

# CZECHOSLOVAK NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED BY THE COUNCIL OF FREE CZECHOSLOVAKIA  
420 East 71 Street, New York, NY 10021  
Telephone: (212) 861-0916

Vol. V, No. 6 (45)

June 1980

## CONTENTS

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Charter Call for Dialog Termed Interference . . . | p. 1 |
| Academic Freedom, 1348-1980 . . . . .             | p. 2 |
| Amnesty Husák Style . . . . .                     | p. 3 |
| ILO Stand on Human Rights in Czechoslovakia . . . | p. 3 |
| Interview with Cardinal Tomášek . . . . .         | p. 4 |
| Measures to Improve Czechoslovak Economy . . . .  | p. 5 |
| Western Protests on Behalf of Jailed Activists .  | p. 8 |

## CHARTER CALL FOR DIALOG TERMED INTERFERENCE

The activities of the Charter 77 civil and human rights movement in Czechoslovakia have been based on the provisions of Czechoslovakia's constitution and laws, and on international agreements that have been incorporated into the Czechoslovak legal system by parliamentary ratification. In their many documents Charter spokesmen have always stressed what the original Charter 77 Manifesto asserted: "Charter 77 is not a basis for political opposition. Its aim is to serve the common interest, as numerous similar organizations for civic initiative do in various countries in the East and West. It has no intention of drafting its own programs for political and social reform or change, but it wants to lead in its sphere of activity through constructive dialog with political and state authorities, in particular, by drawing attention to specific violations of civil and human rights, by submitting proposals [and] by acting as a mediator in situations of conflict that might result in wrongs." In brief, the Charter movement merely demands that existing laws and international agreements be observed for the benefit of all citizens (Czechoslovak Newsletter, No. 7 [January 1977]).

The regime's reaction has been entirely negative. It has accused the movement of political acts that it has never undertaken and has never planned to undertake. Now after waiting three years the party has responded to the Charter's suggestion of dialog. This response was made by Jan Fojtík, a member of the Central Committee Secretariat of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, in the May 1980 issue of the journal Nová mysl, the committee's theoretical and political monthly. In a first public admission by the party that Charter 77 had ever sought dialog, Fojtík claimed that the movement had tried to act as an opposition on behalf of "Czechoslovaks who are alleged to have no other opportunity for democratic expression and civic commitment." The Charter's supporters, he said, "want to force the official representatives of our state into a dialog with this political opposition," and to use such a dialog as "a criterion of Czechoslovakia's implementation of the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference." He charged: "All this extra-

ordinary but futile effort is impertinent interference in the internal affairs" of the state, and "an attempt to create a fifth column and upset the situation in Czechoslovakia." "This effort is itself," he asserted, "at odds with the conclusions of the Helsinki Conference."

#### ACADEMIC FREEDOM, 1348 - 1980

A new law on higher education, passed by the Federal Assembly in Prague on April 10, 1980, has further tightened government control over Czechoslovakia's universities, technical colleges, and other institutions of advanced education. "It postulates that ideological, political, and moral education of students based on Marxist-Leninist ideology is equal in importance to their professional training" (Vladimír Kusín in Radio Free Europe Research: RAD Situation Report/114, May 19, 1980). The old law of 1966, according to Matej Lučan, deputy federal prime minister, "paid too much attention to outdated, so-called self-management ideas about controlling the universities" (Nové slovo, No. 17 [April 24], 1980). Práce, the daily newspaper of the Central Trade Union Council, described the new law on April 15 as giving added responsibility not only to school officials but also to the Czech and Slovak ministries of education, teachers' and students' social organizations, the trade unions, and the Socialist Youth Union — all party "transmission belts."

