

# V. Karalasingham

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68

CECHOVAKIA





# Czechoslovakia (1968)



1824. 1824. 1824.



NO 7C

# **Czechoslovakia (1968)**

By

**V. Karalasingham**

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*The translation of Two Thousand Words is from the Times Literary Supplement of 18th July 1968.*

*The names on the front cover are of Communists from the U. S. S. R., G. D. R., Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, who are identified in one way or another in the struggle for proletarian democracy.*

*The drawing on the back cover is a reproduction of one of the hundreds of posters which appeared in Prague on 21st August, 1968. Like the others, this expresses the Leninist character of the Czech resistance to the Soviet occupation.*

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TO

Pavel Litvinov  
Larissa Daniel  
Konstantin Babitsky  
Valdimir Dremlyuga  
Vadim Delone

Citizens of the USSR and true upholders of the Leninist tradition of socialist internationalism and proletarian democracy, who on 10th October, 1968, were sentenced by a Moscow City Court to varying periods of exile for having, on 25th August 1968, in the Red Square, Moscow, participated in a demonstration against the Soviet invasion of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

TO THE HONORABLE

MEMBERS OF THE

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

OF THE PROVINCE OF

NEW SOUTH WALES

IN CONNECTION WITH

THE PROPOSED

AMENDMENT OF THE

LAND ACT, 1908

AND THE

LAND ACQUISITION ACT, 1908

BY

THE

GOVERNMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES



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## THE BACKGROUND

What is surprising is not that Czechoslovakia accomplished a political revolution but that it took so long to reach fruition. The controlled revolution of 1948 not only created the new social framework of nationalized property but imposed on that country the Stalinist political regime. The revolutionary impulse of the masses was checked and carefully directed precisely to ensure that the resulting political structure conformed to the pattern of the degenerated workers' state of Stalin's Russia. In the very success of the then Czech Communist leadership was embedded the seeds of future conflict, since Czechoslovakia, unlike the other East European countries, was an industrially developed country, almost on par with the advanced countries of West Europe. The combination of a developed industrial economy and a police regime was incongruous, to say the least.

Despite this fundamental contradiction, Stalinism survived in Czechoslovakia through the thaw which followed the death of Stalin, the reverberations of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the Polish "spring" in October 1956 and the Budapest uprising of the Hungarian workers. But the survival of a regime of terror, which in the conditions of Czechoslovakia lacked even the *raison d'être* of the original Stalinist system, soon revealed the impossibility of maintaining the economic progress of an advanced country. Thus, according to *The Economist*, "by 1962 national income had stopped growing; in 1963 it actually fell and recovered to its 1962 level only during 1965." (August 19, 1967). In this stagnation and decline of the economy is expressed both the silent protest of the working class against the denial of socialist democracy and the negative proof that without political democracy there can be no economic progress in the nationalized economy of an advanced country.

Behind the stern facade of the Novotny regime, however, the molecular process of upheaval was at work and the intellectuals, in particular the writers, soon gave expression to the deep unrest. By the middle of last year, a series of expulsions of writers followed and, towards the end of the year, the students joined in public demonstrations against the regime. The unrest in the country was soon reflected within the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the first major shift of power occurred: in January 1968, President Novotny gave place to Alexander Dubcek as First Secretary of the party. A short lived demagogic attempt to play the workers against the "intellectuals" ended in a fiasco. The failure of the attempted *coup d'etat* of General Sejna, the military leader of the Novotny faction, and his prearranged flight thereafter, to the United States, soon brought the masses into direct political participation, in defiance of all the old repressive laws. In March 22, in response to popular pressure which culminated in a mammoth meeting in Prague of workers and students, Novotny resigned the Presidency and, like in all revolutions, a breathtaking sequence of events followed, in the wake of mass intervention.

Vladimir Janko, a Deputy Defence Minister, committed suicide soon after the cabinet had discussed his involvement in the defection of General Sejna. The praesidium of Parliament condemned the illegal activities of Jan Kudrna, the Minister of the Interior, the Director of the Secret Police, and the Attorney General Jan Batusek, and on the next day the new government demanded their resignation. The workers came into the lead, and significantly, the leading position here was occupied by the miners at Kladno and the workers of the CKD Sokolov machine plant in Prague who, in the ranks of the Czech working class, occupy a position comparable to that held by the workers of the Putilov works in the revolutionary Petrograd of 1905 and 1917. In



their joint statement which soon became the charter of the Czechoslovak working class, they demanded (1) an early meeting of the Central Committee to adopt the "democratic" action programme (2) the early dismissal of those "unfit for office" and (3) a thorough analysis of the causes which allowed the outrages of the past in order to ensure that the "process of democratization becomes a permanent feature in the development of the party and of the whole of society." (*World Outlook* 29th March 1968).

