rabochi*, Bakunin had denounced Marx and his followers as narrow intellectuals who, living in an unreal world of musty books and thick journals, understood nothing of human suffering. Although Bakunin believed that intellectuals would play an important part in the revolutionary struggle, he warned that his Marxist rivals had an insatiable lust for power. In 1872, four years before his death, Bakunin speculated on the shape the Marxist 'dictatorship of the proletariat' would assume if ever inaugurated:

That would be the rule of *scientific intellect*, the most autocratic, the most despotic, the most arrogant, and the most insolent of all regimes. There will be a new class, a new hierarchy of genuine or sham *savants*, and the world will be divided into a dominant minority in the name of science, and an immense ignorant majority.<sup>5</sup>

In one of his most important works, *Gosudarstvennost i anarkhiya*, published the following year, Bakunin elaborated upon this dire prophecy in a most striking passage:

According to the theory of Mr. Marx, the people not only must not destroy [the state] but must strengthen it and place it at the complete disposal of their benefactors, guardians, and teachers—the leaders of the Communist party, namely Mr. Marx and his friends, who will proceed to liberate [mankind] in their own way. They will concentrate the reins of government in a strong hand, because the ignorant people require an exceedingly firm guardianship; they will establish a single state bank, concentrating in its hands all commercial, industrial, agricultural, and even scientific

production, and then divide the masses into two armies—industrial and agricultural—under the direct command of state engineers, who will constitute a new privileged scientific-political estate.<sup>6</sup>

According to Bakunin, the followers of Karl Marx and of Auguste Comte as well were 'priests of science', ordained in a new 'privileged church of the mind and superior education'.<sup>7</sup> They disdainfully informed the common man: 'You know nothing, you understand nothing, you are a blockhead, and a man of intelligence must put a saddle and bridle on you and lead you'.<sup>8</sup>

Bakunin maintained that education was as great an instrument of domination as private property. So long as learning was preempted by a minority of the population, he wrote in 1869 in an essay entitled *Integral Instruction*, it could effectively be used to exploit the majority. 'The one who knows more', he wrote, 'will naturally dominate the one who knows less.' Even if the landlords and capitalists were eliminated, there was a danger that the world 'would be divided once again into a mass of slaves and a small number of rulers, the former working for the latter as they do today'.<sup>9</sup> Bakunin's answer was to wrest education from the monopolistic grasp of the privileged classes and make it available equally to everyone; like capital, education must cease to be 'the patrimony of one or of several classes' and become 'the common property of all'.<sup>10</sup> An integrated education in science and handicrafts (but not in the jejune abstractions of religion, metaphysics and sociology) would enable all citizens to engage in both manual and mental pursuits, thereby eliminating a major source of inequality. 'Everyone must work, and everyone must be educated', Bakunin averred, so that in the good society of the future there would be 'neither workers nor scientists, but only men'.<sup>11</sup>

The gulf between the educated classes and the 'dark people' of Russia was broader than anywhere else in Europe. During the 1870s, when the young Populist students from Petersburg and Moscow went 'to the people' in the countryside, they ran into an invisible barrier that separated them from the ignorant *narod*. Their pitiful failure to communicate with the rural folk led some disillusioned Populists to abandon the education which they thought was dividing them from the masses. Others wondered whether the education gap could be bridged at all, whether the Populist philosopher Nikolai Mikhailovski was not right when he observed that the literate few must 'inevitably enslave' the toiling majority.<sup>12</sup>

Nor was the situation greatly improved when the peasants came to the city to work in the factories, for they brought their suspicion of the intellectuals with them. One labourer in St. Petersburg complained that 'the intelligentsia had usurped the position of the worker'. It was all right to accept books from the students, he said, but when they begin to teach you nonsense you must knock them down. 'They should be made to understand that the workers' cause ought to be placed entirely in the hands of the workers themselves'.<sup>13</sup> Although these remarks were aimed at the Populist Chaikovski circle in the 1870s, the same attitude persisted in succeeding decades towards both the Populists and the Marxists, who were competing for the allegiance of the emerging class of industrial workers. In 1883, Georgi Plekhanov, the 'father' of Russian Social Democracy, felt constrained to pledge that the Marxist dictatorship of the proletariat would be 'as far removed from the dictatorship of a group of *raznochintsy* revolutionists as heaven is from earth'.<sup>14</sup> He assured the workers that Marx's disciples were selfless men, whose mission was to raise the class-consciousness of the proletariat so that it could become 'an independent figure in the arena of historical life, and not pass eternally from one guardian to another'.<sup>15</sup>

