

CZECHOSLOVAK NEWSLETTER

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CONTENTS

Declaration of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia on Poland	p. 1
Poland and Czechoslovakia	p. 2
<u>Rudé Právo</u> on the Madrid Conference	p. 3
American Elections Seen Through Communist Eyes	p. 4
News from Normalized Czechoslovakia	p. 5
Letter to the International Federation of Human Rights	p. 7
Letter to the Patriarch of All Russia	p. 8

DECLARATION OF THE COUNCIL OF FREE CZECHOSLOVAKIA ON POLAND

In the crisis in the relations between the Polish people and the Polish communist party and government, the Czechoslovak communist regime has taken a position contrary to the will of the Polish nation and has become a mouth-piece for Soviet threats.

The Council of Free Czechoslovakia, in contrast, has stressed from the outset that relations between the Polish nation and government are an internal matter of the sovereign Polish people, that the Polish people deserve the understanding of the whole world in their efforts, and that under no pretext does anyone have the right to interfere in their affairs, let alone threaten violence.

We demand that the Czechoslovak communist government and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia halt their threats and unconditionally respect the independence and sovereignty of the Polish nation. The Czechoslovak regime, whose legitimacy is based solely on Soviet military power and which in Madrid urged respect for the First Basket of the Helsinki Declaration, violates all the rules of international relations among civilized nations when, in contradiction to the U.N. Charter and the spirit of Helsinki, it threatens action against the Polish people that would impose on them total and humiliating control by a foreign power, as happened in Czechoslovakia.

We also call on Czechoslovak citizens to make it unequivocally clear to the Czechoslovak communist government and party that they do not condone the formers' position on Poland and that, with the 1968 Soviet invasion and occupation in mind, they reject threats of similar action against the Polish nation and would not permit the participation of the Czechoslovak army in any move against the Polish people and state.

The history of Polish-Czechoslovak relations teaches that a united, free future will be achieved not by mutual interference in each other's internal affairs but by cooperation based on mutual respect, friendship, and brotherhood.

New York, December 8, 1980

The Council of Free Czechoslovakia

POLAND AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The communist regime of Czechoslovakia continued to keep a nervous eye on developments in Poland. A number of high-level consultations have taken place. Soviet politburo member Andrei Pavlovich Kirilenko paid a visit to Czechoslovakia at the end of October. Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Bohuslav Chnoupek traveled to East Berlin and Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal went to Rumania on November 21. (On the Husák-Kadar meeting of November 12, see Czechoslovak Newsletter, Vol. V, No. 11, p. 6.) On December 3, Prime Minister Štrougal and East Germany's Willi Stoph signed an agreement regarding state borders and used the occasion to voice their conviction that "the Polish working class and the Polish people, led by the United Workers' [communist] Party, will cope successfully with the complicated problems and strengthen socialism." On December 5, President and First Party Secretary Gustav Husak attended the hastily-called meeting of the leaders of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies in Moscow. Media attacks on "counter-revolutionary forces" in Poland continued.

It may be useful to recall the "timetable" of events as they evolved during the "Prague spring" in 1968. The reform movement had gotten into high gear in April of that year. Soviet Marshal Konev arrived for an extended stay in May "to celebrate Soviet-Czechoslovak friendship," and the first secretaries of the Eastern bloc communist parties met in Moscow in the absence of the Czechoslovak and Rumanian representatives. This was followed by visits in May by the Soviet Minister of National Defense, Marshal Grechko, and the Soviet Prime Minister, Alexei Kosygin. Independent political forces emerged in the June-July period (e.g., KAN [Club of Non-Party Engageds] and K 231, an organization of former political prisoners), and the "2000 Words" manifesto was published on June 27. In spite of repeated assertions that Czechoslovakia had no intention of withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet, East German, and Polish media stepped up their attacks against "counterrevolutionary forces" and an arms cache was "discovered," allegedly supplied by "German revanchists," etc.