In the mass media of the country, in press, radio and television, a veritable public debate took place on the origin of Stalinism, the place and role of proletarian democracy, the importance of democracy in a nationalized economy, etc. The vanguard was going back or, rather groping its way to, Lenin and Bolshevism. And appropriately, *Literarni Listy*, the journal of the Writers Union, commenced on April 27th to serialize Isaac Deutscher's *Unfinished Revolution*, with a remarkably warm appreciation of his other writings including the trilogy on Leon Trotsky.

The essence of a revolution is ultimately expressed in the disregard of existing laws by the people in revolt and it can truly be said that in respect of the rights of expression and assembly the revolutionary people of Czechoslovakia were asserting and exercising them, even though the old laws continued for a time to be on the statute book. By the end of April, the laws were made to conform to the new reality and the government repealed the old censorship laws of the Novotny regime. And such was the revolutionary atmosphere in the country that even secret police personnel resigned in substantial numbers and those that remained wanted a clear definition of their powers within the framework of civil rights.

In the early stages of every revolution, the remnants of the old power in a futile attempt to save some of their privileges and later, to restore the *status quo ante*, pay due reverence to the new mood of the masses. So too, the diehard Stalinists, though defeated in the Central Committee but by no means vanquished, paid lip service to democratization but were marking time to make a last ditch stand at the Party Congress scheduled for September. And every revolution is soon confronted with the task of eliminating the "loyalists" of the old regime in order to stabilize the new power. Very early in the struggle the advanced workers had proclaimed the need to dismiss those "unfit for office," thereby instinctively recognizing the danger that these sections represented. The preparatory work for the forthcoming Party Congress inevitably raised, as an urgent question, the removal of all officials tainted with the abuses and crimes of the Novotny era. In furtherance of that historically necessary struggle a group of Czech Communists produced the now celebrated document *2000 Words* which was published on June 26th in the *Literarni Listy* and 3 other journals.

The right wing "Communists," the adherents of the former President Novotny, availed of the new freedom of expression—a freedom which they had for so long suppressed—and commenced a campaign of vilification and distortion of the document *2000 Words*. They promptly raised the matter in the National Assembly which since the revolutionary spring of 1968 was no longer the rubber stamp it was under the regime of President Novotny. It had truly become the forum of the awakened people under the new chairmanship of Josef Smrkovsky, himself one of the leaders in the fight against Novotny. General Samuel Kodaj led the attack denouncing it as a "call to counter revolution" and demanded that the prosecutor-general take suitable action. What had incensed the Right faction was the call to "Public



criticism, demonstrations, resolutions, strikes and boycotts to bring down people who have misused power and caused public harm," and Josef Smrkovsky in permitting the Right to air their irrational denunciation of the appeal had demonstrated how genuine was the new democracy. The rage of the Right and the Stalinist method of criticism which the Novotny dregs employed only served to rally new support within the party in favour of the leadership and contributed further to the isolation of the diehards.

The cry of an aged and impotent general in the Czech national assembly was however, soon taken up by the majority in the Praesidium of the Soviet Communist Party and in the Warsaw letter of the Soviet, Polish, GDR, Hungarian and Bulgarian parties, the "counter-revolution,, was identified with the Communist authors of *2000 Words*. A good portion of that letter deals with this document, and while no attempt was made to answer it, it was characterised as an "organizational-political platform of counter-revolution." To avoid all misunderstanding, the entire section dealing with the document *2000 Words* in the Warsaw letter is given below: "Despite the decisions of the May plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia which pointed to the threat on the part of right wing and anti-communist forces as the main danger, the intensified attacks of reaction met with *no* resistance. This is precisely why reaction obtained the possibility publicly to appear before the country, to publish its political platform under the name of "Two Thousand Words," which contains an open appeal to struggle against the Communist Party and against the constitutional authority, an appeal to strikes and disturbances. This appeal constitutes a serious threat to the party, the National Front, the socialist state: constitutes an attempt to implant anarchy.

"In fact this statement constitutes an organizational-political platform of counter-revolution. No one should be deceived by the assurances of its authors that they do *not* want to overthrow the socialist system, that they do *not* want to act without the communists, that they do *not* want to break the alliances with the socialist countries. Those are empty phrases aimed at legalizing the platform of counter-revolution, to deceive the vigilance of the party of the working class and all working people.

"This platform widely circulated in the crucial period preceding the extraordinary congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia *not* only was *not* rejected, but even found open supporters within the ranks of the party and its leadership, who support the anti-socialist appeals." (*The Times*, 19th July 1968) (Emphasis in original).

