

F.C.I.

Free Central European News Agency . . . . . Publishers of "Czechoslovak Weekly"

G.P.O. Reg. No. 140

Information Service of Free Czechoslovakia . . . . . Cables: TRUTHINFO London, W.10

Managing Editor: J. Josten

Registered in England No. 541226 . . . . . \* VAT registration No. 230 13 60

437 Regent Road, London, W10 9IG Telephone: ~~Ansafone~~ : 270 1410

Vol. XXX No. 2/1377

\* \* Founded in 1948 \* \*

15. 2.1978

SPECIAL ARTICLE No. 1054/5 (FCI) CS(S)R FROM FEBRUARY 1948 TILL AUGUST 1968 AND ON...

FROM COMMUNIST PUTSCH TO SOVIET PROTECTORATE

(ANATOMY OF A SEVEN DAYS' WONDER-1968)

By Josef Josten, London

In order to understand what happened in Czechoslovakia in August 1968, it is necessary to cast one's mind back to the origins of the Communist takeover in Prague, in February 1948. In fact, all the developments in East-Central Europe since the end of World War II are nothing but the recurrence of Czarist paranoia towards Russia's Western neighbours. A politically, culturally or economically retarded society cannot tolerate the proximity of a more progressive government with higher standards of living, greater freedoms and better general education, as typified by the situation which prevailed in democratic Czechoslovakia. Hence the 1947 order to the Soviet-sponsored Cominform to prepare and carry out the penetration, subversion and final overthrow of the Edvard Benes regime in Prague by a coup d'état on February 25, 1948.

LET US MAKE NO MISTAKE: at the time of the 1948 takeover, the country was already socialist in practice, though still to a great degree democratic, humanitarian and economically independent. That was intolerable, so everything had forcibly to be razed into "equality".

Twenty years of Stalinist and neo-Stalinist order followed, while at the same time, in countries like Poland, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia, Soviet rule or influence went through tumultuous developments ranging from uprisings, such as the one which was drowned in blood in Hungary, to a determined disengagement from the Warsaw Pact by Yugoslavia. In Czechoslovakia, where the rule of Soviet Gauleiters was the most oppressive, the opposition was mainly intellectual. It broke the Communist facade for the first time in a significant way during the Writers' Union Congress in summer 1967, where fiery speeches were heard and suppressed. Nevertheless, this opened the door to further expressions of discontent and protests by students and workers alike. It culminated, in January 1968, in the rise to power of Alexander Dubcek. Then came the Czechoslovak Spring, followed by the invasion of the five Warsaw Pact nations, occupation and "normalisation". As late as June 1977, a new dimension of the 1967/8 drama came to light which can be described as a major blunder committed by Leonid Brezhnev and which made the Soviet autumn intervention in 1968 inevitable.

When the German military review, "Conflict Studies", invited me to write an analysis of the nation's, or rather the people's, reaction to the Soviet intervention, with 4,000 tanks and half-a-million soldiers against a seemingly defenceless country, it was not difficult to suggest that we were witnessing a classic example of a development in which words became weapons. Effective weapons. So effective that they caused a great deal of discomfort to the Soviet command, which was caught unprepared, often became helpless, and earned ridicule to a degree almost unprecedented in modern warlike situations.

There already exists a huge corpus of literature on the events of 1948 and 1968 and their aftermath, surpassing in fact all that has been written about the Munich tragedy suffered by the same nation exactly forty years ago. It may still be some time before a definitive volume is produced exhausting all aspects of the Prague confrontation with the Moscow centre of Communist imperialism, and allowing us to absorb the full lesson of those events. In a study called "Unarmed Combat", I have made it my task to record most of the available material and reports depicting the popular, unarmed opposition at all levels of the society under attack, to the dastardly SOVBLOC invasion, which adds a fourth dimension to any military operation known as psychological warfare. It is here that the Soviets were caught napping by the Czechs, while at the same time the Western Powers, mainly represented by NATO, had given psychological warfare up almost altogether, having demobilised and disarmed themselves. \*) Also: Conflict Studies No 86: "Czechoslovakia from 1968 to Charter 77."