Joint Warsaw Pact maneuvers were held on Czechoslovak soil with Soviet units delaying their departure from the country. Western reports were published on troop movements in Poland and large-scale maneuvers took place in Poland and East Germany on July 25. On July 29, the entire Soviet presidium led by Leonid Brezhnev confronted the Czechoslovak presidium headed by Alexander Dubček at the railroad station in Cierna nad Tisou on the Czechoslovak-Soviet border in Eastern Slovakia

"to seek ways of further developing and strengthening the traditionally friendly relations between the communist parties and peoples of our lands." A follow-up conference was held in Bratislava on August 3, explained at that time as having defused the tense situation. Three weeks later, on August 21, Warsaw Pact troops (excluding those from Rumania) led by Red Army units (total estimates ranged from 250,000 to 500,000 men) invaded Czechoslovakia in the wake of preparations for the 14th Party Congress that was to ratify liberal reforms.

RUDE PRAVO ON THE MADRID CONFERENCE

Under the headline "The Responsibility of the Madrid Meeting," the Prague central communist daily Rude právo [Red Right] of November 11, the day that the Madrid Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe opened, carried an article presenting the view of Prague: Fraternal socialist countries working for peace, Western imperialists conniving to undermine detente, but no mention of human rights. Among other things the article said:

" . . . The atmosphere in which the Madrid meeting convenes is in many respects different from the situation in 1975, the year of the Helsinki conference. [The situation] has deteriorated because the ruling circles in the U.S.A., led by Carter and Brzezinski, have tried to force a change in the policy of NATO countries, a change from detente to a new cold war The U.S.A. and the NATO countries, which follow the Washington diktat, proceed in total contradiction to the spirit on which the Helsinki document is based. They concentrate on feverish rearmament, on altering the strategic balance of power, on power politics, even nuclear war How can we compare the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act with the policy of Washington which uses reprehensible devices such as 'economic sanctions' against socialist states or even attempts to disrupt the most sacred sports event, the Olympic Games? . . . Socialist states, which worked for years to convene the Helsinki meeting, are ready to do everything to insure that the process started five years ago continues successfully. In the spirit of imperialist politics bourgeois mass media are spreading false rumors that the policy of European security and cooperation is dead. They argue that the results of Helsinki should be written off, that they serve only the socialist states

"What can the Madrid meeting accomplish? One must frankly note that Western states try to misuse the meeting for a fruitless confrontation, to transform it into a forum of psychological warfare against the countries of true socialism Socialist countries, among them the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, have come to Madrid with a clean record They bring concrete and constructive proposals focused first of all on the solution of key problems of European and global international relations and the reduction of tension in the military sphere. They had already made such proposals three years ago in Belgrade. Responsibility for not adopting them lies squarely with the imperialist circles. Our [Czechoslovak] delegation, together with the delegations of fraternal socialist countries, will do its utmost so that the Madrid meeting may become a significant

step on the road to military detente. The time is ripe for convening a conference on military detente and disarmament in Europe."

AMERICAN ELECTIONS SEEN THROUGH COMMUNIST EYES

Milan Jelinek, the Washington Rude pravo correspondent, filed the following dispatch on the recent American elections and which Rude pravo published on November 8 under the heading "The Rightist and Conservative Forces in the U.S.A. Sound Victorious Fanfares":

"On November 4, congressmen and senators who were recommending moderation and self-restraint lost. They were replaced by reactionary candidates brandishing slogans of a 'strong, superior, unshakable America.' From the Senate internationally known names of bourgeois liberals such as George McGovern, Birch Bayh, John Culver, John Durkin, Frank Church, and Gaylord Nelson are slated to be dropped while that of Congressman John Brademas will no longer be on the roster of the House of Representatives. Fifty-three slots in the 100-seat Senate will be occupied by the Republican Party, and it is precisely politicians who are mostly of the extreme right wing of the American bourgeoisie who were instrumental in reversing the party balance Not since World War II have the monopolies and big capital managed to join in a reactionary and conservative grouping of political representatives of American bourgeoisie in such a powerful and effective bloc as is the case now.

" . . . The American people did not choose James Carter and Ronald Reagan as their presidential candidates. The nomination of these was decided by the political machines of the bourgeois parties, by those who hold the class power in the U.S.A. . . . The power and prestige of the imperialist superpower have declined. The bourgeoisie has become disturbed by the revolutionary changes in the world. Defeats and failures of the American policy of interference in Southeast Asia, Angola, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and Iran, the shaky and deteriorating relations of Washington with a number of its influential allies have produced in the ruling circles a notion that the United States, or ~~more precisely~~ the American bourgeoisie, has begun the struggle for its survival. The extreme reactionary and conservative group of the bourgeoisie became convinced that the U.S.A. must mobilize its reserves--in short, increase its military power and economic capability, to achieve superiority at all levels and to regain lost positions on the international scene During the past 20 years the powerful American financial circles have sent six presidents to the White House. Kennedy was assassinated, Nixon was thrown out as a swindler, and Johnson, Ford, and Carter were not renominated for a second term because of their failures. The fast turnover of presidents is also evidence of the instability and crisis of the bourgeois political system in the U.S.A."