The wild allegation quoted above is about the only "concretization" which the Moscow bureaucracy permitted itself of the Czech "counter-revolution," and the importance of the Warsaw letter today lies in that delineation. Now it transpires that the counter revolution which so alarmed the Stalinist majority in the Soviet Communist Party was the publication of the document..... *Two Thousand Words!*

The full text of *Two Thousand Words* is published in the next chapter and the reader can himself see how baseless is the allegation that it constituted "the platform of the counter-revolution." There are plenty of criticisms which could legitimately be made - not the least, its utterly parochial character - but to label it counter-revolutionary is to confess total bankruptcy and betray a police-bureaucratic mind. This of course is the very essence of Stalinism which the fakers of the Left and the Right attempt to palm off as Bolshevism. To understand how Bolshevism treated dissident



opinion within its ranks, one need only recall the way Lenin treated the "Left" Communists led by Bukharin who in their opposition to the proposed treaty of Brest not only organized a faction but issued a public factional journal, *Kommunist*, in March 1918. Although in those critical days, the new Soviet power was held by a bare thread, Lenin argued his way to winning over the opponents of his peace policy. He no doubt polemicized sharply but the familiar and fashionable Stalinist epithets and denunciations – counter-revolutionary, fascist, imperialist agent, etc – were completely foreign to him and the whole Bolshevik school.

But Stalinism needs these because of its congenital incapacity to conduct a political argument, particularly where the opposition represents in however inadequate a way, the historic interests of the working class and the socialist revolution. Throughout its history all such currents have been denounced as "fascist" or "imperialist" and it is in that alien and disloyal tradition that the document *Two Thousand Words* was characterized as the platform of the counter-revolution.

That document was anything but counter-revolutionary. Its central purpose was to take forward, on the basis of the socialist foundation of the economy, the Czechoslovak political revolution which commenced with the overthrow of Novotny. Only conscienceless men, hacks and scribblers who will write anything on command, like the anonymous "Press Group of Soviet Journalists," who understand neither the working of Soviet democracy nor the ethics of communist journalism and are distinguishable from their professional colleagues of the "yellow" capitalist press only in their servility to a different master, can write as follows: "The authors of the 'Two Thousand Words' extoll in effect bourgeois Czechoslovakia and do not conceal their liking for the

capitalist system." It is at this level of lies and falsehoods that the propaganda machine of the Stalinist bureaucracy operates.

The document's criticisms of the bureaucratic and totalitarian past is equated with an attack on socialism, while its concern to ensure genuine socialist development is completely ignored and deliberately misrepresented. Soviet readers, treated like nuns in a convent of the Orthodox Church, were never given the full text of the original document but innumerable commentaries by dishonest and incompetent men, were served up. Here is an example of the working of the censorship laws which the Stalinist bureaucracy maintains to perpetuate its rule. No wonder the repeal of such laws in Czechoslovakia caused so much panic among the diehard Stalinists in Moscow. The fresh air of socialist ideas simply chokes them.

The importance of this document cannot be exaggerated. We have here in the words of a group of Czech Communists the predictable and dire consequences of 20 years of a bureaucratic single party state based on socialist property relations. It is plainly narrated and all the more startling is the picture of petrified social, economic and political life under such a regime – a cruel mockery of a socialist state! The signatories thereafter record the positive achievement of the first six months of the new power, viz, freedom of expression, and make a fervent appeal to the awakened for vigilance. The declaration made pointed reference to the forthcoming party congress, to the efforts of the remnants of the old bureaucratic power to stage a come back and on the need to maintain mass initiative as the bulwark against the recrudescence of bureaucratism. In proclaiming such a document "counter-revolutionary," the bureaucracy was employing its peculiar notation to indicate that its parasitism



is irreconcilable with proletarian democracy and that the movement for democratization is directed against its material interests. Just as the defence of bourgeois class interests is invariably expressed in "patriotic" slogans, so too the caste interests of the bureaucracy of a workers' state has necessarily to be translated into the popular language of the international workers' movement. Hence the bureaucracy's fight against democratization is projected on the world screen as the fight against "counter-revolution."

The historic document *Two Thousand Words* is required reading for the entire Left, not only to understand the fear, and therefore, the intolerance which grips the Stalinist school of the Soviet bureaucracy, but to show the real political axis of those Communists who defend Soviet military intervention in Czechoslovakia. In their conception of socialist democracy, the indubitably socialist ideas of the document *Two Thousand Words* find no place, even though the sponsors of this document are themselves members of the Communist Party. The followers of socialist and "non-conformist" Communist parties the world over have the right to know what will be the status of their respective organizations in the bureaucratic and monolithic conception of socialist democracy that is held by the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its defenders.

16th October, 1968.

