

PR AVDA VITEZI!

Bulletin of the Committee
to defend
Czechoslovak Socialists

The Committee to defend Czechoslovak Socialists has been formed in solidarity with those who are being persecuted in Czechoslovakia because of political activity as socialists and communists. We are concerned with what happens to these men and women, not only as individuals whose constitutional rights are at stake, but as fighters for a cause which is that of all Czechoslovak working people. We believe that those who endanger the socialist cause today are not those who are the target of repression in Czechoslovakia, but those who instigate and conduct this repression. The committee will seek to disseminate information throughout Britain, especially within the labour movement, about the struggle of socialists in Czechoslovakia and to express and organise support for their struggle.

PRAVDA VITEZI

TRUTH WILL PREVAIL

Bulletin issued by the Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists

The purpose of this bulletin is to give information about Czechoslovak affairs to the British labour and socialist movements and others who may be interested, in view of the current difficulty in obtaining information from Czechoslovakia. It will use both published sources and information from unofficial sources inside Czechoslovakia.

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Patrick Camiller
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Tamara Deutscher
Peggy Duff
Christopher Farley
Margaret Gardener
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Czechoslovak Socialists

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The response to our previous issues has demonstrated that there is profound concern over the fate of socialism in Czechoslovakia.

We urge readers to give a practical expression of their concern by taking out a subscription and sending a donation so that the Bulletin may continue its efforts to ensure that truth does indeed prevail.

Please fill in the tear-off slip below and send it with your cheque or postal order made out to Committee to Defend Czechoslovak Socialists, to:

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THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT OF CZECHOSLOVAK CITIZENS

surveys the situation five years after

Five years ago, on 21 August 1968, troops from the five Warsaw Pact countries entered our country. This military intervention was intended to halt the revival of Czechoslovak society which itself had stemmed from a realisation that general and comprehensive development was dependant on profound, albeit gradual, changes in many aspects of our communal life. Furthermore, such changes would be essential for Czechoslovakia, an advanced and cultural European country, to do no more than keep in step with the revolution in science, technology and culture, quite apart from the question of implementing the socialist and democratic programme which the majority of the Czechs and Slovaks supported. Most important of such changes were democratisation and the provision of legal guarantees of fundamental civil rights and freedom.

In recent years, the Socialist Movement of Czechoslovak Citizens has frequently stated its attitude to the August intervention and the effect this has had on our national life and on international relations. We have repeatedly condemned the crimes and the ignorance of the present regime, the dismissal and harassment of those whose political views fail to conform, the political trials, the systematic destruction of Czechoslovak culture and the paralysing of public life. Nothing has changed in our attitude to these political practices. Nor, alas, has there been any change for the better in our public and political life.

But the world has changed considerably during the past five years. The war in Vietnam has been halted as a result of negotiations between all the interested parties. New relationships are being created in Europe through the conclusion of treaties between the USSR, Poland and West Germany and the recognition by mutual agreement of the reality of two German states. A settlement between Czechoslovakia and West Germany, based on recognition of the nullity of the Munich Agreement, is being prepared. The visit of the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party to the United States has led to an improvement in the relations between the two strongest world powers. The many international negotiations, the successful opening of the conference on European security and cooperation and on the reduction of nuclear forces in Central Europe are all clear indications of a turn away from cold war towards the easing of tension and peaceful co-existence. A system of guarantees is being built up in Europe which should in future exclude any method of solving conflicts other than negotiation. This policy is in the interests of the Czechoslovak people, whose existence as a nation and as a state has always been entirely dependent on good international relations - it may indeed be said that Czechoslovakia lies at the centre of European problems.

If no genuine solution is found for the Czechoslovak question, Czechoslovakia will by its stagnation and the paralysis of its internal development constantly poison the atmosphere in Europe and throughout the world. It will constitute an obstacle to confidence among the countries of Europe and the world powers. The Czechoslovak question will continue to divide the international communist movement and will contribute to the division of anti-imperialist forces.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHANGE

The Czechoslovak problem can, of course, be solved or left unsolved; it can be relegated ad acta. Today all issues are global and interconnected. Five years is sufficient time for reason to replace passion, for a sober attitude to supersede recrimination, for responsibility to replace mere concern for prestige, for arguments about the causes and the consequences of past events, about what would have happened "if...", to be halted in favour of practical, patient efforts to make good the damage caused by recent years to the internal life of Czechoslovakia and her relations with other countries, especially with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.

