

CZECHOSLOVAK NEWSLETTER

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AFTER THE POLISH PARTY CONGRESS

The special congress of the Polish United Workers' (communist) party is over, but its outcome will haunt communist capitals.

It is unlikely that Czechoslovakia's workers will follow the example of Solidarity under present circumstances: they are much better off than their Polish counterparts. President Gustáv Husák's regime is doing its utmost to keep stores stocked with an acceptable supply of consumer goods (at the expense of badly needed modern equipment for Czechoslovakia's obsolete factories), while escalating the persecution of dissidents. But the hundred-year-old trade-union tradition is not dead. If Poland with Western support manages to put its economy in order and is able to withstand Soviet pressure, which will undoubtedly continue, the time may come when even the workers of Czechoslovakia will rise up, especially as economic conditions deteriorate, as is almost bound to happen. Czechoslovakia's workers ran riot in Plzeň in 1953; in 1968 there was the Prague Spring. Some day the shock waves from Poland's summer will ripple, not only through Czechoslovakia, but throughout the whole Soviet-dominated world, including the Soviet Union itself.

CZECHOSLOVAK COMMITTEE OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

The Council of Free Czechoslovakia has received a proclamation of the formation in Czechoslovakia of a Committee of Free Trade Unions. Here is the full text:

"As critical-minded citizens living in Czechoslovakia, we can no longer look on with indifference at the enormous shortcomings in our life and economy, the dishonesty, the lack of freedom, and the injustice. We have resolved to set up a preparatory committee of free trade unions. We wish to express our solidarity with all those citizens who, in spite of persecution, are trying to widen the range of free creativity, independent thought, exchange of information, and human dignity. We shall strive to broaden democratization by legal means; we shall base our efforts on the criticisms and legitimate complaints of citizens expressed in personal encounters, at election meetings, in factories and farm cooperatives, and at any other kind of gathering. Above all, we intend to defend workers' rights. Our society is seriously sick. It suffers from the rigidity of the political system, from its undemocratic character, and from corruption. It suffers from unqualified management and from stagnation in economic, scientific, technological and cultural development. It suffers from the impossibility of communicating freely and exchanging opinions. Our purpose is to restore society to health.

"We appeal to all critical-minded citizens, advocates of a truly free society, to seek ways to overcome our social shortcomings and to gain access to objective data that are not obscured by biased and deceptive information. We appeal to democratic organizations and like-minded individuals all over the world for their moral support. We can and will no longer tolerate lack of freedom, incompetence in management, lawlessness and license. We shall not be giving excuses for watching in indifference and silence while honest and courageous people are being persecuted.

"Step by step we must compel improvement in our public affairs even though present conditions are extremely unfavorable for this. We are not giving the names of our committee members at present: we shall do so under more propitious circumstances.

Committee of Free Trade Unions"

CRACKDOWN ON DISSIDENTS

Signs are that a new show trial is being prepared in Prague. At least sixteen dissidents were under orders to report to the authorities in Prague on July 7 to learn the results of investigations into their activities. These activists

were among more than thirty persons detained by the police at the beginning of May after the arrest of two French citizens at the Austro-Czechoslovak border for smuggling allegedly subversive literature into Czechoslovakia (see Czechoslovak Newsletter, Vol. VI, No. 5/6 [May/June 1981], p. 2). It is considered possible that Josef Hrodic, a spy who returned to Czechoslovakia from Austria in July (see p. 5), may play a part in an eventual trial.

Detained Dissidents Sentenced

Jiří Gruntorád, a 28-year-old construction worker, was sentenced in Prague on July 9 to four years in prison. He had been in jail since December 19, 1980, on charges of subversion of the republic by participating in the publication of Forum, a samizdat journal devoted mainly to sociology, philosophy and literature, and for distributing the "Brown Book," a collection of documents about the trial of two pop groups, the Plastic People of the Universe and DG 307.

