CHAPTER III

CZECHOSLOVAK CRISIS: FACTORS, NATURE AND SOVIET RESPONSE

Czechoslovakia was the country that had suffered most under Stalinist domination. The model of "Russian socialism" had been imposed most forcefully and political repression had been inflicted with the greatest brutality on Czechoslovakia. Paralysed as it was by the socio-political events of 1948-1953, Czechoslovak society reacted little to the liberalizing influences coming from post-Stalin Russia. Unlike Poland and Hungary Czechoslovakia experienced neither uprisings nor the formation of political working class movements. De-Stalinization in Czechoslovakia could not begin until about 1962-1963. It was provoked by a general crisis which manifested itself most explicitly in economic and political spheres.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to trace the background of Czechoslovak crisis in late 1960s and to find out factors responsible for it. Accordingly, the focus has been concentrated on the analysis of such issues as the rigorous implementation of the Soviet model during the Gottwald period, the crisis situations generated by the inflexible regime of Novotny era, and Dubcek-led revolution movement from above in order to bring about changes, etc. This chronological order of the development of events has been considered by situating them in the concrete socio-economic, political and ideological background.

Background

As the only East European country with a reasonable democratic tradition and a newer, albeit brief, parliamentary heritage, Czechoslovakia had quite often been
considered somewhat exceptional for that part of the world. So too the communist movement in Czechoslovakia had often stood out as somewhat unique in East Europe.

Both in the 1920s and in the 1940s, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia found itself at odds with the International communist movement because of its apparent lack of revolutionary fervour, its tendencies towards a peaceful, parliamentary, and perhaps evolutionary road to socialism. In both periods, however, it accepted the will of the international movement - in the 1920s, by undergoing Bolshevization through purges and, in 1948, by staging a coup d'etat. Yet, after coming to power, the party demonstrated its obedience by undertaking the most extensive and ruthless series of trials and purges known in East Europe. For this reason it became known as the most dogmatic, imitative and loyal follower of Moscow in East Europe.¹ The real character of Czechoslovak communism may be further illustrated by a closer examination of the almost quarter of a century of communist rule under Klement Gottwald and his principal successor Antonin Novotny.

During the period from 1945 to 1948 the communist party under Gottwald emerged as the dominant, but not the exclusive, political force in liberated Czechoslovakia. Refraining from an attempt at violent and total revolution on the Soviet pattern, the party with the sanction of the Soviet Union, opted for a more moderate course; more in line with the predominant national traditions of the country. Accepting the leadership of Benes as president and cooperating responsibly with other

parties within the National Front, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia espoused a programme which represented a blend of continuity and revolution.²

The nationalization of a sector of industry, radical land reform, and a limited system of short-term planning produced a mixed economy which included substantial elements of both capitalism and socialism. The pre-war constitutional system was, in broad outline, preserved, although with some significant changes, including a broadened Slovak autonomy and a reformed system of local government in the form of the national committees. Non-communist parties were permitted, in the Czech areas as continuants of pre-war predecessors. The National Front, grouping the main political parties as a basis for the coalition government, was an unusual political formation, permitting no opposition to the front as such, but allowing sharp conflict and some electoral competition between its constituent elements. In spite of these limitation, political life took place within a general context of democratic freedom, in which the press, scholarship and cultural life were largely free of party or government control. The "People's democracy" thus established was certainly not a complete nor a perfect democracy, but embodied important democratic elements, far more genuine than in the neighbouring "People's democracies" or in Soviet Union and it retained important features of pre-communist Czechoslovak politics.³

This "national and democratic revolution", as Gottwald called it, continued the pre-war strategy of the popular front and identified the communists with important

aspects of Czechoslovak tradition. Moreover, President Benes and the non-communist parties were prepared to accept, in the main, certain revolutionary changes advocated by the communist party. As a result the later had a broad popular appeal and became a dominant factor in post-war politics.  

The post-war revolution in Czechoslovakia occurred within the context of the changed balance of power in Europe and of the dominant influence of the Soviet Union in East Europe. This was expressed, as far as Czechoslovakia was concerned, in the alliance with the Soviet Union, which had been concluded by Benes during the war years and was the keystone of her foreign policy. The communists regarded the bond with the Soviet Union as crucial and sought to make it the exclusive one, whereas non-communist parties preferred to balance it by ties with the West. Although the primacy of Soviet influence was distasteful to many Czechs and Slovaks, they were consoled by the fact that the Soviet Union at the time favoured the national path to socialism proclaimed by Gottwald and approved, if it did not initiate, the moderate course followed by their Czechoslovak comrades. For other communists, doubtless including Gottwald, there were temporary tactics, designed to conciliate the non-communist forces and to prepare the ground for more radical steps when appropriate. By 1948, with the drastic changes in the international situation exemplified by the beginning of the "cold war" and the assertion of independence by Yugoslavia, the time had come for a shift in course in foreign and domestic affairs. Although the new policy, no doubt imposed by Moscow,

represented a volte-face in Czech communist politics, it was willingly adopted by Gottwald and accepted by the bulk of the party.  

Following the Soviet Model

February 1948 marked the initial step in the break of Czechoslovak communism with national traditions and the ultimate undermining of the legitimacy with the movement had acquired in the early post-war years. The seizure of power, through the use of extra parliamentary pressures, accomplished by forcing president Benes to accept the hegemony of the communist party, has often been described and needs no further elaboration. The full impact and the ultimate implications of the February events were not immediately apparent to all, including even the communists. For most members and for other sympathetic sections of the population. February at first constituted a triumph over the forces of reaction represented by other parties and their leaders. Although manipulation and deceit played an important part in Gottwald's victory, it must be conceded that he was able, by propaganda and masterly organization, to mobilize substantial support for the seizure of power not only among the huge party membership, but also within the trade union movement and even among the intelligentsia and peasantry. The nationalist communists and more


moderate, who had favoured the post 1945 tactics of the party offered no serious opposition to the new line.\textsuperscript{7}

The breach of continuity with the past was at once made evident by Gottwald's coercion and ultimate elimination of Edward Benes as president and the transformation of the National front and the coalition into a facade for communist domination. Through the action committees, the non-communist parties were purged and remoulded into satellites which had little or no support among their former adherents.

In the aftermath of February of 1948, Gottwald seemed obsessed with an almost suicidal drive to extirpate not only national traditions but also those of party itself, thereby causing even some communists to question the legitimacy of his regime. The concept of a "people's democracy", as a distinctive form of government and society was emptied of meaning by its identification with the Leninist doctrine of the "dictatorship of the proletariat".\textsuperscript{8} Under the slogan "the Soviet Union, our Model", Gottwald embarked on a Slavish adoption of the Soviet practice in every sphere and the elimination of distinctive national patterns. This was followed by a vindictive denigration of such respected Czechoslovak leaders as Masaryk, Benes and Stefanik and a campaign against bourgeois nationalism in Slovakia. Still another important segment of the party's leadership, those of Jewish origin, was singled out for attack, notably in the trial of Rudolf Slansky (the party's General Secretary), Vladimir Clementis and thirteen others, most of whom were executed. In the political

\textsuperscript{7} ibid, pp.120-22.

\textsuperscript{8} H.Gordon Skilling, "People's Democracy: The Proletarian Dictatorship and the Czechoslovak Path to Socialism", \textit{American Slovic and East European Review}, no.10, April 1951, pp.100-16.
trials beginning in 1950 and culminating in the case against Slansky and his associates, Gottwald showed most strikingly his subservience to Soviet will and his apparent impulse to destroy his own handiwork, the communist party and its prestige. Later evidence revealed that these trials were conducted at the command of Stalin and his associates. Nonetheless, the trials delivered another damaging blow at the legitimacy of Gottwald’s rule within his party as well as in the nation as a whole, a blow the impact of which was felt most seriously in the subsequent period of de-Stalinization. The system of terror, embodied in a succession of trials of communists and non-communists alike, provided a cruel and crude means of securing obedience, based on fear and coercion.⁹

It was during Gottwald’s rule that the Czechoslovak Constitution which was enacted in 1948 made some concessions to the continuity of Czechoslovak traditions, some not without importance, as for example, the retention of the presidency. In the main, however, it was a meaningless document. The National Front and other parties became non-entities, the National Assembly was nothing more than a rubber stamp; the executive departments were administrative agencies and the local bodies, including Slovak organs, tools of the central power. The mass associations, including the large trade union movement became ‘transmission belts’ of the party. The party itself was transformed, the Secretariat and Presidium dominating the making of policy, and the Central Committee apparatus directly controlling all other government and party bodies. The apparatus also subjected culture, education and scholarship to its

⁹ See Skilling, n.3, p.27.
control and conducted a barrage of propaganda in the press, radio and television.\textsuperscript{10} In the economy, the almost total collectivization of agriculture, and the nationalization of the whole of industry and commerce. Under the five year plan the economy was drastically reorganized and mobilized at breakneck speed to achieve ever higher goals, especially in heavy industry.\textsuperscript{11}

These harsh measures generated dissatisfaction among many sectors of the population and awakened doubts even in communist ranks, about the correctness of the course followed. As a result of the system of terror, little or no open opposition was expressed and many retreated into apathy and political indifference. Moreover, in spite of the ills of society and evils of the system, many communists supported Gottwald is policies. On the surface the regime seemed stable, but it had many weaknesses which were gradually to mature into a deepening crisis in the economy, in politics and in society in general.\textsuperscript{12}

The sequel to Gottwald’s death in 1953 was a four year period of dual rule by Antonin Zapotocky, veteran party leader and prime minister under Gottwald, who succeeded him to the presidency, and Novotny, party functionary and a relative newcomer to the highest party circles who became the First Secretary.\textsuperscript{13} Closely associated in the top rank of what was described as a collective leadership were

\begin{itemize}
\item ibid, p.140.
\end{itemize}

\raggedright 63
Viliam Siroky, elevated to the premiership and Karol Bacilek, the Slovak First Secretary.