Three years ago, in a statement of policy by the Socialist Movement of Czechoslovak Citizens, we declared good neighborly relations and alliance with the Soviet Union, our biggest neighbour and a world power of first rank, to be essential.

It is still true that it will be necessary to overcome the negative and indiscriminating attitude of the majority of our people to the USSR. The reasons for this attitude are understandable, but being purely emotional and hence unconstructive, it cannot lead to a positive solution. Moreover, it is an attitude to a certain line of Soviet policy as it was manifested five years ago. But we cannot change this attitude.

However, a gradual change can be brought about if the Soviet leadership shows in some way, in the spirit of its present policy - perhaps less in words and more in deeds - that it wishes, and also considers it beneficial for itself, to make good the consequences of 21 August 1968.

In the new international situation, this alternative is entirely possible. Within the socialist camp the leading representatives of the forces holding back the advance of peaceful policies are now out of political life - people like Shelest, Ulbricht, Gamulka. Only in Czechoslovakia is a group composed, for the most part, of those who masked their own bankruptcy and inability to adapt to change by declaring socialism to be threatened, clinging desperately to power. It is also common knowledge that these people have tried hard, and are still trying, to hold back any positive changes at home and in Europe; even so important a step as the settlement of relations with Federal Germany had to be forced through against their will.

NEW INTERNATIONAL ATMOSPHERE

However, the new international atmosphere strengthens the awareness that good neighbourly relations and alliance cannot be ensured by military presence nor by a handful of unprincipled protegés trying to deceive themselves, their allies and the world at large. We repeat that such relations can be assured only by a society of free and aware citizens, who can have no other interest than this.

In this new atmosphere, then, it is essential that an end be put to the situation where hundreds of thousands in our country are second- or third-class citizens who, to the detriment of the entire community, do not possess the right to work according to their abilities and their knowledge, who are

humiliated and harassed by the power of the state and whose children have no right to full education. Their return by degrees to full participation in the economic, scientific, cultural and political life of Czechoslovakia would be of enormous benefit to our country. This by no means implies that all those who have taken their places would have to leave, that revenge would be taken and the vicious circle of persecution and recrimination start anew. All posts must be filled by those best equipped to benefit their fellow citizens, their country and socialism.

Such a policy could not, however, win confidence and support while people jailed merely for criticising the present regime remain in prison. Czechoslovakia must not be listed with Spain, Portugal and Greece as a country where communists, socialists and democrats are imprisoned.

It is also necessary to deal with the serious problems confronting the Czechoslovak economy. Today we are still reaping the fruits of the wave of investment during the second half of the 1960s. Beneath the seemingly healthy surface, the consequences of a technological lag are already becoming apparent. The main reason for this is the exclusion of tens of thousands of skilled specialists and the suppression of all initiative except that imposed from above. Investment in projects with no future and the return to the outdated system of command management of the entire economy are other factors.

The crisis in sales of consumer durables - cars, refrigerators, television and radio sets etc, which are also being ousted from the home market by products from other socialist countries, usually manufactured under licence from the West, is a forewarning of troubles throughout the economy. Before losses reach enormous proportions, it is necessary to speedily renew the search for methods of management suited to Czechoslovak conditions and to the level of our economic development, and to use all mechanisms which can help towards progress.

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Economic integration is an essential factor in economic development today. To oppose this trend at a time when the USSR and the USA are planning joint projects for industrial enterprises in the interest of both countries would be an outdated anachronism. A course needs to be followed, however, which ensures that no country should suffer and that the benefits of economic association should be felt by the public both as producers and consumers.

Moreover, Czechoslovakia must be in a position, as the other socialist countries are today, to join in economic and scientific cooperation with the advanced capitalist countries in the interests of her own economy and of developing cooperation in Europe.

We are aware that the problems that have accumulated over the years cannot be solved at a stroke. We repudiate those who want to solve nothing because, apart from persecuting others, they are capable of nothing. But neither can we agree with those who set maximalistic demands, who want everything at once and who see useful compromises as the betrayal of ideals. We are convinced that any solution, even a partial one, of our problems is better than none, insofar, of course, as it is not an end in itself but a means towards creating a better atmosphere of mutual understanding and appreciation of the problems

of others. When changes are seen in this way, the solving of one problem must lead to solving others.