Rudolf Battěk, a sociologist and Charter 77 spokesman who had already served 13 months' pretrial detention, was sentenced in Prague on July 28 to seven and a half years in prison followed by three years' police surveillance. Arrested on June 14, 1980 (see Czechoslovak Newsletter, Vol. VI, No. 4 [April 1981], p. 7), the authorities in January justified his extended detention on the ground that he was under investigation for subversion, a charge alleged pending since October 3, 1979. In September 1980 Battěk was ordered to undergo psychiatric testing to determine whether he was fit to stand trial. A hunger strike by himself, his wife Dagmar and fellow Chartists, a Charter 77 appeal to President François Mitterrand to intercede for him, petitions from the West, and even a resolution of the European Parliament all failed to sway the authorities in Prague.

Defense Counsel Penalized

Jan Černogurský, a Bratislava defense attorney, has been expelled from the Czechoslovak Lawyers' Association for his defense of Mrs. Drahomíra Šinglová of Strachotice (South Moravia) against charges of copying samizdat. While representing her at her trial, he had invoked the Helsinki Final Act. Černogurský, 37, who has four small children, now works as a delivery man. His wife is unable to work.

Western Protests

Amnesty International has sent an urgent appeal to President Gustáv Husák to reexamine Czechoslovak laws limiting freedom of information and to permit its representative to convey its objections to the Czechoslovak government. Enclosed with the appeal was a 17-page briefing paper containing documents on those imprisoned for their political or religious convictions. The paper, drawing on Charter 77 and Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted (VCNS) sources, also cited such cases as an attempt last year by two men to push a Charter 77 signer under an approaching subway train, the beating of a dissident in České Budějovice (South Bohemia), and such abuses as limited detention, house searches, electronic

eavesdropping, surveillance, discrimination at work, and loss of pension benefits.

Véronique Neiertz, national secretary of the French Socialist Party in charge of international affairs, visited M. Pudlák, the Czechoslovak ambassador in Paris, on July 16 to intercede on behalf of 17 Czechoslovak dissidents who have been indicted for "subversive activities," Le Monde reported on July 18. During her call she also discussed the case of Rudolf Battěk.

The European Parliament on July 18 adopted a resolution urging the Czechoslovak government to free arrested Czechoslovak dissidents. It requested Czechoslovakia to admit foreign journalists and observers from international human-rights organizations to any trials that may take place, and called for immediate release of Rudolf Battěk, Václav Havel, Petr Uhl, Jiří Dienstbier and Václav Beneš. Jiří Pelikán, a supporter of secretary General Alexander Dubček during the Prague Spring and now an Italian Socialist Party delegate to the European Parliament, presented Simone Weil, president of the Parliament, with a copy of the French edition of Eva Kantůrková's book Douze femmes de Prague (Paris: Petite collection Maspero, 1981). Kantůrková and several of the women interviewed in her book are now in jail. The original Czech edition was first published in samizdat in Prague and later by Index, of Cologne, West Germany

United States and other delegates at the Madrid review Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe condemned the Czechoslovak government's treatment of dissidents. Protest letters have also been signed by many prominent West Europeans, including Claude Bourdet, Jean Cassou, Vercors, Eugène Ionesco, Maurice Béjart, Simone Signoret, Nobel-Prize-winner André Lwoff, and Lionel Jospin, first secretary of President François Mitterrand's French Socialist Party.

The New York Times on July 10 published the following appeal on behalf of Václav Havel who was sentenced in Prague in October 1979 to five years in prison for his activities (see Czechoslovak Newsletter, Vol. IV, No. 11 [November 1979], p. 1):

"In 1979, the Czech dramatist Václav Havel was arrested in Prague for being a member of a 'subversive' organization, whose 'crimes against the state' consisted of publicizing cases of unjust accusations and prosecutions by the state police.

"Havel's plays have been performed in the United States, but they are better known throughout Europe, where he is regarded as a leading playwright. Because of his international reputation, the Government of Czechoslovakia offered to free him if he would go into exile. He courageously chose prison instead, because of his love for his country and its culture.

"Since Havel's trial, A.I.D.A. (Association Internationale de Défense des Artistes), along with P.E.N. International, has been working to make Havel's case known in Europe and the United States. Havel has now been in prison for two and a half years; he has been deprived of any opportunity to write, and his health is failing.