The A New Course

The Zapotocky-Novotny duumvirate coincided at the outset with the Malenkov-Khrushchev partnership in Moscow and the "New Course" in the USSR and some other bloc countries. In Czechoslovakia, however, changes of policy came somewhat later and were more modest than those in Hungary and Poland. The initial step was Siroky's policy statement in September 1953, which provided mainly for economic relaxations and proposed no serious changes in the political system. The measures introduced were a product in part of the customary practice of following the Soviet example, and in part of the necessity of rectifying some of the difficulties resulting from Gottwald's post 1948 policies and industrialization and collectivization.

In what may be termed the Czechoslovak "New Course", an effort was made to relax the frantic drive for industrialization and collectivization of the previous five years; to place somewhat greater emphasis on agriculture, light industry, and consumer goods; to pay more attention to improving the standard of living; and in general to employ conciliation and propaganda to win the allegiance of the population. In agriculture, for instance, forceful collectivization was suspended and farmers even permitted to leave collective farms. Some took advantage of this, until the

14 Skilling, n.3, p.30.

opportunity was withdrawn in 1954.\textsuperscript{16} The economic measures introduced in 1953 and early 1954 were on the whole shifts in emphasis rather than basic changes of direction.

In the political field there were even fewer relaxations. A collective leadership was proclaimed, and the cult of personality was condemned. The Soviet Union continued to be taken as the model, although more emphasis was laid on adapting it to Czechoslovak national conditions. Changes in leadership were minimal, and the Gottwald team continued in power. The structure of government inherited from Gottwald remained unaltered. The elections of the National Committees and of the National Assembly took place in 1953, without competition, on the basis of single National Front list and did not produce any modification in the function and character of these bodies.\textsuperscript{17}

The 10th CPCZ (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) Congress held in June 1954 was an anti-climax. Its proceedings were mainly devoted to agriculture and industrial short-comings, and there was no major revision in policies. It is difficult to indentify the date of ending of the "New Course" which in a sense simply petered out during 1955 and early 1956.

By the time of the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU the Czechoslovak Party had overcome the difficulties created by the deaths of Stalin and Gottwald and the New Course, and was committed to relatively hardline policies in every sphere of

\textsuperscript{16} ibid, p.18.

\textsuperscript{17} ibid, p.20.
The fall of Malenkov in the USSR had no counterpart in Czechoslovakia where the leadership remained intact.

In February 1956, in the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Khrushchev proclaimed the equality of all communist parties and the right of each country to follow its own path to socialism. In a secret session the Congress made the official denigration of Stalin. Strangely, neither of these momentous pronouncements created a ripple in Czechoslovakia, except among lower levels of the party organization. In the spring of 1956, the first rumblings among the intelligentsia, noticeable in all communists states, found an echo among university students and writers in Czechoslovakia.19

The repercussions of the assault on Stalin at the twentieth party congress in February 1956 raised questions concerning the whole system of Stalinist communism and stirred up a wave of controversy throughout the Soviet bloc.20 As elsewhere the greatest pressures for de-Stalinization in Czechoslovakia came from intellectuals and the students who took advantage of the new policy in Moscow to press their demands for similar environmental changes in their own country.

A minor thaw did take place in the cultural world, primarily as a result of a certain hesitancy on the part of the party as to how to handle this initiative from below. Thus, briefly, in the Spring of 1956, numerous bold and critical articles began to appear, a number of previously suppressed manuscripts were published and

18 Korbel, n.11, p.252.
19 ibid, p.255.
20 Skilling, n.3, p.32.
demands for a change in cultural policies could be heard. All this reached a climax in the Second Writers Congress in April 1956 when such writers as Ladislav Mnacko and poets Hrubin and Seifert criticised Stalinist cultural policies and demanded change.\textsuperscript{21} The dissident writers even managed to gain control of the union and elect a liberal presidium. This outburst was followed and taken up by the students, whose own campaign climaxed in their traditional Majales festival on May Day 1956. In their parades both in Bratislava and Prague, the students unfurled anti-regime slogans and demands for liberalization, such as freedom of speech, access to western press, contacts with the West and so forth.\textsuperscript{22}

The party’s response to these actions was relatively swift and by 1957 the brief thaw was over. The students were forbidden to hold their festival again and the liberal writers were castigated at both the party national conference in June 1956 and at the Plenary Session of the Czechoslovak Writers Union in June 1957. In January 1957, according to Rude Pravo of 29 January 1957, Novotny condemned the ambiguous word "de-Stalinization" as standing only for the idea of weakening and giving way to forces of reaction. The 1958 party congress formalized the open continuation of Stalinism, but Novotny pursued a course that involved a minimum of de-Stalinization and avoided any serious relaxation of the system or basic changes in leadership.\textsuperscript{23}


The dominant role of the party was constantly reiterated as the cardinal principle of statecraft and was taken to justify continued strict control of the mass associations. As a result congress or conferences of the trade unions, the youth league, the journalists and writers, passed uneventfully. In the field of agriculture the drive for collectivization won gradual success, without provoking open unrest among peasants. On the model of the Soviet Union, heavy agricultural machinery was to be transferred to the collective farms from the machine tractor stations. In October 1959 a draft five year plan for 1961-65 was approved, continuing to accent heavy industry and integrating the economy more than even with the Soviet bloc.\textsuperscript{24} In the cultural and intellectual spheres the years 1958 to 1960 were marked by sustained effort to stamp out dissident and heretical ideas and to coerce the intellectuals into acceptance of the orthodox party line. But this could by no means be expected to solve or eliminate the potential for dissidence within the party. Indeed a slight liberalization, the tentative agreement to a limited amount of decentralization of the economy, was wrested from Novotny but its genuine implementation was never permitted.\textsuperscript{25}

The Czechoslovak party affirmed the legitimacy and victory of its conservative policies with the promulgation of the 1960 Constitution and the declaration that Czechoslovakia had reached the stage of socialism, soon to be followed by the transition to communism. The special party conference in July 1960 was to be the

\textsuperscript{24} ibid, p.122.
\textsuperscript{25} ibid, pp.129-31.
turning point, with the approval of the draft of the third five year plan (1961-1966) and the text of the new Constitution.\textsuperscript{26}

The fundamental law went further than its Soviet counterpart in describing the party as the leading force in society and in the state, in requiring that cultural policy and education be directed in the spirit of the scientific world outlook, Marxism and Leninism, and in endorsing the "fraternal cooperation" of the countries belonging to the world socialist system. The constitution was trumpeted as the embodiment of "socialist democracy", although the elections to the representative bodies, which had already been held in June 1953 were conducted in old style. The Constitution completely subordinated Slovakia to the Prague’s organ of government, thus reversing the slight advance towards Slovak autonomy in 1956.\textsuperscript{27} It also confirmed the revamping of the system of local government, endowed with somewhat greater autonomy, but still subject to strict control from the above.\textsuperscript{28}

An initial shock came from the proceedings of the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, when Khrushchev renewed his onslaught on Stalin’s heritage. More embarrassing was Khrushchev’s call for a new offensive against Stalinism. An acceleration of de-Stalinization in Prague might easily have produced crisis situation comparable to those in Budapest and Warsaw and might have threatened the position of Novotny and his colleagues, who were deeply


\textsuperscript{27} ibid, p.147.

\textsuperscript{28} Tarborsky, n.5, pp.144-8.
involved personally in the wrongs and the failures of the old order. The Prague leaders were apparently confident that while paying homage in words to crusade against the "cult of personality", they could avoid serious measures in this direction.

In his report to the Central Committee in November 1961, Novotny adopted a cleaver line of symbolic de-Stalinization which was designed to associate himself verbally with current Soviet policy and to ward off criticism of his own responsibility during his eight years in power.

In 1961 Novotny was forced into some measures of relaxation by Khrushchev's second denunciation of Stalin. Characteristically, however, Novotny simply used this occasion to remove his rival Rudolf Barak, the ambitious minister of the interior and a member of the Presidium, but it was not enough. The further pressure from the Soviets and from the intelligentsia at home forced Novotny to agree to the formation of a commission under Drahomir Kolder enquire into the trials of 1949-54. This at last betokened a real move away from Stalinism, as did the removal of Gottwald from his mausoleum and blowing up of the huge statue of Stalin in Prague.

The threat of de-Stalinization seemed a thing of the past and the party's central role both vis-a-vis the government and Slovakia ensured. However, circumstances swiftly changed. With this change came new irresistible pressures which launched


30 For Novotny's speech to the central committee of the communist party on November 1961. See *Czechoslovakia Today*, Special Supplement No.3, Prague, March 8, 1962, p.12.

a drive for reform. Until 1968 this was a drive basically within the party, conducted by party members motivated by varying views of socialism - including the nationalists view of many Slovaks - but more or less agreed on the idea that the existing system did not provide the proper framework for socialist society, polity and economy. This drive was of particular significance because the reformers sought fundamental, institutional changes.