Notwithstanding repeated reassurances of this sort, many factory workers eschewed the doctrinaire revolutionism of Plekhanov and his associates and bent their efforts to the task of economic and educational self-improvement. They began to manifest a tendency (in which they were joined by a number of sympathetic intellectuals) which later acquired the label of 'economism'. The average Russian workman was more interested in raising his material level than in agitating for political objectives; he was wary of the revolutionary slogans floated by party

leaders who seemed bent on pushing him into political adventures that might satisfy their own ambitions while leaving the situation of the workers essentially unchanged. Political programmes, wrote a leading spokesman of the 'economist' point of view, 'are suitable for intellectuals going "to the people", but not for the workers themselves. . . . And it is the defence of the workers' interests . . . that is the whole content of the labour movement'. The intelligentsia, he added, quoting Marx's celebrated preamble to the bylaws of the First International, tended to forget that 'the liberation of the working class must be the task of the workers themselves'.<sup>16</sup>

Underlying the anti-intellectualism of the 'economists' was the conviction that the intelligentsia looked upon the working class simply as the means to a higher goal, as an abstract mass predestined to carry out the immutable will of history. According to the 'economists', the intellectuals, instead of bringing their knowledge to bear on the concrete problems of factory life, were inclined to lose themselves in ideologies that had no relation to the true needs of the workers. Emboldened by the Petersburg textile strikes of 1896 and 1897, which were organized and directed by local workmen, the 'economists' urged the Russian labouring class to remain self-sufficient and reject the leadership of self-centred professional agitators. As one bench worker in the capital wrote in an 'economist' journal in 1897, 'the improvement of our working conditions depends on ourselves alone'.<sup>17</sup>

The anti-political and anti-intellectual arguments of Bakunin and the 'economists' made an indelible impression on Machajski. While in Siberia, he came to believe that the radical intelligentsia aimed not at the achievement of a classless society, but merely to establish itself as a privileged stratum. It was no wonder that Marxism, rather than advocating an immediate revolt against the capitalist system, postponed its 'collapse' until a future time when economic conditions had sufficiently 'matured'. With the further development of capitalism and its increasingly sophisticated technology, the 'mental workers' would grow strong enough to establish their own rule. Even if the new technocracy were then to abolish private ownership of the means of production, Machajski said, the 'professional intelligentsia' would still maintain its position of mastery by taking over the *management* of production and by establishing a monopoly over the specialized knowledge needed to operate a complex industrial economy.<sup>18</sup> The managers, engineers and political office-holders would use their Marxist ideology as a new religious opiate to becloud the minds of the labouring masses, perpetuating their ignorance and servitude.

Machajski suspected every left-wing competitor of seeking to establish a social system in which the intellectuals would be the ruling class. He even accused the anarchists of Kropotkin's *Khleb i volya* group of taking a 'gradualist' approach to revolution no better than that of the Social Democrats, for they expected the coming revolution in Russia not to go further than the French revolution of 1789 or 1848. In Kropotkin's projected anarchist commune, Machajski held, 'only the possessors of civilization and knowledge' would enjoy true freedom.<sup>19</sup> The 'social revolution' of the anarchists, he insisted, was not really meant to be a purely 'workers' uprising', but was in fact to be a 'revolution in the interests of the intellectuals'. The anarchists were 'the same socialists as all the others, only more passionate ones'.<sup>20</sup>

