

CZECHOSLOVAK NEWSLETTER

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THE COUNCIL'S NEW YEAR'S DECLARATION

On the eve of this new year the world is full of political tension and menace. In Czechoslovakia, where the situation of the communist regime and the country under its control is critical, tension has been heightened by the opposition, hopes and aspirations of the Czechs and Slovaks, whose wish is to manage their own affairs in freedom and independence.

Developments in Poland have demonstrated anew that the communist system is inherently incapable of making certain of even the most basic material needs and moral values, and thus creates a spiritual vacuum. It remains in power only by force of foreign, Soviet might. Every oppressed nation will challenge these conditions as soon as it has gathered enough strength to resist.

In Czechoslovakia the response to the faltering communist regime has been the movement for human rights and freedoms. In spite of drastic measures and show trials of members of Charter 77, VONS (the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted), and their supporters, the regime has not succeeded in silencing the movement. Human rights activists have widened their scope at home and have earned an increasingly rich fund of sympathy and support abroad. The review Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Madrid bore witness to this fact. Violations of human rights and freedoms in Czechoslovakia were generally condemned, and scarcely a single Western representative failed to denounce the Prague regime for breaking its pledges under the Helsinki Final Act. Czechoslovak political exiles and their organizations helped to make the voices of their oppressed homeland heard in Madrid through their moral, political and diplomatic efforts.

Conditions in the coming year augur well for a continued struggle for

better world order and improvement of human rights and freedoms, as well as for democracy and independence from foreign rule and totalitarian systems. The ossified and corrupt Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (essentially a Mafia of apparatchiks ruling by violence for their own private interests and those of the Soviet Union) is making preparations to celebrate its sixtieth anniversary. For Czechoslovakia's citizens this will be a reminder of the betrayal of national and state interests. By manipulated elections to all representative organs, the party is trying to extort a vote of confidence from the people. But neither party celebrations nor communist elections can conceal citizens' true opinions. It is solely the presence of Soviet occupation forces that prevents them from expressing their real attitudes.

The struggle for freedom, democracy and independence is and will remain the program of the people of Czechoslovakia. In this the Czechs and the Slovaks can count on the unflagging support of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia and of the entire Czechoslovak exile community throughout the free world.

New York, December 31, 1980

The Council of Free Czechoslovakia

POLISH EVENTS AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Surveying the Czechoslovak press, radio and television serves two useful purposes. It helps illumine the thinking of the Czechoslovak communist leadership, and since nothing is done in Prague and Bratislava without Soviet approval, it is also a good indication of Moscow's line of thought.

Reaction to Polish Events

Articles in the daily press, and radio and television commentaries, show the anxiety that has been elicited by developments in Poland. They lecture defensively on the advantages of "real socialism," the "leading role" of the party, the unity of the labor movement, and its identity with the party. "Proletarian internationalism" and the duty to protect socialism (the "Brezhnev doctrine") are harped on constantly.

Pravda (Truth), the daily newspaper of the Slovak Communist Party Central Committee, emphasized on October 31, 1980, that "the policy of the communist party is the expression of the interests of the working class and of all people." Rudé právo (Red Right), the Czechoslovak party Central Committee's daily, editorialized on December 9, 1980: "The party has become the people's leader because it has never set itself at a distance from them. . . . Its leading position was earned by its difficult, heroic and determined participation in the forefront of social progress." And the following day: "Socialism fulfills the age-long aspirations of mankind. . . . History has taught us that socialism is unshakable because it is the cause of everyone. . . . Everything that occurs in economy, culture, social security. . . is done in the people's interest."

Under the headline "Sources of Internationalism," Pravda (Bratislava) said on December 16, 1980: "Our wellbeing depends on the healthy development of the revolutionary forces in our country, on a united socialist community, and on the dependable alliance of the socialist countries." Nová mysl (New Thought), the theoretical and ideological monthly of the Czechoslovak party Central Committee, in No. 11, 1980, returned to old themes: "Proletarian internationalism is the fighting solidarity of all sectors of the working class, irrespective of ethnic, racial, national or religious allegiance, in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism. It was Lenin who wrote: 'We must not see things from the point of view of our own country alone (this being the way of thinking of a dummy, of the chauvinistic bourgeois who does not understand that he is a puppet in the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie), but from the vantage point of our part in the preparation, propaganda and promotion of the proletarian world revolution'."