During the years 1963 and 1964 the signs of a deepening crisis were already revealed and, in retrospect, these years marked the beginning of a process of decline, which culminated in the fall of Novotny in 1968.\textsuperscript{32} The seeds of crisis, it was gradually recognised, had been sown in the years after 1948 when the moderate national path to socialism was abandoned and the Soviet model, in its Stalinist form, had been imposed on a country whose national tradition and social circumstances made it entirely inappropriate.\textsuperscript{33}

It was a crisis of many dimensions, affecting all spheres of life. No one factor can be singled out as the decisive cause of the final collapse. The Slovak discontent, the economic crisis, open dissent of the writers, political apathy of the youth, restiveness among students, all contributed to the sapping of the foundations of the Czechoslovak system. Several years were to pass before the accumulation of discontents and unsolved problems reached a climax in the later part of 1967, when the crisis penetrated the highest party organ and affected the person of Novotny.


himself. There were persistent demands for a complete and systemic implementation of de-Stalinization. The Writers Congress and journalists were dominated by this theme and provided a forum for bitter denunciation of the Stalinist past and slowness of changes in policy.34

The Twelfth Party Congress

The Twelfth Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia which was held on 2-8 December 1962 was to most observers a disappointing testament to continued dogmatism in Czechoslovakia.35 The rumoured instability of party’s First Secretary Antonin Novotny attributed to Czechoslovakia’s failure to respond sufficiently to the CPSU’s Twenty-Second Congress, the Barak affair, the deteriorating economic situation and growing popular discontent, combined with the postponement of the Congress from October to December - had led to expectations that startling changes would be forthcoming at the Congress.36

The congress was destined to become a turning point in the history of the Czechoslovak party, perhaps the most important meeting since the historic 1929 Fifth Congress. The forces at play within the Czechoslovak party at that time presented a threat to continued stability of the regime, but Novotny most likely hoped to keep these forces under tight rein, conceding and compromising only where necessary. Liberals elements within the Central Committee had been gaining influence and’

35 Bromke, n.29, pp.96-97.
36 ibid, p.99.
together with their Slovak colleagues, had been pressing for reform in Czechoslovakia.37

The first, but symbolically significant, step for which liberals were pressing was a review of the purge trials of 1949-54 which had marked the height of Stalinist terror in Czechoslovakia Novotny, while speaking at the Central Committee meeting at the end of 1960, dismissed demands for review and revision of trials as "irresponsible and unjustified".38 Any rehabilitations or public redress of errors was likely to lead to a more general questioning of the atmosphere, conditions, policies, and organisation that had permitted these malpractices and their continuation. Thus the opening of the whole issue was like the opening of a pandora's box, given the situation in Czechoslovakia in 1962, fraught with potentially uncontrollable repercussions.

Novotny was justified in almost all his fears, but demands within the party coupled with pressure from Moscow that Prague fall in line with the more liberal posture of the Soviet bloc, brought Novotny quietly to concede to a review of trials. He then announced and confirmed at this Congress the Central Committee's decision to establish a committee to be chaired by the then Novotny man Drahomir Kolder - to investigate the cases of leading communists prosecuted in the 1949-54 period.39

The report of the Kolder Commission was shown to the party leadership in November 1962 but was not discussed in any detail by the December Congress, and

37 ibid, p.99.

38 For Excerpts from address delivered by Antonin Novotny at the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1960, Czechoslovakia Today, Special Supplement, no.12, Prague, December 11, 1960, p.5.

when it was finally presented to the Central Committee in April 1963 it had undergone considerable dilution. Slonsky, it agreed, had not been guilty as charged but he and others had still acted in breach of party statutes. For most of the victim of the 1949-54 purges, rehabilitation was grudging and incomplete.\textsuperscript{40}

The basic tone and thrust of the Congress was decidedly conservative and best summed up by Novotny’s unbudging position on the authority and role of the party despite the problematic state of the economy. The Twelfth Congress of the Czechoslovak Community Party thus marked an important turning point in the history of communist Czechoslovakia. In April 1963 a Central Committee plenum removed a number of compromised, old guard Stalinists from the leadership in both the Czechoslovak and the Slovak parties. A new atmosphere had been sought to be created and it was to dominate throughout the mid 1960s; it allowed an immediate and rigorous examination of the problems of the nations and the parties, past and present.\textsuperscript{41}

One of the most important problems was the deteriorating economic situation which needed an utmost attention. Coupled with the economic difficulty were the political problems. In order to know the exact situation, we may discuss in detail, the economic and political elements of what is known as Czechoslovakia crisis.


\textsuperscript{41} Crampton, n.31, p.321.
Economic Crisis

Czechoslovakia had the distinction of being the most industrialised state within the Soviet bloc. It made an important contribution to the entire Soviet bloc as a supplier of sophisticated technological equipment and skills. But Czechoslovakia failed to maintain this distinction in the long run because of its almost uncritical adoption of the Soviet economic model which involved rigid central planning, overcentralization and excessive political interference in all spheres of economy.42

The Stalinist type of command-economy in Czechoslovakia was one of the institutions which warranted reforms, according to some economists. This kind of command-economy had been suitable to the first stage of extensive economic development. It was no longer effective and in fact was counter-productive in a socialist economy with a broad industrial base.43

The Czechoslovak economy had been marked by a highly centralised, administratively determined, quantitative system which had stifled initiative and led to a decline in both productivity and standards. The cult of the plan, with its concern for gross output instead of economic values, reliance upon directives rather than economic instruments, politicization of the economy, party interference in and control over all aspects of the economy and political rather than economic criteria in foreign trade and investment together, had sapped the strength of the Czechoslovak economy.44

43 Golan, n.40, p.6.
44 ibid, p.7.
During the fourteen years between 1948 and 1962, the once-enthusiastic Czechoslovak proponents of communism saw their visions fade away and were forced to realize that all they had believed in was an illusion. The rigid centralization of the economy and its consequent bureaucracy in critical areas of industrial administration and production had brought economic growth to a halt. Moreover, the dismal situation had been aggravated by the schizophrenic attitude of the party itself.\textsuperscript{45} Inherent in the communist system was a pathological distrust of everything, which produced widespread alienation within the society, and mutual estrangement between the masses and leadership, between individuals in and outside of the party, and between people within the party itself. As a prominent writer Milan Kundera, subsequently put it, "official slogans were full of joy, yet we dared not play even the slightest prank." Jean-Paul Sartre, who certainly cannot be accused of any lack of sympathy with communism, elaborated Kundera's thought when he wrote, "in the name of realism, we were forbidden to depict reality; in the name of the cult of youth, we were prevented from being young; in the name of socialist joy, joyishshness was suppressed."\textsuperscript{46} The communism that was to have freed man from the fetters of capitalism, shackled him instead with the multiple chains of personal frustration, cultural starvation and economic insecurity.

If one go by the 1948 Constitution, in the sphere of agriculture it guaranteed private ownership of land up to fifty hectares and of industry up to fifty employees. These legal assurances were quickly disposed off. Besides the 10 percent of arable

\textsuperscript{45} Korbel, n.11, p.270.

\textsuperscript{46} Quoted in Antonin J.Liehm, \textit{The Politics of Culture} (New York: Grove Press, 1972), pp.16-17.
land organized by 1953 into state farms, the government created four types of cooperatives, of which the two higher types resembled collective farms. By 1960, over 90 percent of the land had been collectivized.47

Similar methods were applied to industry. After a brief spell of experimentation during which a mixed economy still required market determinants and some flexibility, a rigid command economy was introduced, featuring centralized planning, controls, and pricing. Heavy industry was given preference over light industry and agriculture, without adequate regard for the country’s limited supply of raw material. The process of nationalization was so rapid that by 1949, all but 4 percent of the labour force was employed in state enterprises; wholesale business and foreign trade were wholly nationalised; and retail business in private hands were reduced to negligible 0.3 percent of the total retail trade by 1959. Foreign trade, the lifeblood of the Czechoslovak economy was reoriented from West to East. In 1937 only 16.3 percent foreign trade was with the East, while in 1953 it reached 78.5 percent - with all the attendant consequences of difficult adjustments, the loss of highly developed western technology and an unbalanced economy.48

The structural changes in every sector of economy were of such revolutionary magnitude that losses in values were inevitable. These losses were compounded by rigid centralized instructions, unrealistic targets in most heavy industries, over-bureaucratization, and a lack of competence in key positions.49

47 Korbel, n.11, p.261.
48 ibid, p.262.
49 Bruch and Volgyers, n.42, p.156.
By the early 1960s, the economic situation had deteriorated to the point of crisis. The Third Five Year Plan adopted in 1961 was not going as smoothly as might have been wished. In 1962, this plan, after having been already revised several times, was abandoned altogether. The Planning Commission presented six month status report to the government which showed significant shortcomings in foundries and hard coal mines - the back bone of industrial production as well as below quota production in the chemical industry. The industrial growth rate showed a drop from average 11 percent in the years 1958-60 to 8.9 percent in 1961 and for the first time since 1953, gross industrial output failed to reach the planned target. The agricultural production was still in more serious state and food accounted for nearly one-fifth of all imports, at a cost of $390 million. This in turn placed a strain on an already serious balance of payment problems.

The agricultural productions suffered even more than industrial production, though the planned agricultural targets were set at a lower level than the industrial goals. In 1959 the real achievement was still equal to the pre-war level only. The causes of this discouraging picture lay in the substantial decrease in the labour force and the lack of personal interest in production on the part of collectivized farmers.