The new law is a sad commentary on the evolution of academic freedom in Czechoslovakia over more than six centuries. "The single most important feature of the law is rigid centralization and [the] sweeping-away of the last vestiges of academic freedom . . . dating back to the time of Emperor Charles IV, who founded Charles University in Prague in 1348" (Kusín, loc. cit.). Writing about the foundation of Charles University in his Dějiny národu českého [History of the Czech Nation], the nineteenth-century Czech historian František Palacký noted: "Every teacher had the right to choose for himself what he wanted to teach publicly or privately. . . . Doctors and masters were entitled to lecture from their own writings, but not so bachelors, who were enjoined to keep to the writings of distinguished scholars of Prague, Paris or Oxford." The university statutes, he said, offered "complete freedom of learning combined with numerous privileges."

Nowadays teaching chairs have been handed over to party hacks while professors, dismissed and forced to earn their livings as laborers, meet in private apartments to teach interested students, an exercise of their constitutional rights that is persecuted by the police. On March 28, for instance, police surrounded the apartment of Charter 77 signer Jan Litomiský in Výskytná near Pelhřimov (South Bohemia), where Martin Palouš was to have given a lecture on Martin Heidegger to fifteen students from Prague and Brno. Litomiský and several others were detained for interrogation. On April 12 Anthony Kenny, master of Balliol College, Oxford, was about to deliver a lecture on Aristotelian ethics in Julius Tomín's apartment in Prague. Plainclothesmen and uniformed police burst in and arrested more than twenty persons, including Kenny, his wife, and a Frenchman, Jacques Laskar. After several hours' interrogation, the three foreigners were deported.

The Economist (London) had this to say in its May 31-June 6 edition: "Under an

imaginative plan devised by a group of Oxford university dons, an international rota arranged to make regular monthly visits to informal seminars in Prague in the private flat of Mr. Julius Tomín, a philosopher who has for years been prevented from teaching. The rota scheme is also being extended to Poland. . . . Western academics have been visiting Mr. Tomín for some time now. . . . but this spring two Oxford philosophers [the other was William Newton-Smith, also of Balliol, in March] were first questioned at length by policemen and then deported. The same happened to Miss Kathleen Wilkes, an organizer of the Oxford rota. . . . She was questioned on May 21 and expelled."

Tomín, who gave up his job as a zoo keeper after being physically assaulted, and his Charter 77 friends have been continually harassed by the Czechoslovak police.

#### AMNESTY HUSÁK STYLE

To mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of the end of World War II and the liberation of Czechoslovakia from Nazi occupation, President Gustáv Husák proclaimed an amnesty on May 8. The amnesty pardoned those condemned for misdemeanor offenses punishable by less than one year's imprisonment, for offenses due to negligence and punishable by not more than three years' imprisonment, and all those serving terms in reformatories. Those in the last group, and inmates of minimum-security prisons and juvenile institutions are to be freed. Proceedings against those charged in any of these categories but not yet sentenced will be terminated.

The amnesty does not extend to those who violated Article 109 of the Criminal Code by leaving the country without authorization. Unlike the two earlier amnesties issued since 1968 (in 1973 and 1975), the new one does not pardon illegal émigrés who have fled Czechoslovakia since 1975, nor does it apply to political prisoners, most of whom are serving sentences in excess of one year. It also includes no provision to reduce their sentences. Pravda, the Slovak Communist Party Central Committee daily, observed on May 13 that such provisions "would be contrary to the interests of society." It described the limited amnesty as "an expression of the strength of our socialist system and of its high level of humaneness."

The preamble of the 1980 amnesty states: "The facts that socialist democracy has developed further in our homeland, that socialist legality has taken deeper root, and that the moral-political unity of our people has solidified all offer a guarantee that some lawbreakers can be reeducated even without punishment being imposed on them and without having to serve a prison sentence."

#### I.L.O. STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The International Labor Organization (ILO) in Geneva has clashed for the second time with the communist government of Czechoslovakia on the issue of human rights as defined by the International Convention on Discrimination in Employment (Convention III), which Czechoslovakia ratified in 1964.