"The midpoint of Havel's sentence will arrive in August; at that

time, under Czech law, his sentence can be reconsidered. As fellow playwrights and concerned Americans, we ask the Czechoslovak Government to release Václav Havel and allow him to resume his contributions to Czech and universal culture.

Washington, D.C., July 2, 1981

Arthur Miller
Jack Gelber, Jules Feiffer
Ed Bullins, I. F. Stone
Arthur Kopit, Edward Albee"

SPY GOES HOME

Prague Radio announced on July 2 the return home of "an operative of the Czechoslovak intelligence service after successfully completing his assignment abroad." The "operative" was Josef Hodic, who had been in Vienna with his wife since 1977.

Born in 1924, Hodic received a doctorate of law at Charles University, Prague, in 1950, and worked at the Klement Gottwald Military Academy in Prague with the rank of lieutenant colonel until 1967. In 1968 he worked briefly in the defense department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, became involved in the reform movement of 1968, and was expelled from the party in 1970. He then had a job as a pest exterminator and was among the first to sign Charter 77. In November 1977 he and his wife emigrated to Vienna, leaving behind two married daughters with children. Granted Austrian citizenship after only two years, Hodic worked in the Austrian Institute of Foreign Affairs in Laxenburg, outside Vienna, and wrote a study of the military-political view of the Czechoslovak army between 1948 and 1968.

It is hard to say whether Hodic was sent to Austria as a spy, or whether he was recruited, or even blackmailed into it, later. Be that as it may, Prague is portraying him as a master spy to prove the efficiency of its intelligence service, and to scare dissidents at home and political exiles abroad. There is no way to prevent the communist security organs from using Hodic for its propaganda purposes, and as a witness in an eventual trial of dissidents to their "subversive contacts" with exiles.

At a press conference in Prague on July 15 Hodic revealed nothing that was not already known publicly, and trotted out the usual accusations against political émigrés of all stripes who work for Western "diversionist centers." The only ominous part of his "revelations" was a claim that "arms shipments disguised as food deliveries are planned to be sent to Poland from a neighboring country" with the help of Czechoslovak and Polish émigrés, and that representatives of Poland's Solidarity independent labor movement "were informed of this matter during a visit to Switzerland." This smacks a little too much of the "discovery of arms caches" allegedly smuggled into Czechoslovakia by "West German revanchists" on the eve of the Warsaw Pact invasion of 1968.

of the 1981-1985 period [the Seventh Five-Year Plan] will not be easy." To intensify the "reproduction process," he urges higher efficiency and labor of a better quality.

"Past results do not show that any change has taken place. Consumption of raw materials and energy has been higher than planned. Energy input is 50 percent greater than in advanced industrial countries. Our weak spots are the inefficient use of raw materials, and the low effectiveness of capital investments," he states.

"The Main Directions of Economic and Social Development" envisages a better application of science and technology, and greater initiative on the job. But Hruškovič points out: "Further increases in the supply of materials, fuel, and energy will not be at the same rate as in the past. Speculation that we shall obtain more crude oil, gas, iron ore, etc. are unrealistic." Iron-ore imports from the Soviet Union, he reminds his readers, are to remain at the 1980 level throughout the 1981-1985 period, and are not expected to increase until after 1985. Additional supplies can be obtained on capitalist markets, but only for scarce hard currency. "Better use of science and technology is the key to social and economic betterment. The party has been discussing their more efficient use since 1974, but this has not yet resulted in higher economic growth. . . . We cannot be satisfied that in Slovakia new production accounted for only six percent of the total under the Sixth Five-Year Plan [1976-1980]. Equally unsatisfactory was its quality: approximately 76 percent of production was of secondary quality; only 19.4 percent was prime [and] a great deal of this latter still could not be marketed abroad because it did not come up to standard."