The directives for the 1962 plan already included major revisions of the planned targets for that year contained in the third five year plan. In spite of these changes the early months saw the problems of 1961 turn into an economic crisis. Czechoslovakia's state of economy was now in a sad contrast to its relative health

50 Crampton, n.31, p.321.

51 Korbel, n.11, p.261.
of the 1950s. By the middle of 1962 Czechoslovakia’s industrial growth rate was the lowest in East Europe, measured at 6.7 percent, rather than the 9.4 percent projected in the current five year plan.\textsuperscript{52}

Agriculture, had been showing a downward trend since the late 1950s. In the first three quarters of 1962 planned deliveries of meat fell short by 2000 tonnes, of poultry by 3000 tonnes, of eggs by 163 million and of milk by 55 million gallons. The increased importation of food strained still further the balance of payments, already aggravated by serious shortcomings in such key industries as metallurgy, heavy engineering and building. Meanwhile capital investment were steadily declining.\textsuperscript{53}

In 1962 there was only a two percent increase in industrial production instead of projected 9.4 percent and a 7.6 percent decline in agriculture production.\textsuperscript{54} Food shortages, particularly of meat but also of dairy goods, were widespread. Long queues before butchers grocers became a familiar sight throughout Czechoslovakia in 1962 and 1963. The shortage of meat was such that the government ordered one meatless day a week for restaurants. Shortage of fuel and electric power caused the regime to turn off the lights in streets in the evenings.\textsuperscript{55}

The breakdown of a once prosperous economy, one that had once been the most productive in central Europe was not easy to explain. Observers maintained that one of the main factors contributing to this breakdown was the general failures of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} Crampton, n.31, p.321.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Golan, n.1, p.12.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Taborsky, n.32, p.168.
\item \textsuperscript{55} ibid, p.170.
\end{itemize}
agriculture. Whereas food consumption had been rising sharply since the war years, agricultural production stemmed from disproportionately small investments compared with the other branches of the economy, inefficient use of the investment made, uneconomic price structure and ruthless collectivization which had led to peasant hostility and passive resistance.

As we have mentioned, failure in agriculture necessitated an unplanned increase in food importation, placing an unexpected strain on the balance of payment. Reserves of productive capacity in industry and transportation were exhausted. Industries producing finished goods, which accounted for the great bulk of Czechoslovak exports, became increasingly obsolete because of inadequate technological progress and the high concentration of investments during most of the post-war period in industries producing basic materials. Large funds often became frozen in accumulated stocks and large unfinished investment projects. With the economic slump growing worse the Czechoslovak economists were becoming more and more critical of the orthodox communist system of planning and management.

The economists had no other option than to admit that the model of Soviet planning previously accepted as an integral part of socialism could not be applied to Czechoslovak conditions for a variety of geographic and economic reasons. The

56 ibid, p.171.
57 Golan, n.1, p.13.
58 Ibid.
59 Taborsky, n.32, p.169.
Novotny regime was held responsible for having brought the country to economic catastrophe because of its rigid interpretation of economic science.  

The failure of the Stalinist economic model convinced economists that economic system that had been traditionally indentified with socialism had to be abandoned. In other words, the basic assumptions of hitherto practiced socialism would have to be revised.  

The principal issue was centralization, many party economists including central committee member Ota Sik had argued that decentralization of planning and control was essential to recovery, and that the faults of the present crisis lay in the fact that the 1958 decentralization had not been permitted to go far enough. More conservative party economists argued, on the contrary, that the 1958 decentralization was to blame for the crisis, and that the only logical solution was strengthened central planning and control.  

The inability of the regime to find a solution, the reversal of the early decentralization of the policy, and the accompanying debates contributed to factionalization of the party even down to the rank and file. Though the 12th Party Congress did sanction a committee to investigate economic reforms, the actual measures adopted by it to tackle the economic crisis were conservative in approach and, characteristically, sought organizational--administrative rather than substantive

60 Jancar, n.34, p.79.
61 ibid, p.81.
63 Jancar, n.34, pp.55-57.
qualitative solutions. Apart from this acute and pressing problem of the economy, Czechoslovakia confronted political problems of an equally formidable magnitude.

Political Crisis

The abandonment of the third five year plan was a severe blow to the regime's prestige and particularly to the personality of Novotny. Although the population's grievances were not limited to the economic sphere, the economic crisis served as both a catalyst and a focal point of their opposition. By 1962, the population had totally become unhappy over the shortage of consumer goods of life, the population generally put blame on the communist bureaucracy and bungling for such a situation.

The Twenty-second Congress of the CPSU and its renewed attack on Stalinism had come at a most inopportune time for the Prague party, when the party stood weakened by what appeared to be a power struggle in the top ranks. The number two man in the party and most likely successor to Novotny, Rudolf Barak, had made an attack to build a power base for himself with the intention of usurping Novotny's position.

In 1961 Novotny began his move against Barak by transferring him from interior ministry to the job of deputy premier. In this situation came Twenty-second CPSU


65 ibid, pp.215-17.

Congress and the attendant pressures upon Moscow's satellites to undertake more significant de-stalinization initiatives. There were younger or at least more liberal men in Czech and Slovak parties who wanted to see their own parties put their houses in order.\textsuperscript{67} Indeed, the apparat itself had become increasingly dotted with reform minded individuals since 1956.

The deteriorating economic situation promoted many to think in the direction of reform. Aware of this incipient corrosion of the apparat and perhaps fearful that Barak might exploit these elements within the party, Novotny decided to wage a full scale-purge against him. Barak was arrested and stripped of all his positions and arrested in February 1962.\textsuperscript{68} Barak supporters inside and outside the party seems to have protested against the treatment atowards relatively popular figure, while reform-minded party members may have seen this as Novotny's unacceptable answer to demands for de-Stalinization of some kind in Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{69}

An important source of pressure upon Novotny, one which may actually have been the decisive one, was that of the Slovaks, both inside and outside the party. The Slovak issue in the entire Czech story is so important that a brief description would be quite instructive here.

The Slovak Problem

From its inception the Czechoslovak state had suffered from serious minority problems, particularly that of large German and Hungarian populations, far from

\textsuperscript{67} ibid, p.37.

\textsuperscript{68} Skilling, n.3, pp.40-41.

satisfied with their position. The Czechoslovak Republic had been created from the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1918. There was no minority problem so great, however, as that of the Slovaks in their unequal union with the Czechs.\textsuperscript{70} The numerous divisive factor in this union not only failed to be eliminated by the establishment of communist rule in Czechoslovakia, but in fact were aggravated by the addition of some specifically Slovak communist grievances.

The Slovak issue was a great pressure on Novotny’s personal position as well as it constituted the most passionate demands for change. The unresolved problems of Slovakia played a primary role in the factionalization of the Czechoslovak communist party and provided the platform from which reform programme could be launched.\textsuperscript{71}

After centuries of separation from Czech lands, Slovakia became part of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 but this time was granted no special status.\textsuperscript{72} An autonomous Slovak movement soon developed. However, it was fed mainly by the Slovak’s resentment over the poor-relative treatment that they were meted out in some aspects of political and economic life by their more numerous and prosperous Czech brethren. In the 1920s and 1930s the Slovaks felt that they were discriminated against by the dominant Czech people and denied full autonomy.\textsuperscript{73} They wanted more self-government and less dependence on central authorities. They

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{70} Golan, n.1, p.20.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Taborsky, n.5, p.330.
\item \textsuperscript{72} ibid, pp.331-32.
\end{itemize}
raised, as their main political goal, the demand for the creation of special diet endowed with legislative powers in matters pertaining to Slovakia.  

In the early days of Second World War Moscow, for a short time allowed, the Slovak Communist Party to consider the prospect of an independent post-War ‘Red Slovakia’. The existence of an independent Slovak state during the War, plus the psychological factor of Slovak uprising in 1944 induced both Benes and Gottwald to think in terms of a possible post war federation of the two nations. Needless to say, the May 9th constitution which re-established a centralist state came as a disappointment to Slovak expectations. There were indeed some concession made to the Slovaks in that the administration of the Slovak regions was delegated to the Slovak national organs, providing Slovakia with her own government and administration. But the decisions of the Slovak national organs were subordinated to those of Prague. Moreover, the semblance of autonomy provided by the constitution was obliterated by developments within the communist party of Czechoslovakia, with which the Slovak communist party had been forced to merge in 1945. 

Those Slovak leaders who had organised resistance in Slovakia were removed from their positions at the top of the Slovak communist party apparatus. The purges of the Slovak bourgeois nationalist in the 1950s deprived Slovakia, at a most critical time, of those communists who had actively worked for her interests during the period immediately after the war. In keeping with the effort to suppress the Slovaks, the

75 Schwarts, n.69, p.22.
76 Jancar, n.34, p.168.
Prague government rewrote history by down-playing the importance of the Slovak contribution to the war effort. Sharing with Czechs the bitterness of general oppression, the Slovak had additional cause for discontent. They were deprived not only of an autonomous status but even the very symbols of their national identity and by and large none other than the centralist communist party once a pillar of Slovak national rights.\(^77\)

In matters of economy, however, Slovakia received preferential treatment. The CPC (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) channelled considerable industrial investment into Slovakia. According to official sources, while industrial growth in the Czech lands in 1960s was four times higher than in 1948, in Slovakia it had increased more than six times. In 1937 Slovaks shared only 13.4 percent of the total national income, in 1950 it was 21.9 percent and their per capita income had more than doubled.\(^78\) The Slovak nationalists felt that Prague had pursued a deliberate policy of inhibiting investment in Slovakia, this encouraging economic experience produced a political back-lash.\(^79\)

The industrialization of Slovakia only intensified the nationalistic feelings of its people. The Marxist formula, that a people can be freed from bourgeois nationalism by making them a nation of free producers, went somewhat wrong: socialist production only heightened Slovak nationalism. The statistics which is mentioned above do suggest that by the beginning of the 1960s sufficient economic progress

\(^{77}\) Korbel, n.11, p.259.