What then was to be done to avoid this new enslavement? In Machajski's view, as long as inequality of income persisted and the instruments of production remained the private property of a capitalist minority, and as long as scientific and technical knowledge remained the 'property' of an intellectual minority, the multitudes would continue to toil for a privileged few. Machajski's solution assigned a key role to a secret organization of revolutionaries called the Workers' Conspiracy (*Rabochi zagovor*), similar to Bakunin's 'secret society'<sup>21</sup> of revolutionary conspirators. Presumably, Machajski himself was to be at the head. The mission of the Workers' Conspiracy was to stimulate the workers into 'direct action'—strikes, demonstrations, and the like—against the capitalists with the immediate object of winning economic improvements and jobs for the unemployed. The 'direct action' of the workers was to culminate in a general strike which, in turn, would

trigger off a world-wide uprising, ushering in an era of equal income and educational opportunity. In the end, the pernicious distinction between manual and mental labour would be obliterated, together with all class divisions.<sup>22</sup>

Machajski's theories provoked passionate discussions within the various groups of Russian radicals. In Siberia, where Machajski hectographed the first part of *Umstvenny rabochi* in 1898, his critique of Social Democracy 'had a great effect upon the exiles', as Trotsky, who was among them, recalled in his autobiography.<sup>23</sup> By 1901, copies of *Umstvenny rabochi* were circulating in Odessa, where 'Makhaevism' was beginning to attract a following. In 1905, a small group of *Makhayevtsy*, calling itself the Workers' Conspiracy, was formed in St. Petersburg. Despite Machajski's criticism of the anarchists, a number of them were drawn to his creed. For a time, Olga Taratuta and Vladimir Striga, leading members of the largest anarchist organization in Russia, the Black Banner (*Chernoye znamya*) group, were associated with a society in Odessa known as the Intransigents (*Nepriimirimiye*), which included both anarchists and *Makhayevtsy*; and the principal anarchist circle in Petersburg, Without Authority (*Beznachaliye*), contained a few disciples of Machajski.<sup>24</sup> If some anarchist writers took Machajski to task for seeing everything as a clever plot of the intelligentsia,<sup>25</sup> more than a few, as one of Kropotkin's followers admitted, found in the doctrines of 'Makhaevism' a 'fresh and vivifying spirit', in contrast to the 'stifling atmosphere of the socialist parties, saturated with political chicanery'.<sup>26</sup>

The foremost Anarcho-Syndicalist in Russia in 1905, Daniil Novomirski, clearly echoed Machajski's suspicions of the 'mental workers':

Which class does contemporary socialism serve in fact and not in words? We answer at once and without beating about the bush: *Socialism is not the expression of the interests of the working class, but of the so-called raznochintsy, or déclassé intelligentsia.*<sup>27</sup>

The Social Democratic party, said Novomirski, was infested with 'political crooks . . . new exploiters, new deceivers of the people'.<sup>28</sup> The long-awaited social revolution would prove to be a farce, he warned, should it fail to annihilate, together with the state and private property, yet a third enemy of human liberty: 'That new sworn enemy of ours is the *monopoly of knowledge*; its bearer is the *intelligentsia*'.<sup>29</sup> Although Novomirski believed that a 'conscious minority' of far-sighted 'pathfinders' was needed to stir the labouring masses into action,<sup>30</sup> he admonished the workers not to look for outsiders to save them. Selfless men simply did not exist—'not in the dark clouds of the empty sky, nor in the luxurious palaces of the tsars, nor in the chambers of the wealthy, nor in any parliament'.<sup>31</sup>

Machajski's views influenced another ultra-radical group born of the revolution of 1905, the SR-Maximalists. In fact, the chief disseminator of 'Makhaevism' next to Machajski himself, a man who barely acknowledged his master's existence, was a Maximalist named Yevgeni Yustinovich Lozinski. In his most important book, *What, after all, is the Intelligentsia?*, Lozinski paraphrased the central idea of Machajski's philosophy: 'Socializing the means of production liberates the intelligentsia from its subjugation by the capitalist state, but does not liberate the slaves of manual labour; it leads to the reinforcement of class slavery, to the strengthening of the workers' bondage'.<sup>32</sup>

Similar echoes of Machajski's writings were to be found in numerous pamphlets and articles by anarchists, Maximalists, and other extreme left-wing sectarians. But with the stern repressions of Stolypin in the years following the revolution of 1905, these echoes rapidly faded away and the men who produced them disappeared into prison or exile. Machajski himself, who had returned to Russia in 1905, was compelled to flee again two years later.