Now, ten years later, a close look at this aspect of the 1968 military operation, the largest undertaken in Europe since the end of World War II, reveals a number of blunders by the Soviet and the old Czechoslovak Communist leadership. Thus, we can also dispose of some misconceptions in Western thinking.

FIRST OF ALL, WE HAVE TO RECOGNISE that Alexander Dubcek's move was /MORE

not anti-Communist. He simply applied the truth of a slogan coined by President Zapo-  
tocky, one of his predecessors in leadership, who used to say: "You cannot go the  
old way!". Novotny's Stalinist methods which led to every kind of administrative brut-  
ality, were no longer acceptable in a developing situation, even in a Communist ruled  
country, thus: "Communism with a human face". Secondly, there was the lesson of the  
illiterate suppression of information imposed upon a highly literate people. When the  
speeches and even the Resolution of the 1967 Writers' Congress were banned from publica-  
tion, a group of individuals smuggled abroad the so-called "Writers' Manifesto". I  
was charged with publicising it in the West. Back in Czechoslovakia it provoked a  
barrage of press, radio and television attacks, and people were asked to condemn some-  
thing they had never read. Such public reaction was catastrophic for the Novotny regime.  
We know now exactly ten years later, in connection with Charter 77, that the present  
Soviet-installed occupation regime forgot everything and learned nothing.

From the Soviet point of view, the number of blunders committed during the  
Czechoslovak campaign was catastrophic. Some can be easily and directly traced to the  
Party Secretary (now also President), Leonid Brezhnev, who, in a difficult situation  
was more often than not guided by personal animosity towards President Antonin Novotny,  
a Khrushchev appointee, than by the needs of the local developments. Novotny's value  
to the USSR was, that during his 13 years of office he kept the country under his heel,  
or, in other words, preserved a peace of sorts. When he rightly recognised that only  
resolute action could keep him in power, he prepared to carry out a ruthless purge nec-  
essitating the arrest of all his opponents, including the more liberal opposition in-  
side the Party, government and administration, and including the army and the police.  
Brezhnev then stepped in and, for comparatively trivial reasons of his own, stopped him.  
In a nutshell, the intended purge and potential liquidation, which never took place, of  
an alternative leadership which included Alexander Dubcek, Josef Smrkovsky, Frantisek  
Kriegel, General Pichlik, economist Ota Sik, and more than one thousand others, laid  
open the gates to the flood of the Prague Spring.

THE OTHER MAJOR DEFEAT of truly historic proportions, was the absolute and  
irrevocable loss - as a result of the Warsaw Pact invasion - of the final remnants of  
any sympathy of the Czechoslovak people for their Slav brothers. This was well ex-  
pressed in one of the many slogans which appeared during the post-invasion days thr-  
oughout the country and which said: "We lost five brothers but found the whole world".  
The inclusion of the East German army into the invasion force, of necessity recalled  
memories of the Nazi invasion of 1939, and only demonstrated the low IQ of the military  
planners. It must also be pointed out that the split of the Communist movement res-  
ulting from the aggression against an allegedly Communist country (in fulfilment of the  
Brezhnev Doctrine) gave rise to so-called Euro-Communism. It alienated especially the  
Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese Communist leadership from Moscow. This will  
sooner or later affect Brezhnev in the same way as the catastrophic Cuban adventure and ab-  
ortive agricultural policy destroyed Khrushchev.

INCAPABLE OF ANY IMMEDIATE ACTION in 1968, the West was at least shaken in  
its neglect of the military strength of the North Atlantic Alliance and thus a new  
lease of life was injected into NATO. The myth of real detente, dangerous to the  
core, has suffered at least a ten-year set-back, long enough to be extended by a dis-  
passionate evaluation of the fulfilment of the Helsinki accord by the Soviet, which in  
all the Satellite countries is having similar effects to the events of August 1968.  
In this context one must not forget the reaction in two Communist-ruled countries, viz.  
Romania and Yugoslavia, whose leaders first expressed sympathy with Dubcek and then,  
after his regime was liquidated, they set up their own military defences against pos-  
sible Soviet invasion. Only a despot of Brezhnev's calibre and his immediate entour-  
age can survive such signal errors.