\(^{78}\) ibid, p.260.

\(^{79}\) ibid.
had been made to permit the Slovaks to use more than words in their dialogue with the Czechs.\textsuperscript{80}

In the early 1960s the Slovak communist intellectuals seized upon the setting of accounts at the CPSU Congress to press their own demands and stood in the forefront of the struggle for liberation. In addition to their general concern for reform, they had their own special cause: the Slovak right to equality with the Czecks. During the early 1960s many Slovak voices were raised demanding not only rehabilitation of the victims of purges but also recognition of the merits of the Slovak uprising in 1944 and of Slovak national institutions.\textsuperscript{81}

The Slovak intellectuals seized an opportunity at the CPSU congress to press their demands for rehabilitation of their maligned leaders, this significantly contributed to the pressures on Novotny to permit a review of the trials in general and the concession announced at the Twelfth Czechoslovak Communist Party Congress which marked the beginning of de-Stalinization in Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{82}

The most significant aspect of the Slovak reformers’ appeal was that for the first time in Slovakia’s struggle for national identity the recognition of these specific demands was sought within a broader context - the democratization of the whole country. In fact, the Slovaks preceded the Czechs in stressing the need for freedom of expression and for the humanization of the system.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{81} Korbel, n.11, pp.280-1.
\textsuperscript{82} Golan, n.1, p.21.
\textsuperscript{83} Korbel, n.11, p.282.
Writers Discontent

Another intractable problem which confronted Novotny throughout the sixties was the persistent struggle for greater freedom of expression waged by the more liberal writers, conducted in the main through their association, "the Union of Czechoslovak Writers" and its principal organs, "Czech Literarni noviny" and "Slovak Kulturny Zivot". In the early 1960s, the Union, its Congress and its journal began to resist complete party control and to achieve greater leeway for free discussion, this becoming in the words of a Czech historian "an oasis of democracy".84

In the columns of both "Kulturny Zivot" and "Literarni noviny" every aspect of economic, social, political as well as cultural life was subjected to critical analysis and the urgency of drastic reforms was voiced. A high point in the political ferment among the writers came in the spring of 1963 with the Congress of Slovak Writers in Bratislava and of Czechoslovak Writers in Prague. The Prague Congress witnessed revolt and directly challenged the party's cultural policy. The central theme of the sessions, however, was the damage done to literature, and the gross injustices to individual writers during the period of the cult. "Art is hampered," said one Slovak writer Vladimir Minac, "by any terror, whether administrative, psychological or moral; our cultural policy must be fundamentally changed".85

Faced with this explosion the party leadership reacted vigorously. Novotny let off with a savage speech in Kosice warning Kulturny Zivot editors and writers that they had entered on a dangerous path and said that attack on the party would not be

84 Skilling, n.3, p.64.
85 Quoted in ibid, p.65.
permitted.\textsuperscript{86} Three months later novotny proclaimed: "...in the principles and the policy of the party we shall change nothing because of their correctness is confirmed by life and the results of the development of socialist Czechoslovakia. An active campaign against the dissident writers was launched, the campaign was widened to include the media of communications and declared that there could be no room for opinions which do not agree with party politics.\textsuperscript{87}

The Union of writers asserted their intention to continue to attack dogmatism and seek to make an impact on public opinion with our positive and progressive ideas. Novotny denounced the dissident writers for seeking to form a third force and declared that there could be no compromise with bourgeois ideology.\textsuperscript{88} The party apparatus repeatedly interfered in the work of newspapers and periodicals. That the problem was not solved was evident from the constant attacks on the cultural periodicals and on the press and television in the next two years.\textsuperscript{89}

\textbf{The Youth Movement}

The attitude of younger generation presented another difficult problem with which the party struggled without any real success throughout the sixties. The gap between the young people and the regime became more and more apparent.\textsuperscript{90}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{86} Crampton, n.31, p.321.
\bibitem{87} See Skilling, n.3, p.65.
\bibitem{89} ibid, pp.83-84.
\bibitem{90} Jancar, n.34, p.191.
\end{thebibliography}
Distinctive attitudes toward society and its problems, and toward the political system, reopened among certain sections of the youth, especially the students.

The deeper roots of the problem were analyzed by various writers and scholars working in the newly developed field of the sociology of youth. Miroslav Jodi, a leading sociologist, expressed that the problem of youth was a reflection of the problems of society as a whole. He argued, the younger generation accepted socialism as a matter of fact, they were much more prone than their elders to criticize the defects of the system, in particular the discrepancy between the ideal and the reality. Others also admitted the justice of the complaints of youth concerning economic and social deficiencies and problems relating to school and education. Especially demoralizing to the youth had been revelations of the evil features of the cult.

The so-called youth union generation had been succeeded by one highly critical of the shortcomings of society and of the failure of the party and the Czechoslovak Union of Youth (CSM) to deal adequately with these problems. The only solution, as an orthodox but perceptive analysis put it, was to give the younger generation greater opportunity to be political and to offer them plenty of room for independence, for experiment, errors and extremes. Only wise political leadership could win them over and avoid driving them into isolation and political opposition.

---

91 ibid, p.196.
92 ibid, p.198.
93 Skilling, n.3, p.73.
94 Bruch and Volgyer, n.42, p.135.
The party faced a particularly thorny problem in the attitudes of students, who shared the general dissatisfaction of youth with many features of society but had their own special frustrations produced by poor dormitory conditions, restrictions on foreign travel and by what they considered the low quality of education. Special sources of grievances were the courses in Marxism-Leninism, and some urged the reduction or elimination of this compulsory political training. These and other complaints produced among students widespread discontent, political indifference and apathy and a general feeling of uncertainty about life.

It was this confluence of factors: economic crisis, political instability, the Slovak situation, youth and students unrest and pressures from Moscow which forced Novotny to accept for limited forms.

**Limited Reforms**

In accordance with the decision of Twelfth Czechoslovak Communist Party Congress, the party Presidium accepted a plan for a reformed economic system. To find solutions for the economic problems a group of experts was constituted in the Institute for Economic Studied at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and was placed under the chairmanship of Ota Sik. Sik saw the root of the problem in the fact that demand was determined by centralised bureaucratic bodies which had little understanding of the market; the consumer, he argued, should have much more say.

In 1965 a major industrial reorganisation took place.\(^5\) Enterprises were to be independent not only from directives and quotas but also from state support.\(^6\) The

---


96 ibid, p.171.
reforms even allowed a certain amount of private economic activity in some parts of the service sector.97 Neither the government nor the party was to interfere in plant operations or in the basic planning of the system.

The reforms were accompanied by changes in social policies which intensified the pace of and the appetite for restructuring. In the administration of the health services were to have some freedom to choose their doctors whilst in education Soviet practices adopted after 1948 were abandoned.98 In 1963 the revision of some textbooks was undertaken. Examinations for university entrance were also introduced and all entrants had to have completed secondary education, thus excluding the preparatory students or woefully under-qualified and inappropriate party activists who since the communist takeover had enjoyed privileged access to higher education.99

In 1965 there was an appreciable lightening of the censor's hand in the official media. Radio news in particular became less hidebound, popular American television programmes such as 'Dr. Kildare' were transmitted, and there was a much more open debate on a wide range of issues. New legislation made it possible to challenge the censor in a court of law but the former still had wide authority. Nevertheless, the Czechoslovak media enjoyed a freedom which had not been experienced since February 1948.100

97 ibid, p.173.
98 Crampton, n.31, p.322.
99 ibid, p.322.
100 ibid, p.323.
The intellectuals made full use of this laxity. In 1963 Edward Goldstucker had organised a symposium on Kafka, and by 1965 relaxation had proceeded far enough for a Prague theatre to stage. The ‘Memorandum’, a satire on bureaucracy, was staged by the young Czech playwright Vaclav Havel.\textsuperscript{101}

The most significant feature of the relaxation of the mid-1960s, though it was given only limited publicity, was the easing of restrictions on religion. A number of imprisoned clerics were released on condition that they went into retirement. Reforms were introduced in the legal and judicial system designed to defendant’s greater rights and protection.\textsuperscript{102}

There were also steps in the direction of political reform. If the economist wanted a market system, the more politically oriented wanted democracy. Reformers demanded a national assembly composed of persons truly representatives of the people and of the conflicting interests within society. Opposition should not only be permitted but institutionalized and protected by law. Zdenek Mlynar was chosen by the CPCZ’s Thirteenth Congress to head a team which was to prepare draft for political reform. There were changes in the electoral law which allowed greater freedom in the nomination of candidates and even opened the way for the nomination of more candidates than places to be filled. Slovaks demanded greater autonomy to enlarge the role of the Slovak organs. They argued for federal system and accepted


\textsuperscript{102} ibid, p.208.
the formerly debated conclusion that only political reform, in their sense a new constitution could assuage their grievances.\textsuperscript{103}

All of these reforms or step towards reforms were achieved only with great difficulty and lengthy debate particularly within the party. Novotny himself was not in favour of them, but was pressurised into accepting them. The Slovaks were still resentful at the incomplete rehabilitation of the purge victims and they wished to see the restoration of more authority to Bratislava.\textsuperscript{104} Here was confirmation of Slovak feelings that discrimination against them would continue, irrespective of the regime, as long as policies were decided in Prague. The Slovak party, though led since 1963 by Dubcek, had a sizeable conservative wing which Novotny could have won over with a few concessions to the Slovak sensibilities. Instead he behaved with boorish chauvinism. The Slovaks, including the most conservative amongst them, now realised that they had nothing to gain from supporting Novotny against his critics. And they, unlike the dissident intellectuals, had a voice where it mattered most, in the highest echelons of the party.\textsuperscript{105}