Russian radicalism, at a low ebb during the next decade, quickly revived with the outbreak of the February revolution. Although neither the Workers' Conspiracy nor any other organization of *Makhayevtsy* reappeared in 1917, the spirit of Makhaevism was much in evidence within the labour movement. As in 1905, Machajski's influence was particularly strong among the anarchists and Maximalists.

In September 1917, for example, in phrases evoking Bakunin and Machajski, an anarchist workman exhorted the delegates at a conference of Petrograd factory committees to launch an immediate general strike. There were no 'laws of history' to hold the people back, he declared, no predetermined revolutionary stages, as the Social Democrats maintained. Marx's disciples—both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks—were deceiving the working class with 'promises of God's reign on earth hundreds of years from now'. There was no reason to wait, he cried. The workers must take direct action—not after more centuries of painful historical development, but right now! 'Hail the uprising of the slaves and the equality of income!'<sup>33</sup> At a factory-committee gathering the following month, another anarchist speaker opposed the approaching Constituent Assembly on the grounds that it was certain to be monopolized by 'capitalists and intellectuals'. 'The intellectuals', he warned, 'in no case can represent the interests of the workers. They know how to twist us around their fingers, and they will betray us.' The workers, he thundered, can triumph only through 'direct combat' with their oppressors.<sup>34</sup>

When Machajski returned to Russia in 1917, he made no effort to channel these sentiments into a coherent movement. His heyday had passed with the revolution of 1905, and now he was prematurely old and tired. After the October revolution, he obtained a non-political job with the Soviet government, serving as a technical editor for *Narodnoye khozyaistvo* (later *Sotsialisticheskoye khozyaistvo*), the organ of the Supreme Economic Council.<sup>35</sup> He remained, however, sharply critical of Marxism and its adherents. In the summer of 1918, he published a single issue of a journal called *Rabochaya revolyutsiya*, in which he censured the Bolsheviks for failing to order the total expropriation of the bourgeoisie or to improve the economic situation of the working class. After the February revolution, wrote Machajski, the workers had received a rise in wages and an eight-hour day, but after October, their material level had been raised 'not one whit!'<sup>36</sup> The Bolshevik insurrection, he continued, was nothing but 'a counter-revolution of the intellectuals'. Political power had been seized by the disciples of Marx, 'the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia . . . the possessors of the knowledge necessary for the organization and administration of the whole life of the country'. And the Marxists, in accordance with their prophet's religious gospel of economic determination, had chosen to preserve the bourgeois order, obliging themselves only 'to prepare' the manual workers for their future paradise.<sup>37</sup> Machajski enjoined the working class to press the Soviet government to expropriate the factories, equalize incomes and educational opportunity, and provide jobs for the unemployed. Yet, as dissatisfied as he was with the new regime, Machajski grudgingly accepted it, at least for the time being. Any attempt to overthrow the government, he said, would benefit only the Whites, who were a worse evil than the Bolsheviks.<sup>38</sup>

Machajski remained at his editorial post until his death from a heart attack in February 1926, at the age of sixty.<sup>39</sup>

PAUL AVRICH

Queens College, New York

# Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> 'O postanovke partiinoi propagandy v svyazi s vypuskom "Kratkovo kursa istorii VKP(b)"' *Pravda*, 15 November 1938, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 'Chto takoye "makhayevshchina"?' *ibid.* 18 November 1938, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Machajski's wife, Vera, has left a handwritten account of her husband's life up to the time of his escape from Aleksandrovsk prison in 1903. The manuscript is in the private collection of Max Nomad in New York City. On Machajski's life, see also Nomad, *Dreamers, Dynamiters, and Demagogues* (New York, 1964) p. 104; *Bolshaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya* (Moscow, 1929) vol. XIII, pp. 64-6; A. Shetlikh, 'Pamyati V. K. [Vatslav Konstantinovich] Makhaiskovo', *Izvestiya*, 24 February 1926, p. 4; and P. A. [Petr Arshinov], 'Pamyati V. K. Makhaiskovo', *Delo truda*, no. 11, April 1926, pp. 5-8.