As far as the continued internal developments in Czechoslovakia are concerned,  
a number of major points should be considered.

There are now in existence no less than three Communist Parties: one under  
Dubcek's successor, Dr. Gustav Husak, Party Secretary and President, who remains in  
power thanks to the presence of the Soviet occupying divisions, and is politically tot-  
ally subservient to Moscow's rule, being despised by the overwhelming majority of the  
Czech and Slovak peoples. Furthermore, inside the country, there is a vast and as yet  
not well-organised Communist opposition held together by the image of the "Spring"  
leadership of Dubcek-Kriegel-Hajek, the latter being also the last of the three spokes-  
men of "Charter 77". Finally there is the Communist Party in exile, with men like  
Pelikan and Sik at its head, supported mainly by the Italian Communist Party and enjoy-  
ing considerable sympathy among the French Communists.

A GESTURE: Also, we must not overlook the lasting impact of Jan Palach's  
gesture of self-immolation on the young generation who are solidly opposed to Moscow-  
directed, doctrinaire Communism and who now actively support the new Chartist /MORE

PUZZLING PRESS SUCCESS STORY

by Peter Worthington, Editor, Toronto Sun.

(Ottawa/FCI) - One of the remarkable and puzzling journalistic success stories of our times is that of Wilfred Burchett, once a top foreign correspondent with the London Daily Express (the first eye-witness account of atom bomb devastation at Hiroshima) who switched to the communist side and has been their apologist for nearly 30 years.

Before he exposed himself (in a manner of speaking) he covered "big" international stories such as the trial of Hungary's Cardinal Mindszenty in 1949. Burchett was the only non-resident Westerner permitted in the court. At the time he reported that accounts of torture, drugs and extracted confessions were "rubbish" and that the Cardinal was a "miserable, intriguing, ambitious little man...".

IN THE KOREAN WAR Burchett was the main dispenser of germ warfare propaganda and was involved in extracting, editing, fabricating confessions from British, American and Aussie prisoners of war.

In the Vietnam war he was on the North's side and did what he could to ensure victory for the communists. In 1963 one Yuri Krotkov defected from the KGB and told a US Senate subcommittee that he first met Burchett in Berlin after the war, and that he had recruited Burchett into KGB service. He also testified that Burchett had once suggested blackmailing an American air force general who had married journalist Marguerite Higgins, with whom Burchett allegedly claimed to have had an affair.

One would think with that record, Wilfred Burchett would be a pariah (or at least a leper) among respectable journalists. But no. During the Vietnam war Burchett was an oft-used source of expertise. He was a favourite of CBC radio's *As It Happens*, which ran his views without ever identifying his background, sympathies, reputation. Small wonder CBC is often accused of slanted coverage!

WHEN HARRISON SALISBURY of the New York Times was allowed to visit Hanoi and wrote articles that won him a Pulitzer Prize - and criticism for regurgitating Hanoi's statistics and interpretations without question - he never mentioned that his guide and companion was Wilfred Burchett. Some claim that Salisbury's articles were the turning point of American support against that war - the first war ever lost in the news columns of the New York Times.

When Secretary of State Kissinger and President Nixon were negotiating to visit Peking, one of their go-betweens and "experts" was Wilfred Burchett, who once breakfasted at the White House, even though as an enemy of the country he was prohibited from entering the US without special dispensation. Few of the media showed interest in him then - as they show little interest now.

In November-December Burchett scored his greatest coup. He made a coast-to-coast speaking tour of the US which, according to a State Department spokesman, is in accord with the US policy of supporting "the freest possible flow of information and people", regardless of viewpoints.

THE DECISION OFFENDED SOME - notably ex-prisoners of war who had been harassed, threatened, tortured in Burchett's name. Most of the media yawned in disinterest. The New York Post was one that took exception and ran a series of articles detailing Burchett's background. It was a devastating series, undoubtedly done because the Post's publisher, Rupert Murdoch, is Australian and familiar with Burchett's record.

In other times Burchett would not have got such favoured treatment from American officialdom, but would have faced war crimes charges had he set foot in America. When the Post arranged to have ex-POWs confront Burchett, he denied allegations and pretended not to remember. Audiences were unsure as to who was telling the truth.