But the events of 1968 and everything that has followed, have left too deep a scar on the political and moral consciousness of our people. To heal it, neither words nor any superficial measures will suffice. What is required is a genuine attempt to tackle all the fundamental problems. Failing this, the internal disruption of our society will persist, and will paralyse the efforts of all who wish to work to this end.

Czechoslovakia, a land of highly developed culture, could within a few years be a community of satisfied citizens whose aim would not be mere consumption; She could be a modern socialist society. But in the meantime she presents a picture of a country which is lagging more and more behind the rest of the world, including the socialist countries, in industry, science and culture. This country of deep-rooted democratic traditions which could stand in the first rank of progressive European countries with a democracy carried into socialist practice and with human freedom, presents a gloomy picture of silent, apathetic people, intimidated by the arrogance of power, which despises their opinions, a society under police despotism and with its prisons full.

THE FUTURE

Just as the programme of peaceful relations between the two leading world blocs has been brought into being against the will of many opponents on both sides, so it is possible and necessary today to solve the remaining problems, including that of Czechoslovakia.

Concrete and practical steps, taking into account the customs and traditions of our country, are not alien to those who, in 1968, in an entirely different time and a different world, were misunderstood in so many quarters - sometimes involuntarily, sometimes intentionally. One of the causes of this misunderstanding, perhaps, was that, overloaded with the work of modernising their own country, they tended to underestimate the importance of clearly stating their plans in the context of international relations.

All interested parties, all who have an interest and good will, wherever they may have stood in the past, should participate in solving Czechoslovakia's problems. The greater the share, however, in preparing and implementing a positive programme that is taken by those representatives of the Czechoslovak people who enjoy the confidence of the people, the more profound and lasting the results that could be achieved, the more rapid the advance and, consequently, the smaller the risk that would have to be faced.

Such a course would have the spontaneous support of the Czech and Slovak nations, and also of all peace-loving, democratic and socialist forces in Europe and all over the world. It would also be a significant contribution towards furthering the advances so far made in reducing tension in Europe and the world, and this is today the most essential prerequisite for any social progress.

A letter to the General Secretary of the CC CPUSSR

Leonid I. Brezhnev
General Secretary, CC CPUSSR
Moscow

Five years ago the Soviet armed forces occupied our country, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, under the pretence that they had to protect it against an attack from West Germany and the USA. This reason, untrue even then, appears today, after five years, as totally absurd. In 1968 Czechoslovakia was falsely accused of antisocialist intentions when she spoke of the necessity of regulating her relations with West Germany and the USA. Such a policy is being pursued today by the Soviet Union under your leadership.

The military intervention against Czechoslovakia was also said to be motivated by the necessity of protecting the allegedly endangered socialist order, of subduing alleged counter-revolutionary forces and of averting the alleged danger of a renewal of capitalism. The falsehood of these arguments was most tellingly revealed by the fact that the repression unleashed in Czechoslovakia after the occupation was not aimed at so-called counter-revolutionaries or people endeavouring to renew capitalism, but almost exclusively at people who always stood for socialism, above all at a considerable part of the Communist Party itself, as evidenced by 480.000 expelled or eliminated communists. The victims of persecution, arrests and prison sentences are to a large extent communists and socialists.

We the undersigned participants of the 1968 movement for the renewal of socialism in our country ask you:

In the light of the developments of the last five years, can you today assert that in 1968 an aggression of Czechoslovakia from the West was imminent? Do you believe that socialism in Czechoslovakia was endangered by her political leadership and the overwhelming majority of her people?