<sup>4</sup> A. Volski [pseudonym of Machajski], *Umstvenny rabochi* (3 vols. in 1, Geneva, 1904-05) vol. II, pp. 41-2. The best exposition of Machajski's ideas is presented in Max Nomad, *Aspects of Revolt* (New York, 1959) ch. 5, and *Rebels and Renegades* (New York, 1932) pp. 206-8. Another able summary is Marshall S. Shatz, 'Anti-Intellectualism in the Russian Intelligentsia: Michael Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin and Jan Waclaw Machajski', unpublished essay (The Russian Institute, Columbia University, 1963) pp. 52-81. See also Ivanov-Razumnik, *Chto takoye makhayevshchina?* (St. Petersburg, 1908); N. Syrkin, *Makhayevshchina* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1931); P. A. Berlin, *Apostoly anarkhii: Bakunin—Kropotkin—Makhayev* (Petrograd, n.d. [1917]) pp. 28-31; D. Zaitsev, 'Marksizm i makhayevshchina', *Obrazovaniye*, 1908, no. 3, pp. 35-71; S. V. Utechin, 'Bolsheviks and their Allies after 1917: The Ideological Pattern', *Soviet Studies*, October 1958, pp. 121-2; V. Bazarov, *Anarkhicheski kommunizm i marksizm* (St. Petersburg, 1906); B. I. Gorev, 'Apoliticheskkiye i antiparlamentskiye gruppy (anarkhisty, maksimalisty, makhayevtsy)', *Obshchestvennoye dvizheniye v Rossii v nachale XX-vo veka* (4 vols., St. Petersburg, 1909-14) vol. III, pp. 523-33; and L. Kulczycki, *Anarkhizm v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1907) pp. 80-90. There is a brief but interesting summary of Machajski's views by his wife: 'Yan-Vatslav Makhaiskii, 1866 27/xii—1926 19/ii', manuscript in the Nomad collection.

<sup>5</sup> Michel Bakounine, *Oeuvres* (6 vols., Paris, 1895-1913) vol. IV, p. 477.

<sup>6</sup> M. A. Bakunin, *Izbranniye sochineniya* (5 vols., Petrograd and Moscow, 1919-22) vol. I, p. 237.

<sup>7</sup> Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution* (New York, 1960) pp. 432-3.

<sup>8</sup> Eugene Pyziur, *The Doctrine of Anarchism of Michael A. Bakunin* (Milwaukee, 1955) p. 141.

<sup>9</sup> Bakunin, *Oeuvres*, vol. V, p. 135.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* vol. V, p. 144.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* vol. V, p. 145.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur P. Mendel, *Dilemmas of Progress in Tsarist Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961) p. 23. Cf. Richard Pipes, 'Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry', *Slavic Review*, September 1964, pp. 449-53.

<sup>13</sup> Venturi, *op. cit.* pp. 539, 800.

<sup>14</sup> G. V. Plekhanov, *Sochineniya* (24 vols., Leningrad, 1923-27) vol. II, p. 77. *Raznochinsty* was the term which designated the 'men of different classes' who made up the Russian intelligentsia in the nineteenth century.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> S. N. Prokopovich, 'Otvét na broshyuru Akselroda "K voprosu o sovremennykh zadachakh i taktika russkikh sotsial-demokratov"', in Plekhanov, *op. cit.* vol. XII, pp. 501-2.

<sup>17</sup> Peterburzhets [K. M. Takhtarev], *Ocherk peterburzhskovo rabochevo dvizheniya 90-kh godov* (London, 1902) p. 81. On the tensions that existed between labour and the intelligentsia in St. Petersburg, see Richard Pipes, *Social Democracy and the St. Petersburg Labor Movement, 1885-1897* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963).