The ILO criticized Czechoslovakia in 1978 on the basis of a complaint by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions accusing the government in Prague of discriminating against those who signed Charter 77. Hundreds of journalists, writers, university teachers, research workers and scholars had been dismissed for doing so. The Czechoslovak representatives had countered that Article 53 of the Czechoslovak Labor Code empowered employers to dismiss employees in whom they had "lost confidence." They argued that those who had signed Charter 77 were engaged in activities aimed at disrupting public order, discrediting Czechoslovakia's international reputation, and changing the socialist system by unlawful methods. An ILO committee of experts then concluded that it was unclear whether signing Charter 77 amounted to an act against the security of the state and hence was incompatible with employment.

The case of Czechoslovakia was placed on ILO's agenda for a second time this year, and on May 12 the organization's committee of experts issued a statement that it could not accept the argument that Charter 77 represented any threat to public order: "It does not appear that the signing of, or adhering to, such a document by workers could in itself justify any derogation from the basic protection provided by the Convention in matters of political opinion."

#### Charter 77 Response to the ILO

On May 15 Charter 77 published a 1,200-word response in Prague to the ILO's statement. Job discrimination was continuing in Czechoslovakia, it said, and was being applied not only against those who signed Charter 77 and their supporters but also against large sectors of the public. Though Article 153/1969 of the Labor Code, which was at odds with both Convention III and the Czechoslovak Constitution, had been amended to bring it into line with the convention, the charter document said, "in practice the filling of jobs does not proceed in accordance either with the convention or with the Czechoslovak Constitution and Labor Code, but follows internal instructions unknown to the public and so impossible to scrutinize."

The document concluded by saying that violations of Convention III were continuing against Charter members and by offering to supply the ILO with pertinent evidence. It urged the ILO to send a fact-finding mission to investigate on the spot.

#### INTERVIEW WITH CARDINAL TOMÁŠEK

Il Regno, a Bologna biweekly, on April 15 published an interview given by Cardinal František Tomášek in Rome on March 22 about the difficulties facing the Catholic church in Czechoslovakia.

The eighty-year-old Czechoslovak primate told the newspaper: "We have thirteen dioceses, but only three have resident bishops. The Czech Socialist Republic has a cardinal [Tomášek] in Prague and an apostolic administrator (Msgr. Vrana) in Olomouc. Three bishoprics — Litoměřice, Hradec Králové and České Budějovice — in Bohemia and Brno in Moravia have capitular vicars. The Slovak Socialist Republic has two resident bishops, Msgr. Jozef Feranec in Banská Bystrica and Msgr. Ján Pasztor in Nitra. The

archdiocese of Trnava, created in 1978, is still vacant. Bishop Msgr. Július Gábriš is only the apostolic administrator there. The other Slovak sees — Rožňava, Spišská Nová Ves, Košice and Prešov — merely have capitular vicars."

Tomášek said the country's two seminaries, Litoměřice in Bohemia and Bratislava in Slovakia, were insufficient. "There are only about a hundred seminarians and the government stops more young people from entering." The monastic orders, he noted, had been dissolved. "The government has refused permission for a permanent diaconate, yet there are many single and married men who would like to become deacons."

The cardinal spoke out strongly against Pacem in Terris, the government-sponsored organization of so-called peace priests: "This organization was established in 1971, I believe, and is totally dependent — I stress, totally — on the regime. It speaks of brotherhood and cooperation, but in reality it does nothing for the church. It maintains no dialog with the hierarchy. . . . I deprecate this organization as a matter of principle because it does not have Vatican approval. On the contrary, I can tell you that the Pope is very worried about it."

Referring to the differences between Poland and Czechoslovakia, where Catholic believers are fewer than in the former, Tomášek said: "I am a man of dialog, of patient work, of gradual advance. I am convinced that, where Christ's cross is, there is also light, strength, and victory. An open struggle with the regime is inappropriate and would yield no results." The cardinal was critical of the intransigency of émigrés who do not bear the cross of the responsibility of living in Czechoslovakia.