The labor unions are another focus of party propaganda. Rudé právo on November 21, 1980, lauded the "irreplaceable role of the unions," which, according to Lenin, are "the transmission belt through which the party implements its leading role." Tribuna (Tribune), a political and ideological weekly of the Czechoslovak party Central Committee, stated in its issue of December 3, 1980 (No. 49): "Who organizes strikes, even as a reaction to mismanagement, does not represent the working class. . . . To use the right to strike means to apply an ultimate threat that is in reality an act of the class enemy. . . . To speak of the right to strike under socialism, of protecting the working class against the socialist state, by quoting Lenin out of context. . . is patently incorrect, un-Marxist, utterly dogmatic. . . . To speak of some sort of independent and free unions lacks all logic. Those who make such demands do so either out of confusion or from a reactionary, hostile position."

Reaction to the Western Media

The Czechoslovak media keep a watchful eye on how the Western press, radio and television report events in Poland. Listening in Czechoslovakia to Western radio broadcasts and, in parts of the country, to West German and Austrian television broadcasts, has been on the rise, compelling the regime to react.

Rudé právo on December 6, 1980, listed articles that had appeared in the West German press and commented that the West German media had been showing a "suspicious interest" in Poland's domestic affairs since the middle of 1980. It remarked that there had been a "striking similarity" between these articles and those published on the situation in Czechoslovakia in 1968. It singled out the reports published in Bayernkurier, Bild am Sonntag, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Frankfurter Rundschau, Der Spiegel, Süddeutsche Zeitung, and Die Welt.

A great deal of attention is also paid to United States media. Milan Jelínek, the Washington correspondent of Rudé právo, wrote about "the psychological warfare of imperialism against socialist Poland" in the newspaper's December 13 issue: "The machinery of the American media, equipped with the latest technology and with huge funds at their disposal, have been focusing their attention on Poland. . . . Television, dailies and magazines publish a flood of commentaries, speculation, half-truths, and lies. It is psychological warfare against Poland. . . . An American correspondent in Warsaw or some other Polish town stops people in the street, pre-

Telegrams from Czechoslovak Activists

Charter 77 sent the following telegram to the conference:

"We send our greetings to the signers of the Helsinki Final Act in Madrid. We expect that this session will contribute to peace and understanding among nations, and to responsibility and freedom for all citizens of the participating states. We wish you every success in striving for these goals.

Prague, November 10, 1980

Marie Hromádková, Charter 77 spokeswoman
Miloš Rejchrt, Charter 77 spokesman
Prof. Dr. Miroslav Kusý, member of the
collective of Charter 77 spokesmen"

Another cable received by the conference was sent on November 11 by Otta Bednářová, a signer of Charter 77 and a member of VONS (Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted), who was released from prison in late September (Czechoslovak Newsletter, Vol. V, No. 9/10 [September/October 1980], p. 11). In her telegram she asked for the conference's support for those jailed and persecuted in Czechoslovakia for their defense of human rights. She also expressed appreciation for the support she herself had been given during her ordeal by "good friends at home and abroad."

US Statement on Principle VII

R. Spencer Oliver, deputy chairman of the US delegation to the conference delivered a statement on Principle VII, Respect for Human Rights and Freedoms, on December 5. The following is an excerpt from it. After mentioning the names of persons persecuted in the Soviet Union, Oliver said:

"These are not merely names on a list of people who have been imprisoned for their beliefs. . . . They are human beings — and there are many others like them. . . . Sadly, these human tragedies are not confined to the USSR. In Czechoslovakia, members of Charter 77 Václav Benda, Jiří Dienstbier, Petr Uhl, Albert Černý, Václav Havel and others have also been arrested and imprisoned. The stated aim of Charter 77 was to call on the Czechoslovak government to observe its own contribution and its commitments under international agreements. Since 1977, Charter membership has grown to 1,000 people, including workers, young people and intellectuals. Rather than entering into a dialogue with those concerned Czechoslovak citizens, the government has undertaken a campaign of repression, including job expulsions, house searches, interrogations, arrests, and imprisonment. In response to such governmental actions, another citizens' group was organized, the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS).

"Over the past three years, over 1,000 documents on violations of human rights in Czechoslovakia have been issued by members of VONS and the Charter. Although there have been some instances in which charges have been dropped or when people were given suspended sentences, there

are continuing arrests and imprisonments of political activists in Czechoslovakia. Surely, Mr. Chairman, such governmental actions are in violation of Principle VII promises to promote the exercise of civil and political rights."