The veiled attempt to shift the responsibility for the military intervention in Czechoslovakia on Shelest or Ulbricht and Gomulka would indicate that you do not wish your name to be connected with that action and that you therefore do not consider it correct. The Czechoslovak people and with them peaceloving and progressive people throughout the world would welcome as a genuine historic contribution towards a real lessening of international tension and a stimulus to socialist hopes, if you had the courage to say so to the Soviet and world public opinion, and to draw the necessary conclusions:

to recall the Soviet armed forces from the territory of Czechoslovakia

to annul the validity of the Moscow Protocols and the unequal agreements based upon them

to recall the accusations against Alexander Dubcek and his legitimate leadership of the CPCz

to stop the persecution of those who supported the policy of the CC CPz in 1968

to free all political prisoners in Czechoslovakia

(signatures)

Eduard Goldstücker

Zdeněk Hejzlar

Antonín J. Liehm

Jiří Pelikan

Josef Pokštefl

Jan Šling

CZECHOSLOVAK POLITICAL PRISONERS WELCOME WORLD PEACE CONGRESS

TO ALL INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATING IN THE PREPARATIONS FOR
THE WORLD PEACE CONGRESS

We have been happy to read the reports indicating a lessening of international tension, especially the news about the conferences in Helsinki, Vienna and Geneva and the other concrete negotiations. We welcome the convening of the World Congress of the forces of peace. Genuine and lasting peace is incompatible with any form of oppression, restrictions upon the self-determination of nations, limitations of state sovereignty and the suppression of human and civil rights. Inviolability of the rights of individuals, nations and states is a condition of peace, freedom, democracy and socialism. The Congress should contribute to closer understanding among all who are sincerely striving for these values

ON BEHALF OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
CZECHOSLOVAK DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST OPPOSITION
(COMMUNISTS, SOCIALISTS, CHRISTIANS)
HELD IN BORY PRISON -

R Battěk
A Černý
K Fridrich
J Mezník
J Stehlík
J Šabata
M Šilhán
L Šelda
J Tesař
Z Vašíček

Notes from prison

CONDITIONS IN CZECHOSLOVAK LABOUR CAMPS AND PRISONS

So-called Prisoners' Councils have been established. (Similar Councils were introduced in Nazi concentration camps). Members are selected by the prison authorities. Most are prisoners who are willing to collaborate with the warders and the STB (secret police), to inform on other prisoners and spy on them according to instructions given at regular briefings.

Many are criminals of the worst type. One example is Sozenica, who brutally murdered his wife, cut her up and put her into a suitcase which he delivered to her mother. He is now head of the Prisoners' Council at the Tesla Works at the Bory (Pilsen) prison. As a reward for informing, he is allowed to go into the town with his visitors at any time, and once every six months he gets one or two weeks' holiday.

Another is a killer who murdered his wife and dissolved her in acid in the bath. At Bory he has a privileged job: he repairs television sets. He is not only free to go where he likes within the prison walls, but he often goes into the town without a warder on the pretext of buying spare parts for television sets. In return he informs on his fellow prisoners.

All informers enjoy privileges, both as regards work and pay: they receive special bonuses, they supervise the work of others, are free to move about the camp, and watch television at any time, may have visitors at any time and may receive an unlimited number of parcels.

The repressive measures taken against other prisoners do not apply to them.

Political prisoners are cruelly exploited. They have to fulfil incredibly high work norms and are paid absurdly low wages (some as little as 400 Crowns a month, even when they have fulfilled their target by 100 per cent). Political prisoners receive 9 per cent in pocket money; the rest goes to the prison management for their 'board'.

In all prisons pensioners are also required to work, and their pensions are retained by the State. They too have to fulfil work norms by 100 per cent. The disabled also are forced to work; in the case of one-armed prisoners, the norm is reduced by 50 per cent.

Warders (called 're-educators' today) treat prisoners, particularly political prisoners, with the arrogance of masters and slaves, although many ought to be behind bars themselves. Some steal commodities intended for sale. The warders in Mirov prison steal whole kilogrammes of tin foil for cooking purposes which is made there to be sold.

In Pankrac (Prague) prison warders steal furniture and plumbing and electrical equipment. In Leopoldov (Slovakia) prison they steal electrical equipment from the workshop of the EZ (railway electrification) works. In Bory (Pilsen) prison warders steal food from the prisoners' rations or allow the cooks to do so. As a result, the prisoners receive little or no sugar in their coffee and meals with little or no fat content and negligible portions of meat.

Political prisoners at Bory and Mirov are still denied the rights of political prisoners. They are segregated in top security wings with a particularly repressive system comparable to that applied to 3rd Category prisoners, although the courts classified them in the 1st Category (first offenders) at Bory and 2nd Category at Mirov.