Tomášek continued: "We show the rich and powerful churches how to live in God and poverty. Our faith is not mere tradition. It is a personal commitment. When you ask a Pole why he believes, he replies: 'Because I am a Pole.' When you ask a Czechoslovak, he says: 'I know why I believe.'" When asked what he found oppressive in Czechoslovakia, the cardinal answered: "The presence of Moscow. It suffocates everything, and people are angry. How can you expect things to go well in a country under the watch of the Red Army?"

Radio Prague reported on May 21 that the Czechoslovak News Agency (ČTK) had been authorized by the cardinal to deny parts of the interview. ČTK said the interview contained untruths and gross slanders against Czechoslovakia and its friends and allies. The agency did not say which parts of the interview the cardinal had rejected, but quoted him as saying that the published version included statements that he was unaware that he had made.

#### MEASURES TO IMPROVE CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S ECONOMY

The Czechoslovak economy, which has been in critical condition for some time, has become even shakier during the last couple of years under the impact of poor harvests and soaring world prices for raw materials and fuels. The government and the presidium of the communist party have now come up with a "set of measures" intended to improve the situation. The measures are directed at specific areas of planning, management, production control, price and wage policy, and foreign trade. They aim to make better

use of science and technology, and call for the establishment of a special commission under the minister of finance to supervise the way they are implemented. They also look for greater initiative by management, better husbanding of materials and fuel, improved work discipline, adjustment of work norms to improve the quality of work and secure fairer compensation for it, and stricter financial control in enterprises to reduce costs and ensure higher product quality.

The published measures, however, are not really new. They have been suggested before, but such proposals have been disregarded. The only innovation now is a greater emphasis on enforcement. The regime is ready to take drastic steps against delinquent managers and workers, but it is doubtful whether even these will achieve the desired results in a system plagued by bureaucracy and centralized command planning.

The new measures were published after Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal had addressed a series of meetings of party activists and a joint session of both chambers of the Federal Assembly to discuss the state of the economy. Before painting a complex picture of "unhealthy phenomena" in the Czechoslovak economy and the means to remedy them, Štrougal first spoke about the economy's achievements. In an account of his address to the Federal Assembly published on March 17 in Rudé právo, the daily newspaper of the Czechoslovak party Central Committee, Štrougal was quoted as saying that Czechoslovakia's national income had grown to 474 billion crowns during the last ten years, 59 percent more than in 1970. Over the same period 338 billion crowns had been invested, industrial output had risen 75 percent, and farm production had gone up 19 percent, despite the loss of 213,000 farm workers to the industrial sector. Among the most successful areas of industry were machinery and chemicals, the output of which rose 110 percent over the decade.

Štrougal used these figures to demonstrate that living standards had improved. In 1979 total earnings of the population were 343 billion crowns. The number of families with an average monthly income of not more than 800 crowns had dropped from 32 percent of the population in 1970 to 12.7 percent in 1979. Collective farmers' incomes had now caught up with industrial workers'. During the decade the consumption of meat had risen by 26.4 pounds, of eggs by 13 percent over the 1970 level, and car ownership had gone up from 18 percent of the population in 1970 to 40 percent in 1979.

Looking forward to the decade ahead, Štrougal warned: "It should be clear to everyone that such a growth rate cannot be repeated in the 1980s. . . . To maintain the present level, it will be necessary to enhance the efficiency of our whole economy." The hidden implication of his words was that, even in spite of higher efficiency, production and living standards were likely to decline.

The prime minister conceded that the present economic situation had produced a mood of gloom among management and workers alike. "When we encounter difficulties, many people see things only in the light of present problems." He warned against extreme attitudes because "a bleak view prevents us from seeing things in their proper perspective, and reduces our ability to evaluate potentials in a realistic way and to find solutions." He said "intensive factors" in production were "the only possible alternative, in fact, a categorical necessity. We do not assess our primary resources properly, . . . or our use of raw materials, energy, and manpower. Just a superficial comparison with the energy input of other advanced countries, for instance, shows that ours is 50 percent higher. The same is true of metals and other raw materials."