PRESS STATEMENT AT THE BUCHAREST CONGRESS

Acta Creationis: Czechoslovak Historians Remain Active

A group of eleven historians from six countries, led by Professor Thorolf Rafto of Norway, issued a joint press statement on August 15, 1980, at the Fifteenth International Congress of the Historical Sciences in Bucharest, Rumania (see Czechoslovak Newsletter, Vol. V, No. 9/10 [September/October 1980], p. 5), calling attention to a book published that month in the Federal Republic of Germany under the editorship of Vilém Prečan entitled Acta Creationis: Independent Historiography in Czechoslovakia, 1969-1980. This statement read: "We believe, as do all responsible historians, that freedom to think, to write, to publish, and to travel is essential for all historical work. We should therefore like to call your attention to a volume which contains a collection of essays by Czechoslovak historians supplemented by a bibliography of works completed but not published in Czechoslovakia since 1969."

Dr. Prečan, who was responsible for publication and distribution of the pamphlet, Acta Persecutionis, at the Fourteenth International Congress of the Historical Sciences in San Francisco in 1975, was forced to choose between prison in Czechoslovakia or exile for that action, which described the way in which the Czechoslovak government had dismissed many professional historians from their positions and forced them to undertake menial tasks after 1968. He now resides at Ferd. Wallbrecht Strasse 49, D-3000 Hannover in the Federal Republic of Germany. The splendid volume he has edited includes a bibliography of unpublished works which Czechoslovak historians have written "for the drawer" in the last twelve years, as well as six articles completed in Czechoslovakia on various aspects of Czechoslovak history from the fifteenth century until the 1970s and which Dr. Prečan has obtained for publication.

The scholars who signed the declaration included Professor Rafto, Professors William Chaloner and Ralph Henry Charles Davis of the United Kingdom, René N. Girault of France, Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Gotthold Rhode of the Federal Republic of Germany, Marina Thorborg of Sweden, and Robert F. Byrnes, Gordon Craig, and Albright G. Zimmerman of the United States.

Robert F. Byrnes
Distinguished Professor of History
Indiana University, Bloomington

NEWS FROM NORMALIZED CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Availability of Bibles

In the Czech Hussite weekly, Český zápas (Czech Struggle), No. 50 (December 21, 1980), a minister wrote: "These days all church organizations are selling the Bible in a new ecumenical translation. Not enough copies are available. . . . Many would like to give the new translation to their dear ones as a Christmas present. When they cannot get it at their own church, they turn to other rectories and other denominations. I have telephone calls every day from people asking for the Bible, but how can I satisfy them when my allocation has run out?"

Who Is a Good Communist?

Pravda (Truth), the Slovak Communist Party Central Committee's daily, on December 6, 1980, defined what it means to be a communist: "It means to be a step ahead, to be taller than others, . . . to take responsibility for the development of society, for problems at one's workplace, setting aside one's own problems, to take the lead where the struggle is taking place, and to be modest when success is celebrated. . . . [Communists] are not born like those with 'blue blood' in feudal society or like supermen in bourgeois society. They become communists during the course of their lives. They harden the communist qualities through work." But, Pravda complained, not all communists have such "altruistic and revolutionary" characters: "There are many comrades who become indolent. They seek to solve today's and tomorrow's problems by yesterday's means. . . . The source of a communist's optimism is not the daily vagaries of successes and problems, but a deeply ingrained conviction of the righteousness and ultimate victory of our struggle."

The First Year of the Seventh Five-Year Plan

Deputy Prime Minister Václav Hůla published a report on December 16 in Rudé právo (Red Right), the Czechoslovak party Central Committee's daily, on the draft economic plan for 1981, the first year of the Seventh Five-Year Plan. In 1981, he said, "a new situation" would need to be met with "resoluteness" and "professionalism," because "the reactionary forces of the world want to reverse international development by various means, including economic blackmail and discriminatory practices of the cold-war era. Frankly, we have to prepare for difficulties, to ask the people and leadership cadres to work better, with more discipline, conscientiousness, selflessness, honesty, and responsibility."

In the first year of the new plan, national income is to increase by 2.8%, compared with an average of 4.4% under the previous plan. Industrial growth is to slow down, to 0.7% in the case of the chemical industry, compared with the previous plan's average of 5.0%. Coal output is to increase by 2.8% to 27.8 million metric tons of bituminous coal and 95.5 million metric tons of lignite. Electric power output, including imported energy, will be some 77 billion kilowatt-hours; pig iron production will be over 10 million metric tons, and steel output up by 2.2% over 1980 to 15.7 million metric tons. Engineering industry output, to be given preference, is to increase by 5.5%, light industry by 2.5%, and farm production by 2.6% by intensive methods to offset labor losses to other economic sectors.