Prison doctors and nurses treat sick prisoners not as patients but as prisoners, as though they themselves were warders. For example, they remove the thermometer before it has had time to record the prisoner's temperature, with the result that prisoners often work with a fever. The medical staff are loathe to prescribe drugs for prisoners. The chief prison doctor at Bory is Dr Sadilek.

Lawyers may not speak to prisoners unless a warder is present. Political prisoners have fewer rights than common criminals, to whom warders usually behave in quite a friendly manner. At Bory prison Captain Karel Tvrklik, chief warder of Block 5, where the political prisoners are segregated, and the prison governor Major Jezek, are responsible for these conditions.

Theoretically, prisoners may send complaints to the Czech Minister of Justice and other central authorities, but all the complaints are forwarded by these bodies (if the prison authorities send them off at all) to the administration of Czech 'reform and re-education institutes' (prisons) which is staffed by warders who have been promoted to these high posts. All complaints are therefore doomed to be rejected, and severe reprisals are taken against their authors.

Purge in mass media

Former leading journalists are a target of repressive measures under Husak's regime. More than one-third of the country's 3,000 journalists have been sacked and proscribed. Some are operating dredgers or cranes, others are employed as lorry drivers or lorry drivers' mates, as taxi drivers, junior clerks, or store men; a few lucky ones have obtained jobs as archivists. The majority are employed as unskilled labourers.

About 350 former Czech newspaper and mass media reporters have become 'notorious' job-hoppers - not because economists, doctors of philosophy or political science lawyers and scientists etc make unsatisfactory manual workers, but because they are on the black list.

If the appropriate department of the STB (secret police), an official of the Communist Party's Central Committee or of the newly-appointed leadership of the Journalists' Union discovers that they have settled down to a job, instructions to dismiss them are issued. Often managers who have signed on former journalists are persecuted. The regime even goes so far as to persecute doctors who issue medical certificates for journalists on the black list.

Since Husak rose to unrestricted power, 350 journalists known for their sympathies with the Prague Spring have been interrogated by the police and urged to denounce their colleagues and leading politicians of the Dubcek era. At the present time, 30 are being prosecuted and some are in prison.

Czech writers who used to contribute to the writers' weekly *Lisuv*, for example Ludvik Vaculik, Vaclav Havel and Lubos Dobrovsky, have had legal proceedings taken against them. Many other former contributors to the journal are under constant police surveillance. Two other former contributors, Dr Hubl and Dr Tesar, have been sentenced to 6½ and 6 years' imprisonment respectively.

The former staff of *Reporter*, journal of the former Journalists' Union, now banned by Husak, are no better off. None of the editors are allowed to work on any kind of newspaper, in the mass media or in any branch of publishing. All its reporters have been interrogated by the police. Some have received prison sentences. Karel Kyncl, former television foreign news commentator, and Vladimir Skutina, television news reporter and journalist, are among those in prison.

Mrs Mouckova, popular television newscaster in 1968, particularly during the Soviet invasion, has been interrogated by the police six times. A number of former radio reporters are under constant police surveillance, for example Vera Stovickova, Cestmir Suchy and J. Dienstbier. The telephones of 286 former journalists are tapped intensively; their mail is intercepted and examined; members of the STB question their neighbours and other associates. From time to time they are tailed by the STB for several consecutive days. Last year on one day alone the homes of 38 journalists were searched. Foreign newspapers and books, postcards and letters from abroad were confiscated.

The witch hunt has been carried to such extremes that no reference may be made in any book or newspaper article to any journalist of the Prague Spring period. Recently, employees of Czechoslovak television who collaborate with the present regime carried out a check-up on the accounts department responsible for paying out fees, presuming that innocuous names were pseudonyms for proscribed journalists or writers.

Progressive Czech journalists are disappointed in the International Journalists' Organisation which has its headquarters in Prague. It protests vehemently at repression of journalists in other parts of the world, but not a word has this Moscow-paid secretariat uttered in support of persecuted Czech journalists. Will the International Federation of Journalists in Brussels take up the cudgels on their behalf?