NEWS FROM NORMALIZED CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Atheist Campaign

Czechoslovakia is waging a continuous atheist campaign, but its methods are becoming more subtle. The establishment of an Institute of Atheism at the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava was followed by the opening of a similar unit in Brno, Moravia. Religious persecution since Helsinki has become even more severe. In an article, "Difference of Opinion, Unity in Action," the Bratislava Pravda of July 10, 1980, wrote that "in our country the attitude toward believers and their religious communities has been consolidated on the whole." And it explained: "It is an objective fact that rather numerous groups of believers are part of our socialist society and that they claim adherence to various churches. Their way of thinking is influenced by religion, but their existence is already firmly rooted in the conditions formed by socialism. This contradictory situation is not anomalous but rather an inevitable fact in the period of transition from capitalism to communism. We should bear in mind that historical ascendancy over religious and other ideas and traditions is the condition for reaching higher forms of societal relations."

Until now the regime has not conceded any positive contribution by believers. But growing economic difficulties make it recognize that "in all responsibility it is necessary to create mutual relations so that they may express first of all the interests of both atheists and believers, which undoubtedly are identical--the improvement and development of our society, of a happy life." And the article praises the party which "has appreciated the participation of believers in socialist construction." But it warns that "we have no intention of making room for a reactionary political clericalism revived under any kind of pretext and especially under the slogans of religious freedom. At this stage of development good workers, even believers, help to build socialism, not to establish religious freedom. The party regards the overcoming of religious views and traditions as a long process related to overall efforts to mold the consciousness of people, not a matter of everyday confrontation Social conditions are being created now where people do not need religion any more for their goals, aspirations, and answers to the problems of life. The scientific world view is not just a result of awareness, experience, and political practice. It is a method of thinking, of an active approach to life, a method of facing unsatisfactory situations. The diffusion of the scientific [i.e., Marxist-Leninist] world view is therefore regarded as the struggle for the soul of believers."

Corruption on A Grand Scale

The totalitarian system in the countries controlled by communist parties produced a parallel culture and a parallel economy outside the power of the regime, a result of the innate urge of man to organize his life freely, without interference by the state. One of the results of this situation is widespread corruption which, in reality, is the way people cope with the rigid regimentation of their lives.

The Bratislava Pravda of September 2 carried a revealing article on this problem entitled "The Degree of Responsibility":

" . . . The number of citizens prosecuted for economic crimes has been on the decline since 1975. It is a positive phenomenon. But statistics do not cover an increase in hidden criminality, especially against our economic system, against discipline, sophisticated forms of embezzlement of socialist property, and growing bribery. In addition to the traditional crimes new forms have come to the fore in recent years. They are characterized by their high level of organization. They often spill over across the counties [okres], regions, even the national republics, frequently affect several economic sectors at the same time. It is sufficient to recall the case of the misuse of socialist enterprises for the misappropriation of socialist property. More than 900 state organizations in the Czech and Slovak socialist republics paid about 500 million crowns for jobs performed by groups organized on a private enterprise basis. [Various groups including] collective farms and physical education units in Slovakia were involved in private activities. Those committing such crimes are often managers and employees of organizations which suffer the consequences. Some 55 percent of the individuals indicted for the embezzlement of socialist property last year were employees of the victimized organizations But only occasionally do prosecuted offenders commit new forms of economic crimes such as violation of planning, pricing, and financial processes or technological routines through corruption in the distribution system and illegal profit by one organization at the expense of another."

If the Cosa Nostra Rules Your Country

A letter was smuggled from Czechoslovakia to a Middle Eastern country describing many aspects of life in the former. Below is an excerpt on how people feel in "normalized" Czechoslovakia:

"The communist regime makes sense only when it assumes the existence of two enemies, one within the country and another abroad. If there are none, they are created. It is easy to fight an enemy who cannot defend himself and even easier when he is nonexistent. Constant tension is maintained under the conditions of war communism which includes a shortage of the most commonplace necessities. So, one day there is no shoe polish while on other occasions there is no toothpaste, soap, nails, cardboard, cement, or toothbrushes. Shortages are the main feature of the market. The power structure and military establishment must be satisfied first. The regime does not rely on ideology. Not even those in power believe in it. Violence is the only instrument of rule. The country is slowly being ruined by the imposed Soviet system and shameless embezzlement by the leading cadres.