Turning to labor problems, Hruškovič notes that greater efficiency is needed in the 1981-1985 period because the increase in the labor pool will be only half as great as it had been in the previous five-year period. "It is disturbing that a necessary change in economic thinking and in the approach to solving problems has not yet penetrated the consciousness and actions of either the people or the executive organs." He exhorts communists to be in the forefront in mastering "the difficult tasks of improving efficiency in every economic sphere," especially at the management level.

The seriousness of the economic problems to be faced was probably what prompted changes in the personnel of the central organs of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Following the party's Sixteenth Congress in April, Josef Kempný was relieved of his post as a secretary of the Central Committee Secretariat and a member of the party's Economic Commission, though he retains his full membership of the party Presidium. He was given a second-level appointment as chairman of the Czech National Council. The new head of the Economic Commission is Miloš Jakeš, a full member of the party Presidium and a secretary of the Central Committee Secretariat. Václav Hůla remains a full member of the party Presidium, but lost his job as chairman of the State Planning Commission to Svatopluk Potáč.

Whenever things go wrong, a time-honored system comes into play: blame the functionaries, for the party and the system can never be wrong.

WRITERS AND ARTISTS IN A STRAIT JACKET

Many leading writers and artists left Czechoslovakia following the Warsaw Pact invasion of the country in August 1968. Those who stayed behind were forbidden to publish, perform, or exhibit. Some of them are now in jail (for the circumstances of Czech literature, see also Czechoslovak Newsletter, Vol. IV, No. 9/10 [September/October 1979], p. 6). With few exceptions, those still working in Czechoslovakia are second-rate, pedestrian scrawlers and daubers, and party hacks who hew to the line of "real socialism," in exchange for a comfortable life and permission to travel. The real writers and artists have either ceased to produce, or publish in samizdat (Padlock editions) or abroad. Only officially approved art may appear in public (although some "unofficial" art has been permitted to be shown abroad for propaganda purposes).

Rudé právo (Red Right), the daily of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, published a commentary on March 17 on the state of literature: "According to certain Western sources, two kinds of literature exist in the socialist countries — the official and the unofficial. Unofficial literature is supposed to be circulated in laboriously prepared, typewritten copies. According to some experts, there are probably more writers than copyists and readers. Five centuries after Gutenberg, they have to transcribe their works not because of their doubtful quality, but for a more serious reason: it is claimed that if such works were published, they might topple the socialist order. . . . Unofficial literature is not hallowed by its readers, but by those who have elevated it into an instrument of ideological diversion."

Yet "unofficial literature" is flourishing. Some novels by blacklisted writers now living in the West have been translated into many languages and been acclaimed by critics. The Book of Laughter and Forgetting by Milan Kundera, for instance, has become a best seller in several countries. Works in Czech written by authors either in Czechoslovakia or living in the West are published by several émigré publishers: Archa, Arkýř, Index, and PmD in West Germany; Konfrontation in Switzerland; Skauted in the Netherlands; Accademia Cristiana in Rome; 68 Publishers in Canada; the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences in the United States; Czech records are put out by Šafran in Sweden. Slovak books are published by Poľana in Switzerland, the Slovak Institute in Italy and the United States, and the Slovak Jesuit Fathers in Canada. Subjects range from poetry and fiction to social and political studies. The publishers are supported by the Czech and Slovak communities all over the world. Their books also reach readers in Czechoslovakia, where single copies circulate from hand to hand until they fall to pieces from use.

In April Rudé právo had this to say about art: "We are confronted by so-called official and unofficial art. [This phenomenon] was already known in the 60s [in the thaw preceding the Prague Spring], when right-wing opportunist theoreticians derided social realism, which was labeled official, . . . and helped to glorify bourgeois ethics and esthetics, . . . blind subjectivity, mysticism, cynicism, destruction, despair, and gloom." It went on: "Western antisocialist centers" and radio stations praise the so-called unofficial art of socialist countries and "speak openly of dissident art," whose practitioners are portrayed as martyrs and

heroes. "It is no secret that many 'martyrs' live from funds supplied through various channels from the West. Let us mention, for instance, the so-called dissident Biennale of Venice of a few years ago. Exhibits were staged in the United States and other bourgeois countries under the unauthorized title 'Czechoslovak Art'."