That voice was heard more loudly than ever before during a flash confrontation between Novotny and Dubcek at a central committee plenum at the end of the October 1967. On the last day of the October Plenum violent discontent had broken out amongst the students of Prague.\textsuperscript{106} There was already general resentment at the regime’s refusal to allow genuine democratization of the party’s youth organization

\textsuperscript{103} Steiner, n.80, p.105.
\textsuperscript{104} ibid, p.107.
\textsuperscript{105} Crampton, n.31, p.324.
\textsuperscript{106} ibid, p.325.
and this was now added mounting anger at the poor living conditions in the capital students hostels; not least among the complaints was that concerning the frequent interruptions in the electricity supply even at time of the annual examinations. The students, therefore, invited journalists to inspect the Strahov hostel, the largest in Prague. The arrival of the journalists coincided with yet another power cut, at which the students decided to march into city. They were interrupted by the police who suggested that the marchers appoint spokesperson to articulate their demands. When the students refused, the police reverted to their traditional instruments of persuasion: the truncheon, the tear gas canister, and the water canon. Thereafter students protest meetings became more and more frequent and they voiced ever more radical demands.\(^\text{107}\) The clash between the students and the police had been an ugly one and this together with disarray in the Central Committee Plenum showed that the Novotny regime was in deep trouble.\(^\text{108}\)

The conflicts within the party erupted at the October 1967 session of the Central Committee, and there was no way Novotny could silence the criticism.\(^\text{109}\) The economy was in shambles; the reformers were accelerating their drive for liberalization; the youth of the nation had demonstrated their dissatisfaction; the people in general were hostile to the system; and the party itself was in the throes of cutthroat crisis. Novotny was considered the chief culprit and other party members


\(^{108}\) ibid, p.47.

sought to avert disaster by stripping him of at least one post of the two he combined as first secretary of the party and president of the republic.\textsuperscript{110}

The Quite Revolution of 1968

The first serious challenge to Novotny’s leadership came in a plenum of the Czechoslovak Communist Party’s Central Committee on 30-31 October 1967, when a group of Slovak and Moravian committee members accused Novotny of neglecting the demand that he resign his high party office. In the same session there were also some challenges voiced to Novotny’s competence as president of the Republic.\textsuperscript{111} Alexander Dubcek, then the first secretary of the Slovak Communist Party, emerged as the leader of the anti-Novotny faction in the Central Committee. The session ended abruptly without a vote on the issue of Novotny’s continuing rule; but it highlighted his vulnerability to progressive forces and, thus, marked the beginning of the end of his political career.\textsuperscript{112}

Between the October 1967 plenum and early January 1968, Novotny naturally sought to save his own position. It was probably Novotny who, in his capacity of First Secretary of the Central Committee extended that committee’s urgent invitation to Brezhnev to come to Prague. Brezhnev’s presence reportedly shifted the predominantly anti-Novotny line up in the 10-member Presidium of the party from the original 8-2 to 5-5. However, a subsequent Central Committee plenum, in session

\textsuperscript{110} ibid, p.125.

\textsuperscript{111} ibid, p.127.

from 19-21 December 1967, resolved that Novotny should be ousted from the party leadership and established a commission to choose a successor.113

On 3 January 1968 the Central Committee again convened a three-day plenary session and resolved to replace Novotny with Alexander Dubeck, thus marking the first time in Czechoslovak communist history that a Slovak was to hold the highest party post in the land. It also decided on some general principles to become known, as the "January course" to humanize and democratize communism in Czechoslovakia.114 Thus began a brief period of ferment - a "quite revolution", that was to transform the politics of Czechoslovakia until the massive military intervention by the Warsaw Pact succeeded in gradually restricting the communist orthodoxy. The Dubeck leadership managed to give the appearance of being in control of the country, even while it gained immense popularity - a situation quite normal in democracies, but highly unusual in communist systems. Dubeck's first major speech at the party's Central Committee in late January 1968, represented a radical break with the past or, to put it differently, provided a clear view of the future. Reviewing the two decades of communist rule in Czechoslovakia, Dubeck cited Gottwald's words on following "our own specific path" and creating a new type of democracy but who in reality reiterated the importance of strengthening unity and fraternal cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. He admitted that many unresolved questions had accumulated and referred specifically to economic difficulties, the conflict with intelligentsia and problems of youth. He spoke at some length about

113 Crampton, n.31, p.325.
Czechoslovak relations and stressed both national equality and Czechoslovak "statehood".\textsuperscript{115} In general, the key to reform, Dubcek declared was in the political sphere, where there must be an end to the directive methods of the past and a new activity to replace previous passivity. The leading role of the party, however, could not be questioned, he declared quoting Gottwald again, that the party must "lead the masses" and not command them.\textsuperscript{116}

Dubcek’s brilliant phrase, "Socialism with human face", rang throughout the free world. Eloquent in its simplicity and succinct in its meaning, it summed up the programme of the Marxist reformers: to preserve the egalitarian principles of socialism and, at the same time, to imbue the society with the values of humanism.\textsuperscript{117}

The dramatic changes in national leadership had a fundamental impact on the nature and scope of the reform activities. Once impelled into national power, Dubcek did not hesitate to contribute his own ideas to new programmes and to provide inspiring leadership.\textsuperscript{118}

By March 1968, the reform movement assumed an entirely new character. The focal point shifted to the masses who, through spontaneous action forced the regimes had on number of measures, converting the revolution into a mass movement.

During the preceding years, writings had been limited to scholarly and political-literary journals which primarily criticized Stalinist practices. After January 1968, writings had been limited to scholarly and political-literary journals which primarily criticized Stalinist practices. After January 1968, writings had been limited to scholarly and political-literary journals which primarily criticized Stalinist practices. After January 1968, writings had been limited to scholarly and political-literary journals which primarily criticized Stalinist practices. After January 1968, writings had been limited to scholarly and political-literary journals which primarily criticized Stalinist practices.

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{116} Skilling, n.3, p.185.
\item\textsuperscript{117} Kintner and Klaiber, n.112, p.279.
\item\textsuperscript{118} Korbel, n.11, p.286.
\end{footnotes}
daily papers including the party organ, Rude Pravo joined the battle. Radio and television, once plagued with officially imposed dullness, were turned on again with eagerness and curiosity. All mass media were entirely freed and they played leading role in the process of revival.\textsuperscript{119}

Criticism of the past turned into constructive demands for the correction of the present. The old dogmas fell victim to new, creative propositions.\textsuperscript{120} The word democracy abused for decades by communist propagandists regained its true meaning - not a single party people's government but a pluralistic government by the people. Economic socialism was to be accompanied by personal and political freedom. The nation was to find in its own history a fountain of moral inspiration. Slovakia was to have full satisfaction of her claim to equality with Czech lands in a constitutional federation.\textsuperscript{121} The advocates of these momentous changes, all of them communists, were convinced that ideologically speaking, they were writing a new and glorious chapter in the history of Marxism.

The reformers' ideas were embodied in a number of documents, drafted by prominent individuals and various interest groups, including the party itself. Most important of all was the voluminous and comprehensive what was called 'Action programme' adopted in April 1968 by the Central Committee.\textsuperscript{122} This was an eclectic document, quite general in its provisions and thus left a great deal to be

\begin{flushright}

120 Svilak, n.101, p.113.

121 ibid, p.118.

122 ibid, pp.120-22.
\end{flushright}
concretely determined in future laws and measures. As stated in the text, the programme comprised the tasks, designs and aims of the immediate future and would be followed by a long-term programme. Dubcek in a speech to the prague aktir on the day before publication, called it an "open document" which opens the door to structural changes and a new dynamism of society corresponding to the specific national conditions of Czechoslovakia. Dubcek noted that the programme, as he put it, was a "first step toward a new democratic model of socialist society".

The programme rehabilitated the "policy of Czechoslovakia's road to socialism" during the three post war years and, mixing severe criticism of the past with constructive proposals for the future, it stressed the importance of recognizing the various needs and interests of individual people and social groups.

The Action Programme called for such pragmatic measures as putting an end to income equalization and for applying the principles of remuneration according to quantity, quality and social usefulness of work. The economy of the country must be democratized, and the economic policy must not be blunted "by taking from those who work well and giving to those who work badly." Enterprises must become independent and their management accountable to democratically elected bodies. Trade unions must serve the interests of the workers, not the party. The socialist economy must introduce flexible market mechanism.