<sup>18</sup> Jan Waclaw Machajski, 'An Unfinished Essay in the Nature of a Critique of Socialism', unpublished manuscript (written in Paris in 1911) pp. 16-17.

<sup>19</sup> A. Volski, *Bankrotstvo sotsializma XIX stoletiya* (n.p. [Geneva] 1905) p. 30; *Umstvenny rabochi*, vol. III, part 2, pp. 9-24; *Burzhuaznaya revolyutsiya i rabocheye delo* (n.p. [Geneva] 1905) p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> *Rabochi zagovor*, no. 1, September-October 1907, p. 75.

<sup>21</sup> M. A. Bakunin, *Gesammelte Werke* (3 vols., Berlin 1921-24) vol. III, pp. 35-8, 82.

<sup>22</sup> *Rabochi zagovor*, no. 1, pp. 58-63; *Umstvenny rabochi*, vol. I, p. 30.

<sup>23</sup> Leo Trotzki, *Mein Leben* (Berlin, 1930) p. 125.

<sup>24</sup> *Buntar*, no. 1, 1 December 1906, pp. 30-1; *Almanakh: sbornik po istorii anarkhicheskovo dvizheniya v Rossii* (Paris, 1909) p. 7; Syrkin, *op. cit.* pp. 7-8, 65; Gorev, *loc. cit.* vol. II, p. 525; I. Genkin, 'Sredi preemnikov Bakunina', *Krasnaya letopis*, 1927, no. 1, pp. 186-90; Genkin, 'Anarkhisty: iz vospominanii politicheskovo katorzhanina', *Byloye*, 1918, no. 9, pp. 171-2; *Bolshaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*, vol. XIII, p. 66. A few *Makhayevtsy* were also active in Bialystok, Ekaterinoslav and Vilno. In Warsaw, there was a bandit group which used the label Workers' Conspiracy (*Zmowa Robotnicza*) but was not really a Makhaevist organization.

<sup>25</sup> *Burevestnik*, no. 10-11, March-April 1908, p. 31.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* no. 8, November 1907, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> *Novy mir*, no. 1, 15 October 1905, p. 6. Cf. the Makhaevist critique of 'intelligentsia socialism' in *Chernoye znamya*, no. 1, December 1905, pp. 3-6.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> D. I. Novomirski, *Chto takoye anarkhizm?* (n.p., 1907) p. 37.

<sup>30</sup> *Novy mir*, no. 1, pp. 4, 10.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> E. Lozinski, *Chto zhe takoye, nakonets, intelligentsiya?* (St. Petersburg, 1907) p. 232.

<sup>33</sup> *Oktyabrskaya revolyutsiya i fabzavkomy: materialy po istorii fabrichnozavodskikh komitetov* (3 vols., Moscow, 1927-29) vol. II, p. 23. Cf. Machajski's notes to his translation of *Die Heilige Familie* by Marx and Engels: 'Like all religious and idealist systems, Marxism calls for a superstitious worship of "historical necessity" . . . a socialist Providence which has been preparing, over whole centuries, for an earthly paradise for future generations'. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Svyatoye semeistvo* (2 vols., St. Petersburg, 1906) vol. II, p. 54. There is a similar passage in *Burzhuaznaya revolyutsiya i rabocheye delo*, pp. 82-3.

<sup>34</sup> *Oktyabrskaya revolyutsiya i fabzavkomy*, vol. II, p. 128.

<sup>35</sup> N. Baturin, 'Pamyati "Makhayevshchiny"', *Pravda*, 2 March 1926, p. 2; Syrkin, *op. cit.* p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> *Rabochaya revolyutsiya*, no. 1, June-July 1918, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 9, 12, 25. Cf. the declaration of the SR-Maximalists in August 1918 that education still remained 'in the hands of the bourgeois and bourgeoisified intelligentsia'. *Maksimalist*, no. 2, 25 August 1918, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Rabochaya revolyutsiya*, no. 1, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> *Izvestiya*, 24 February 1926, p. 4; *Pravda*, 2 March 1926, p. 2.

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