"One should not overestimate the activities of these individuals in Prague and elsewhere here, but neither should one underestimate them," Rudé právo warns. "Their 'unofficial' art is antiesthetic, antiethical, and contrary to the ideals of our society and the principles of socialist culture, seeking links with Western 'novelty' and its hostile ideology."

CAPTIVE NATIONS WEEK

The following is an abridgment of a proclamation issued by President Ronald Reagan:

"Twenty-two years ago, by a joint resolution approved July 17, 1959, (73 Stat. 212), the Congress authorized and requested the President to proclaim the third week in July as Captive Nations Week. . . .

"During Captive Nations Week, Americans should realize our devotion to the ideal of government by consent, a devotion that is shared by millions who live in nations dominated today by a foreign military power and an alien Marxist-Leninist ideology.

"This week Americans should recall the series of historical tragedies — beginning with the broken promises of the Yalta Conference — that led to the denial of the most elementary forms of personal freedom and human dignity to millions in Eastern Europe and Asia. . . .

"During Captive Nations Week, we Americans must reaffirm our own tradition of self-rule and extend to the peoples of the Captive Nations a message of hope — hope founded in our belief that free men and women will ultimately prevail over those who deny individual rights and preach the supremacy of the state; hope in our conviction that the human spirit will ultimately triumph over the cult of the state. . . .

"Now, therefore, I, Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate the week beginning on July 19, 1981, as Captive Nations Week."

LETTER TO PRESIDENT FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND

Mojmír Povolný, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia, has sent a letter of congratulation to François Mitterrand on his election as President of France. The letter expresses the hope that the defense of human rights and civil liberties will continue to be an integral part of French foreign policy and that, as in the past, the new president will support every effort to improve the situation in Czechoslovakia. "The communist regime in Czechoslovakia," it said, "has not destroyed the will of the people to be free again. . . . It is in the interest of France that Central and Eastern Europe is not buried under a modern version of the Peace of Westphalia — cuius regio eius religio. . . . We hope that the French government will give its support to those in Czechoslovakia who under the most difficult conditions continue to fight for their rights." The letter points out that France was one of the signatories of the Helsinki Final Act that insisted on the incorporation of humanitarian considerations into the agreement. It concludes by expressing the hope that the government of France will maintain a positive attitude toward the Czechoslovak political exiles who, inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution, are working for the return of democracy to their homeland.

NEWS FROM NORMALIZED CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Afghan Leader in Czechoslovakia

Babrak Karmal, head of the state, government, party and armed forces of Afghanistan, arrived with a national delegation in Prague on June 23 at the invitation of Gustáv Husák, president of the republic and secretary general of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. As a culmination to the visit, a 25-year treaty of friendship and cooperation was signed between the two countries, with an automatic 10-year extension if neither contracting party cancels it 12 months before its expiry. An agreement on legal assistance was also signed, and one on the mutual recognition of scientific degrees. Afghanistan is evidently already regarded as part of the Soviet empire. Czechoslovakia is Afghanistan's second largest trading partner after the Soviet Union.

Increase of Czechoslovak Economic Dependence on the USSR

The planned turnover value of goods to be traded between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union in the period from 1981 to 1985 has been increased from 40,000 million rubles to 50,000 million. This will be a 68.7 percent increase over the period from 1976 to 1980, when turnover value was 29,100 million rubles. The increase may be partly attributable to a new pricing method, but it is undoubtedly part of Moscow's scheme to augment both its East European client states' economic and their political dependence.

Deputy Federal Prime Minister Rudolf Rohlíček, in an interview on June 15 with ČTK, the Czechoslovak news agency, put the value of Czechoslovakia's contribution to Comecon integration projects over the last ten years at 800 million transferable rubles. Among the projects in which Czechoslovakia has been participating is the 1,747-mile Soyuz natural-gas pipeline from Orenburg to the Soviet western border, a 535-mile power line from Vinnitsa in the central Ukraine to Hungary, and two nuclear power stations in Khmel'nitskiy and Konstantinovka in the Ukraine.