Unmentioned was a libel trial in Australia in 1974 when Burchett sued one Senator Jack Kane in efforts to have his confiscated Australian passport returned, his name cleared and the slate wiped clean. His sponsor was Jack Cairns, deputy prime minister in Gough Whitlam's since-rejected Labour government!

SOME OF THESE SAME EX-POWs came to Australia to testify - notably former US Air Force Colonel Walter Mahurin, a highly decorated "ace", and ex-Lt. Paul Kniss, both of whom had germ warfare confessions extracted from them. And there was the most impressive witness of all - Private Derek Kinne, formerly of Britain's Northumberland Fusiliers and now a Tucson businessman, who'd defied Burchett in Korean prison camps and whom Burchett threatened to have shot. As punishment for defying Burchett (who wore a Chinese uniform), the Chinese tortured Kinne. For his fortitude and courage Kinne was awarded the George Cross - equivalent of the VC.

The extraordinary thing was that when the State Department was confronted/MORE



with Burchett's record, an attempt was made to whitewash him. Reed Irvine, editor of an establishment and media irritant, Accuracy in Media (AIM), asked questions at a news briefing. State spokesman Hodding Carter III said there was no proof that Burchett had been a KGB agent and stated categorically that Burchett had won his Australian libel case when, indeed, he had lost it (to the tune of \$100,000).

THIS CLAIM was supported later by another State Department official, Tom Reston, who denied any knowledge of the case. There is special irony because the Washington Post of November 2, 1974, carried a full story with the heading "Australian Journalist Loses Libel Case". So there is no excuse for the State Department claiming ignorance.

What is particularly upsetting about America letting Burchett in for the "free flow of ideas and people" is that US denied permission for moderate Rhodesian blacks to enter the country to present a view that differs from the guerrilla viewpoint.

And the Dalai Lama, always friendly to the West (and a victim of Chinese imperialism), was told it would be "inconvenient" for him to visit America at this time. So much for a free flow of those ideas and people. And so it goes. It seems the double moral standard is thriving in the White House and State Department just as it thrives in the Canadian Prime Minister's Office and in the Department of External Affairs.

COPYRIGHT: FCI/JW. For reproduction rights contact FCI, 43, Tregunter Road, London, SW 10 9LG. Telephone 01 373 9410; Cables: TRUTHINFO London SW 10.

FROM COMMUNIST PUTSCH TO SOVIET PROTECTORATE (continued)

movement. During the period of the so-called "normalisation", some 350- to 400,000 real or nominal (in the cause of economic survival) Communists were purged from the Party and demoted. They increased the flood of escapees which has by now reached the figure of almost one-hundred thousand. This is depriving the country, its economy, culture, education, administration and even sport, of irreplaceable individuals, thus producing a brain drain which results especially in an incompetent industrial management, which will take a long time to make up.

The summing up of the situation which now prevails in Czechoslovakia has been aptly provided by the official mouthpiece of the ruling Party, which in June 1977 issued the following warning: "Those who lie on the rails to stop the train of history, must expect to have their legs cut off." - Whose legs?

J. Josten

COPYRIGHT FCI. For reproduction rights contact: FCI, 43, Tregunter Road, London, SW10 9LG. Telephone 01 373 9410; Cables: TRUTHINFO London SW 10.

P L E A S E   N O T E :

(Editorial Office/London) - Due to the EDITOR's impending departure for an extended stay in North and South America, it will not be possible to produce the MARCH ISSUE of FCI next month. Normal publication will resume in April. In accordance with our present plans, the frequency of issues will be increased. \* There will be unavoidable delay in dealing with personal correspondence. \* WE COUNT ON THE UNDERSTANDING OF OUR SUBSCRIBERS who will find that the results of our reorganisation which is now in progress, will serve well our common cause. It will bring our press work to the forefront of attention. On this development we hope to report fully in the April issue. \* In view of our major report/in this issue, we trust that our Subscribers will realise that FCI's contribution to the free flow of UNCENSORED AND ABSOLUTELY INDEPENDENT PRESS INFORMATION is more important now than it has ever been before.