MILAN HÜBL writes to his family

The latest news from my aquarium concerns the result of my eye test. It was a very cursory examination - it took 5 to 10 minutes. But it revealed enough for comparison with the results of a previous test. In spring 1970 the eye specialist in the Synopsis clinic told me that my sight had not deteriorated since the previous examination in 1964. On the contrary it showed a tendency to improve, which is not unusual among shortsighted people as they get older. During 1971 I did not have any trouble with my eyes. I followed the doctor's advice - I avoided eye strain, and rested my eyes regularly in green surroundings.

In 1972 a radical change occurred in my environment - not only in lighting conditions - and this caused the troubles you know about.

This latest test showed the following changes in my sight: the sight in my left eye (-9 3/4 diopters) has deteriorated only slightly by 1/4 diopter; but the sight in my right eye (-10 diopters) has deteriorated by 2 diopters to -12 1/2 diopters. In 15 months this is a marked deterioration. I hate to think what will be the result if my sight goes on worsening as it has since January 1972. Angela, with -3 diopters, was warned that constant dim light could send her blind.

Apart from a stronger lens for my right eye, nothing has been changed. 'But you can see close up,' was all I got.

An article in *Rude Pravo* prescribed a daily routine for the prevention of cardiac coronary; I see that I have about 5% of the recommended amount of exercise. It seems that the slogan here is 'Don't keep fit!'

April 19, 1973

NOTE

At the end of last year Milan Hübl was suffering from high blood pressure (245/110) and fluctuations which were symptomatic of a sudden attack of hypertension. His blood pressure is now more or less back to normal but his eyesight has markedly deteriorated.

[Editor]

Sociology society brought into line

The Czechoslovak Sociological Society has, in the past, carried out extensive work in its field and maintained widespread contacts with colleagues in other countries. After August 1968, the Committee, which had been duly elected in accordance with the statutes of the Society, adhered to its principles, agreeing, for instance, to the attendance of Czechoslovak sociologists at the International Sociological Congress in Varna only after receiving assurances that free discussion would be possible.

This, however, was not to the liking of the new political leadership. At the beginning of 1970, the political authority 'decided' that the composition of the committee had to be changed. This was achieved by a well-tried method. 'Someone' convened the committee, inviting only those members approved by the secretariat of the Party Central Committee.

In the absence of the rest, including the chairman, Dr Solar, a new committee was nominated. An announcement appeared in the press that Dr Solar and a number of other committee members had 'resigned', although the people concerned were unaware of their own resignations.

The new, self-appointed committee, composed predominantly of people hitherto unknown in sociology, then decided to halt the admission of members to the Society. Whereupon it transpired that some of the recruits to the committee were not members of the Sociological Society. Therefore, having first elected themselves to the committee, they proceeded to admit themselves to the body they were supposed to represent.

All this happened on May 7, 1970. Since that time and up to January 1973 - in contravention of the statutes - the committee has proved itself incapable of convening a general meeting. The first concern was to 'politically' guarantee attendance at the International Sociological Congress in Varna. Again, because those passed for attendance were completely unknown in the international forum, the authorities decided to 'explain' the absence of well-known Czechoslovak sociologists to the international assembly in an original manner. They produced a document in Russian detailing the political errors committed since January 1968 by various sociologists and stating the reasons for their expulsion from the Communist Party. In short, a purely domestic political and party matter was to be placed before an international scientific congress.

Evidently the organisers of this effort realised what a blunder it would have been, so that, in the end, the 'pamphlets' were only handed to a few delegates from the socialist countries. Even many Czechoslovak delegates knew nothing about them.

Finally, in January 1973, the committee resolved to call the general meeting. There it repeated on a larger scale the farce of its own self-appointment. Invitations went - again, contravening the statutes - only to selected members (10-15% of membership) who could be relied on to endorse everything presented to them. For the sake of appearances, the proposal that so-called 'special membership' be instituted, open to people not working in the field of sociology, was tabled.

There was, of course, no mention of the fact that those who cannot work in the professional sphere cannot do so because they supported the 1968 policies - that is, they are debarred for political not professional reasons. The meeting passed the motion, thereby, in fact, bringing the decision (which had preceded the motion) that the majority of members should not be invited into line with the statutes. Then the new committee - which, when it installed itself in May 1970, had been instructed by the Party authorities to cut work in sociology down to a minimum - was elected without difficulty.