123 Skilling, n.3, p.219.
124 ibid.
126 ibid, p.89.
Agricultural production and cooperatives must be more efficient. The primary concern of the reformers was to determine their own affairs, from management and day to day operations to competing on the market.\textsuperscript{127} Thus Action Programme said, it will be useful to make individual cooperatives independent, self contained, and fully authorized economic and social organizations, to abolish the ineffective administrative centralization of cooperatives.\textsuperscript{128} Among the first concrete steps the Action Programme envisaged to achieve the above goals were: permission for cooperative forms to engage in business activity in other sectors and perhaps most important, the right and possibility of direct sales of part of farm production to the people and to the retail trade system. No clear cut decision on this matter was, however, announced by the regime.\textsuperscript{129}

The Action Programme further stipulated that the entire political system, guaranteed by a new Constitution, must be reformed to "permit a new dynamic development of socialist social relations", to ensure "freedom of assembly and association", and to make certain "legal norms to provide a more precise guarantee of the freedom of speech for minority interests and opinions" and protect in a "better and more consistent way the personal rights and property of citizens."\textsuperscript{130}

The National Assembly was to be a socialist parliament with all the scope for action, the parliament of a democratic republic must have and the party must take

\begin{itemize}
\item[127] Korbel, n.11, p.287.
\item[128] ibid, p.288.
\item[129] ibid, p.290.
\item[130] Remington, n.125, p.91.
\end{itemize}
steps to make the government responsible to the national assembly.\footnote{131 ibid, p.92.} The executive, legislative and judicial responsibilities were to be delineated and separated from each other. Courts, the Programme stated, must be independent of political factors and bound only by law. Political power must be diffused and the ministry of the interior which had assumed an undue concentration of powers must be reduced to become only a department for internal state administration. Rehabilitation of the victims of illegal trials and purges must be carried out in all its political and civic consequences.\footnote{132 ibid, pp.128-30.}

The Action Programme met fully the demands of the Slovak nation. After all other ideas - centralization, autonomy and even secession had been explored and rejected or proven unsuccessful, the relation between Czechs and Slovaks were at last to be based on the principle of complete equality in the form of a federation.\footnote{133 Robert W. Dean, \textit{Nationalism and Political Change in Eastern Europe: The Slovak Question and the Czechoslovak Reform Movement} (Denver: Monogram Series in World Affairs, 1973), p.31.} A new constitution would preclude, in particular, the possibility of outvoting the Slovak nation in legal issue concerning relations between Czechs and Slovaks and the constitutional status of Slovakia. Even these guarantees were being further extended, though the ever suspicious Slovaks addressed the old warning to the Czechs that "should inequality perpetuated, the Slovaks would find their own way to meet their goals, even if this means separation and the foundation of an independent socialist state."\footnote{134 ibid, pp.32-33.}
With regard devoted to education and culture the Action Programme asked for basic reforms in education, improvements in educational standards, the self management of universities, academic freedom, and access to foreign literature, equal opportunities for education, and assurance of the recognition of the prestige, authority and social importance of the educators. The Programme considered that the care for culture was not only the concern of the cultural front, but of the entire society.135 Rejecting bureaucratic and administrative methods of implementing cultural policy, it called for complete freedom of cultural expression and a return to culture's traditionally humanistic tasks.

The Action Programme was the work of combined forces, the intellectuals and some top officials of the Party. The essential concepts, however, were produced by the ever-growing ranks of writers, scholars, journalists, commentators, and artists who even after the publication of the Action Programme, continued to propound ideas that went even beyond its intent.136

In June, came a statement called "2000 words" which became the most eloquent document of that period. It shook the top echelon of the party, even among the supporters of the reform movement and it created a furore in Moscow.137 The statement was addressed to workers, farmers, scientists, artists and all people and was signed by some 150 persons, including scholars, writers, artists and three olympic champions and, most importantly, perhaps many workers and farmers. It

---

135 Remington, n.125, p.136.
136 ibid, p.35.
137 Kintner and Klaiber, n.112, p.204.
contained a scathing attack on the past practices of the party. Then, pointing to the many officials who still opposed change, the appeal insisted that there must be no slackening of effort, that the "aim of humanizing this regime" must be fulfilled. Let us establish committees for the defense of freedom of expression.\textsuperscript{138}

*Pravda*, on 22 August 1968 called "2000 words" an open call to struggle against the constitutional power. *Pravda* then revealed that, apparently on the same day when the statement appeared, the leadership of the Soviet party called Dubcek’s attention to the danger of this document as a platform for further activization of counter-revolutionary actions.\textsuperscript{139} He replied that the central committee presidium is considering the problem that the appeal will be given the sharpest evaluation, and that the most decisive measures will be taken.

The action programme went so far as to state that Czechoslovakia would take its own stand on basic issues of world policy, participate actively in European affairs and improve its relations with western Europe while, at the same time, maintaining its alliance with the Soviet Union and other members of the Warsaw Treaty Organization on a basis of equality.\textsuperscript{140}

Amidst this electrifying atmosphere, the reins of the party changed hands. Novotny was dismissed from the presidency of the Republic and expelled from the Central Committee of the party and replaced by simple-minded Ludvik Svoboda. The party’s chief ideologist, Jiri Hendrych was also dismissed, and the party was now led,

\textsuperscript{138} ibid, p.284.

\textsuperscript{139} ibid, p.285.

\textsuperscript{140} Korbel, n.11, p.296.
without any physical liquidation of the opposition, by the liberals - Dubcek, Josef Smrkovsky, Kriegd, Cernik, Cestimir Cesar, and Josef Spacek. These men spoke on many occasions, before a wide variety of audiences and the themes of their addresses were: the Czechoslovak tradition of democracy and progress, the Czechoslovak road to socialism, the necessity of freedom of expression, inter-party democracy, the need for a reformed socialist economy and humanism and the dignity of man.

They exercised caution on one delicate issue, the position of the party in the reformed society. Partly because of pressure from Moscow, partly because of their own concern about the party's future, the leaders were against any ideas of permitting, at least as yet, a genuinely pluralistic system that would allow political parties outside the National Front.

The anti-reformists who remained in the party leadership waged a bitter counterattack. In spite of such flurries of retreat and reaction, however, the hurricane of reform continued to sweep the nation and its most important effect - transformation of the party continued. In 1968, new party statutes were published, to be submitted to the Fourteenth Congress. It was a refreshing document, its introductory section pledged allegiance to the "international communist and revolutionary movement", to the "principle of proletarian internationalism and socialist patriotism", and to the "fraternal relations and collaboration of the Czechoslovak

141 ibid, p.298.
142 ibid, p.299.
143 ibid, p.301.
people with the Soviet people." However, it also linked the CPC with the national, democratic and revolutionary traditions of the Czechoslovak people, stating further that the party was a deeply humanistic party one which wanted to preserve its vanguard mission in the struggle for socialism, democracy, human justice, freedom, and the humanistic ideals of communism in our country."144

There was talk of reform was everywhere, and the whole country became enveloped in an atmosphere of real liberation. New associations and clubs were formed and issued statements, all carrying messages of freedom and socialist humanism.145 The circle of independent writers published a declaration reminding the nation of the values of "humanity, cultural freedom, and independence and made it clear that the country could not even approach the ideals of socialism as long as that was interpreted as the anti-thesis of democracy."146

From the moment the revolt of the intellectuals began to attack the party itself, the communist parties of the Warsaw Pact countries, who gave full political and moral support to their comrades in Prague, watched the developments in Czechoslovakia with increasing suspicion. They mounted a careful orchestrated campaign of criticism, starting with admonitions veiled in familiar communist phraseology, progressing to open accusation and threats, and culminating in military invasion.147

In March 1968, the leaders of the communist parties in the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia met in Dresden. The meetings

---

144 For the text of the statutes, see Remington, n.125, pp.267-87.
145 Korbel, n.11, p.301.
146 ibid.
147 ibid.
communique asked for increased vigilance against the aggressive intentions and subversive actions of the imperialist forces, emphasized the necessity for further consolidation of the socialist countries and expressed confidence that the working class and all the working people of Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, under the leadership of the Communist Party, would ensure the further development of the socialist construction in the country.148

On 15 July representatives of five communist parties met in Warsaw and sent letter to the Czechoslovak Party’s Central Committee, making their position and demands unmistakably clear. The letter expressed profound anxiety over what they called "the reactionary offensive, supported by imperialism against the party and Czechoslovakia’s social system thus endangering the interests of the entire socialist system." While professing that they did not wish to interfere in the planning of socialist economy, they could not allow hostile forces to create the threat that Czechoslovakia may break away from the socialist commonwealth. The letter stated unequivocably that this was no longer the internal affair of Czechoslovakia.149

The Soviet Response

On 21 August 1968 troops of five Warsaw Pact nations crossed the borders of Czechoslovakia. The governments of Bulgaria, East Germany, Hungary and Poland each in its own way had a significant part in determining the tragic fate of the Prague spring.150 However, there is little doubt that, while the Soviet Union’s East European

148 Remington, n.125, pp.55-57.
149 ibid, pp.137-8.
150 Dimitri K. Simes, "The Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Limits of (continued...)
allies could submit their advice and presumably exert political pressure, only the Soviet leadership had the authority to launch the invasion. It was up to the Kremlin to make the difficult decision between continuing the attempts to influence development in Czechoslovakia by political means and using the Moscow controlled Warsaw Pact military machine. The Soviets chose the later option.\(^\text{151}\)

There are two major approaches to analysing the Soviet decision-making process. The first focuses on general Soviet political, ideological and strategic doctrines as well as on Soviet interests with regard to specific cases. The second focuses on Soviet bureaucratic politics, assuming that actions of the Soviet leadership were determined by a number of bureaucratic influences and pressures.\(^\text{152}\)

The two approaches have much in common. Most adherents of the first agree that bureaucratic interests played an important role in Soviet decision-making. Yet it should be pointed out that, while routine cases in bureaucratic politics dominated Soviet policy formulation, in crisis situations all factions of the Soviet ruling elite demonstrated a significant ability to act in concert on the basis of interests vital to the regime.\(^\text{153}\)

All senior Soviet decision-makers must have been disturbed by Czechoslovak reformism. They evidently agreed that the political situation in Czechoslovakia had

\(^{150}(...continued)\)

\(^{151}\) ibid, p.175.