"People feel betrayed and written off (Yalta, the 1968 invasion) and devote all their energies to survival. People at the top are unqualified, without morality. They do not hide

their greed before ordinary individuals and rob the republic. They are protected by the regime whose backbone they form. Justice is partial. After a car accident the cop asks for one's identity card and then asks 'are you a party member?'

"People don't see any sense in their work. They perceive the shameless enrichment of people in key positions everywhere. To understand how we live imagine that the Cosa Nostra rules your country. But no gunmen are needed here. Courts and hangmen do the job. Walter Laqueur is mistaken when he writes that communist states know how to eliminate terrorism. They don't need to. Terror is part of the establishment. It secures 'law and order.'

"People are withdrawn into their private worlds. They hibernate. Low work morale, corruption, and an everybody-for-himself attitude are rampant. They watch Western timidity in dealing with Soviet expansionism and are unwilling to take risks, with their memory of 1968 still vivid. But they know their enemy, the 'new class' of the communist apparatchiks protected by an all-permeating police network directed from Moscow. When they think the appropriate time has arrived they will know what to do. They have not forgotten their Western democratic roots."

The Socialist Legal Order

"The legal order is one of the effective instruments for implementing the policy of the communist party Socialist law and especially its application are regarded by many citizens as an instrument of repression and not as one of the important and effective tools for the development of society."

The above is an excerpt from an editorial entitled "The Citizen and the Law" published in the Bratislava Pravda, October 27, 1980.

LETTER TO THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

VONS [Czechoslovak Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted] sent a letter dated October 1 to the International Federation of Human Rights in Paris with a list of more than 300 names of individuals in Czechoslovakie who are in prison, are detained, or otherwise harassed for political reasons (Czechoslovak Newsletter, Vol. V, No. 9/10 [Sept./Oct. 1980], p. 11). The full text of the letter is given below:

Dear Friends:

A meeting is taking place in Madrid this November of the signatories of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Respect for human rights in the country of each signatory is an inseparable element of the Final

Act. The Czechoslovak League of Human Rights-Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted has been monitoring for almost three years the situation in one of the most painful spots in this area, namely, the unjust and criminal prosecution and imprisonment of people in Czechoslovakia. We have summarized cases of unjust prosecution in our Communication No. 195, which is enclosed.

We shall be grateful to you if you drew this documentation to the attention of the representatives and the public of the participating parties in Madrid in a way you deem appropriate. It contains all cases of the unjustly prosecuted, which were the concern of the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted-Czechoslovak League of Human Rights during the time of its activity and which documents in part violations of human rights in Czechoslovakia. First, we point out the cases of citizens whose release from jail we regard as the foremost step in restoring the health of Czechoslovak society and in strengthening security and cooperation in Europe.

Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted-
Czechoslovak League of Human Rights, member of the
International Federation of Human Rights

LETTER TO THE PATRIARCH OF ALL RUSSIA

VONS [Czechoslovak Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted] reacted to the sentencing of Father Gleb Iakunin in Moscow with the following letter to the Patriarch of All Russia Pimen:

Your Excellency:

We were deeply disturbed by the news that on August 28, 1980, Father Gleb Iakunin was sentenced in Moscow to a long prison term of five years and to five years of internal exile for allegedly violating Soviet laws and Soviet interests abroad. He supposedly committed a criminal act by courageously defending the rights of Eastern Orthodox believers and openly speaking up about their situation in the U.S.S.R.

We therefore turn to you as the highest representative of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union and ask you since you hold an immensely responsible position to use your authority to its fullest extent to request the immediate release of Father Gleb Iakunin and his total rehabilitation. He was fulfilling his spiritual duty when he called things by their true names and supported people who were entrusted to his charge and whom he was sent to help in their effort to secure justice for all and to live in truth. Only such an everyday struggle can establish real peace for which all of us, you and we, long and about which we do not wish merely to speak as we see done so often.

Prague, September 12, 1980 Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted,
member of the International Federation of Human Rights