Štrougal said Czechoslovakia was also using its labor force wastefully. "An international comparison shows our manpower input is too high. While other countries show a steady decline in manpower input, ours is on the rise." Turning to capital investment, he said: "The proportion of capital investment in our economy does not lag behind that of other industrial states, . . . but it is the structure of it that matters. . . . Other advanced countries allocate some 60 to 80 percent to modernizing their industrial base. . . . The contrast is obvious: in our country manpower input is rising, while the number of shifts worked is declining." This explains Czechoslovakia's manpower shortage: its much publicized full employment is really hidden unemployment.

Czechoslovakia's so-called scientific planning and management is in a mess. The prescription offered by Štrougal was, "Follow scientific and technological progress" because that "is the strategic content of the set of measures" now introduced by the party and government. Progress, he said, depended on people "who have ideas, know new solutions, and push technology and the economy forward." Yet during the "normalization" that followed the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, qualified scientists and technologists were ousted from their jobs, which were given to those whose loyalty to the regime was unimpeachable. Even if Štrougal's comment was an olive branch offered to the purged specialists, they are unlikely to supplant the unqualified party loyalists who are one of the two mainstays of the regime. (The other is the presence of the Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia.)

"When we join forces with the scientific-technological potential of the USSR, progress should be rapid," the prime minister told his listeners. Yet cooperation with the Soviet Union seems an unsatisfactory measure of progress. After more than thirty years of it, the Czechoslovak economy has not advanced well enough to avoid "unhealthy phenomena." The state of it has worsened in spite of "more than seven thousand investments, and some three hundred suggestions for improvement that are taken up every year."

The crux of the new economic measures is the improvement of work norms. "The state of norms is very unsatisfactory," Štrougal admitted. "We must state frankly that we shall ask workers to make a greater effort. Those who do not meet their work assignments will feel the consequences in their pay packets. . . . The improvement in our living standards is in direct proportion to the values we create. . . . This is doubly true now. We cannot live at the expense of future development and future generations."

Štrougal added a warning to workers and consumers alike: "We are facing inevitable changes in the wholesale prices of fuel, energy, and some raw materials. There will be problems not only in the supply of industrial commodities but also in supplies of meat and some other foodstuffs."

The new measures are meant to be introduced over the course of the next two years, years that are likely to be difficult for the people of Czechoslovakia — and the rest of the communist countries, for that matter. In the rigid Soviet type of centralized command planning that characterizes Czechoslovakia's economy, if the past is any indication, it may well be questioned how much improvement this latest "set of measures" will bring.

## WESTERN PROTESTS ON BEHALF OF JAILED ACTIVISTS

Public demonstrations were organized in several West European cities, including Amsterdam, Bonn, Paris and Oxford, to mark the first anniversary of the arrest of human rights activists in Prague on May 29, 1979. Six of those arrested were sentenced last October 23 to lengthy prison terms on charges of "subversion of the republic." The six — playwright Václav Havel, philosopher and mathematician Václav Benda, mechanical engineer Petr Uhl, journalists Jiří Dienstbier and Otta Bednářová, and psychologist Dana Němcová — are all members of Charter 77 and the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS) (Czechoslovak Newsletter, Vol. IV, No. 6 [June 1979]; ibid., No. 9/10 [September-October 1979]).

In Paris members of nine rights organizations demonstrated outside the Czechoslovakian embassy and staged a protest meeting outside the Palais de Chaillot. A message from VONS, a member of the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, sent from Prague, was read to the meeting.

William Newton-Smith, a member of Balliol College, and Kathleen Wilkes (see "Academic Freedom, 1348-1980," pp. 2-3) were the main speakers at a public meeting in Oxford of the British Committee to Defend Charter 77.