\(^{152}\) ibid, p.177.

to be stabilized and they seem to have recognised that the situation might require the use of military force. Thus covert preparation for military action and possible intervention began in the early stages of the crisis - February-March 1968. In fact, the military build-up had been accomplished by late June or early July but the political decision to invade Czechoslovakia was taken only in late August after a long process of pulling and hauling among the senior decision makers. Each player, depending on his bureaucratic position, domestic interests and personal background gave a somewhat different reading of the Czechoslovak issue.

The decision makers responsible for domestic affairs were especially concerned about the affect Prague reformism might have on the Soviet Union. In the perception of the Ukraine party bureaucracy and its head P.E. Shelist as well as of other party bureaucrats in the Soviet Union’s non-Russian republics like P.M. Masheror and Lithuanian leader A.V. Snechokus, deviant ideas of reformism and federalism could spill over from Czechoslovakia to encourage nationalism in their own republics.

Even Mikhail Suslov, the chief Soviet Communist Party ideologue, who was usually considered a Soviet hardliner was among the skeptics of the Soviet leadership about the wisdom of armed intervention in Czechoslovakia. The same was basically true with regard to another politburo member, Alexander Shelepin. He like Suslov,  


often considered an extreme conservative tended to favour the moderate side with regard to the invasion of Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{156}

There were substantial disagreements within the Soviet ruling elite over the formulation of an appropriate response to developments in Czechoslovakia. The bureaucratic interests of the Soviet players determined their stands on the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Even before the Soviet leadership was confronted with the Czechoslovak issue, two coalition had emerged within the politburo: the technocrat reformers, allied in a certain way with foreign policy internationalists and the hardliners.\textsuperscript{157}Thus, the debate over Czechoslovakia intensified the contradictions among the Soviet decision-makers. As a result of disagreements between the intervention politburo coalition and the moderate coalition, the politburo moderates were defeated. Thus, the decision to invade Czechoslovakia was made under the pressure of the politburo hard-liners supported by some bureaucratic elites.\textsuperscript{158}

The institutional and bureaucratic affiliations of the Soviet decision-makers had a significant influence on their perceptions of events in Czechoslovakia. However, interestingly, the coalition that emerged in the process of the debate corresponded only to a small extent to institutional lines. Rather, they tended to reflect the functional responsibilities of their members. Representatives of the party apparatus, government agencies, and the military establishment were to be found in both camps.\textsuperscript{159} The composition of both coalition was based on functional rather than

\textsuperscript{156} Valenta, n.154, p.56.
\textsuperscript{157} ibid, p.57.
\textsuperscript{158} Simes, n.150, p.176.
\textsuperscript{159} ibid, p.177.
institutional interests, and those who were doves with regard to Czechoslovakia could easily become hawks with regard to some other international crisis. Here it shows that the interests of the Soviet decision-makers were not necessarily consistent and they varied from issue to issue.\textsuperscript{160}

It seems that certain differences existed between functional and bureaucratic interests. Bureaucratic interests corresponded not only with specific functional responsibilities, but also with loyalties and bureaucratic affiliations and as a rule they played only a marginal role. The supreme loyalty of the politburo members was to the politburo itself. These Soviet officials considered themselves as politburo representatives in their respective bureaucracies rather than as representatives of these bureaucracies in the politburo.\textsuperscript{161}

There is no hard evidence to suggest that there were outright opponents to the intervention within the Soviet leadership.\textsuperscript{162} Advocates of military intervention were found in the department of liaison with ruling workers and communist parties of the CPSU Central Committee apparatus. In addition, the committee for state security and representatives of the conventional armed forces, especially those concerned with Warsaw Pact problems, were counted among advocates of armed intervention. Among the skeptics on the issue of armed intervention were the international department of the CPSU central committee apparatus, certain departments divisions of the foreign ministry and some government agencies.\textsuperscript{163}

\textsuperscript{160} ibid, p.178.
\textsuperscript{161} Valent, n.154, p.156.
\textsuperscript{162} ibid, p.159.
\textsuperscript{163} Simes, n.150, p.178.
One group of advocates argued that the invasion was necessary to forestall the serious damage to Soviet political, economic and military interests in East Europe. A second group of advocates was primarily concerned about the potential domestic impact of developments in Czechoslovakia while alarmed that events in Czechoslovakia could, to some extent, shift the balance of forces in favour of the West. Skeptics of armed intervention, including powerful elements in the foreign policy establishment, warned that an invasion could jeopardize Soviet hopes of achieving some kind of accommodation with western Europe and force independent-minded Europeans back into the arms of the United States. These skeptics pointed to the impact that such an action would have on world public opinion and the international communist movement. From the stand-point of the stability of Europe, an invasion could be counter-productive, ostracism of the Soviet Union by the West could work to the advantage of China, while a simultaneous consolidation of NATO could bring into reality the traditional nightmare of two-front threat.\textsuperscript{164}

What was involved in the Soviet decision-making on the Czechoslovak issue had more to do with the conflict among different Soviet foreign and domestic policy interests - as voiced by the various bureaucracies than with the conflict of intra-party order and discipline. But Premier Kosygin, who was responsible for governmental diplomacy and was an advocate of the Non-proliferation treaty and an early start of to SALT talks with the United States, feared the detrimental effects of intervention.\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{164} ibid, p.179.

Brezhnev took lead in opposing Kosygin just as Khrushchev had opposed Malenkov's policy of peaceful coexistence in 1954. Brezhnev fully endorsed the decision of the hard-liners and announced a new hard-line policy of military intervention, which subsequently came to be known as "Brezhnev doctrine". Brezhnev in his address to the Polish party congress in November 1968, implicitly endorsed the doctrine by proclaiming the necessity of military action to protect the sovereignty of socialist country if socialism were threatened by "external and internal forces hostile to socialism". Such military assistance, he declared, was "an extraordinary measure, dictated by necessity; it can be called and beyond its boundaries, actions that create a threat to the common interests of the socialist camp."\textsuperscript{166} The Second Warsaw Pact summit held in July 1960 issued a letter to the Czechoslovak Presidium which stated the rationale for limited socialist sovereignty that was to justify military invasion:

We cannot... agree that enemy forces should divert your country from the path of socialism and expose Czechoslovakia to the danger of being torn from the socialist community. This is no longer your affair alone, this is the affair of all communist and workers parties and all countries which are linked by alliances, cooperation, and friendship. As Brezhnev said we cannot and never will be indifferent to the fate of socialist construction in other countries.\textsuperscript{167}

At 11 p.m. on 20 August 1968 the troops of members of the Warsaw pact led by Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia. On the morning of 21 August the citizens of Prague awoke to the rumble of Warsaw pact tanks rolling through their streets, for them it was the dawn of a new era. Soviet Union and its allies conducted full scale

\textsuperscript{166} L.Labedz, "Czechoslovakia and After", \textit{Survey}, no.69, October 1968, pp.10-13.

\textsuperscript{167} \textit{Current Digest of Soviet Press}, 4 December 1968, pp.3-4.
military intervention in Czechoslovakia to uphold the socialist system not only in Czechoslovakia but in the entire East Europe.

As a result of military intervention, Dubcek’s rule came to an end in April 1969, eight months after invasion. On 28 March when Czechoslovakia defeated Soviet Union in ice hockey for a second time, massive anti-Soviet demonstration erupted in several Czechoslovak cities and resulted in some damage to Soviet property. Moscow took this event as a pretext for a full scale attack on the Czechoslovak leadership. It demanded a purge of the ruling Presidium and a speedy “normalization” - Soviet style. On 17 April the Czechoslovak Central Committee voted to reorganize the Presidium, Dubcek had to step down, Gustav Husak took his place. In the new Presidium, hard-liners held the balance. The stage was thus set for a return to ‘normalcy’.

Conclusion

In the years 1945 to 1948 Czechoslovakia managed to continue with the democratic tradition of the past, but this tradition was destroyed with the ruthless imposition of Soviet hegemony and system with vastly different circumstances. This alien Soviet system was carried forward by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia under the leadership of Novotny. The system was so rigid that it enabled the Communist Party to dominate and interfere in every sphere of life, more distinctly in economic and political areas, though not least in ideological and cultural fields. The party laid more emphasis on heavy industry neglecting the consumer and severe restrictions were imposed on freedom of movement, press and expression. As a

result of which Czechoslovakia had to suffer from ubiquitous crisis situations in almost every sphere of life.

Apart from affecting various facets of life the crisis of Czechoslovak communism evoked discontent among nearly all social groups, especially the youth, the intellectuals, workers and peasants and in increasing degree, the rank and file and the functionaries of the party. These forces demanded a radical change in the system and started their revolutionary movement to bring about what they understood significant changes in the theory and practice of Czechoslovak socialism. This nationwide movement was seen by the Soviet Union as a dangerous threat to the principle of socialism in East Europe in general and Czechoslovakia in particular and from which even the Soviet system could not remain immune for long. This basically explains the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia and the restoration of the communist orthodoxy in that country after a brief and refreshing spell of liberal reformism. That also largely explains the overall political, strategic, ideological and socio-economic attitude and policy of the Soviet Union towards East European countries who, in the wake of Cold War, had been virtually reduced to the level of protectorates constituting a buffer zone between the West and the Soviet Union. Although the Czechoslovak reform movement was crushed in 1968, it did leave behind a set of martyred ideas whose grandiose resurrection the entire East Europe could witness in 1989 leading to the fall of socialist regimes one after another.