## TWO THOUSAND WORDS

The first threat to our national life was the war. Then came other evil days, and events menacing to the nation's spiritual wellbeing and character. It was with high hopes that most of the nation welcomed the socialist programme. But its direction fell into the hands of the wrong people. It would not have mattered so much that they lacked adequate experience in affairs of state, factual knowledge or philosophical education, if only they had enough common prudence and decency to listen to the opinion of others and agree to being gradually replaced by more able men.

After enjoying great popular confidence immediately after the war, the Communist Party by degrees bartered this confidence away for office, till it had all the offices and nothing else. We have to say this, and it is well known to those of us who are communists and who are as disappointed as the rest at the way things turned out. The leaders' mistaken policies transformed a political party and an alliance based on ideas into an organization for exerting power, one which proved highly attractive to egotists itching to wield authority, to cowards with an eye to the main chance, to people with bad consciences. The influx of members such as these affected the character and behaviour of the Party, whose internal arrangements made it impossible – short of scandalous incidents – for honest members to gain influence and adapt it continuously to modern conditions. Many communists fought against this decline, but they did not manage to prevent what ensued.

Conditions inside the Communist Party served as pattern and cause for identical conditions in the State. The Party's



association with the State robbed it of the asset of separation from executive power. No one criticized the activities of the State and of the economic bodies. Parliament forgot how to hold proper debates, the Government forgot how to govern properly and managers how to manage properly. Elections lost their significance, the law carried no weight. We could not trust our representatives on any committee or, if we could, there was no point in asking them for anything because they were powerless. Worse still, we could scarcely trust one another. Personal and collective honour decayed. Honesty was a useless virtue, assessment by merit unheard of. Most people accordingly lost interest in public affairs, worrying only about themselves and about money, a further blot on the system being the impossibility today of relying even on the value of money. Personal relations were spoilt, there was no more joy in work, and the nation, in short, entered upon a period menacing to its spiritual wellbeing and its character.

We all of us bear responsibility for the present state of affairs. But those of us who are communists bear more than others, and those who acted as component parts, or as instruments, of unchecked power bear most of all. It was the power of a self-willed band of men, spreading out through the party apparatus into every district and community. It was this apparatus which decided what might and might not be done, which ran the cooperative farms for the cooperative farmers, ran the factories for the workers and ran the National Committees for the public. No organizations, not even communist ones, were really controlled by their own members. The chief sin and deception of these rulers was to have represented their own whims as the "will of the workers." Were we to accept this pretence, we would have to blame the workers today for the decline of our economy, for crimes committed against the innocent,



for the introduction of censorship to prevent any one writing about these things: the workers would be to blame for misconceived investments, trading losses and the housing shortage. Obviously no sensible person will believe the working class responsible for such things. We all know, and every worker, knows especially well that he had virtually no say in deciding anything. Working-class functionaries were given their voting instructions by somebody else. While many workers imagined that they were the rulers, it was a specially trained stratum of Party and State officials who ruled in their name. In effect it was these men who stepped into the shoes of the deposed ruling class and themselves came to constitute the new authority. Let us in fairness say that some of them long realized the bad trick history had played. We can recognize such individuals today by the way they are rectifying old wrongs, making good their blunders, handing back powers of decision to rank-and-file Party members and members of the public, setting limits to the authority and size of the bureaucracy. They share our opposition to backward views among Party members. But a large proportion of officials have been resistant to change and are still influential. They still wield the instruments of power especially at district and community level, where they can employ them in secret and without fear of prosecution.

Since the start of this year we have been experiencing a regenerative process of democratization. It started inside the Communist Party. We have to say this, and it is well known even to those communists amongst us who no longer had hopes of anything good emerging from that quarter. It must also be added, of course, that there was nowhere else where the process could have started. For after twenty years the communists were alone able to conduct some sort of political existence: it was only communist criticism which had any impact on courses of action; it was only the opposi-



tion inside the Communist Party which had the privilege of contact with antagonistic views. The effort and initiative now displayed by democratically-minded communists, then, is only a partial repayment of the debt owed by the entire Party to the non-communists whom it had been holding down in a position of inequality. No thanks, accordingly, are due to the Communist Party, though perhaps it should be granted that the Party is making an honest effort at the eleventh hour to save its own honour and the nation's. The regenerative process introduces nothing particularly new into our life. It revives ideas and topics many of which are older than the errors of our socialism, while others, having arisen below the surface of visible history, should long ago have found expression but were instead repressed. Let us not foster the illusion that it is the power of truth which now makes such ideas victorious. Their victory has been due rather to the weakness of the old leaders, evidently debilitated in advance by twenty years' of rule with no one standing in their way. All the defects hidden in the foundations and ideology of the system must clearly have reached their full maturity. So let us not overestimate the effect of the writers' and students' criticisms. The source of social changes is the economy. The true word makes its mark when it is spoken under conditions that have been properly prepared. Properly prepared conditions – in our context, that must unfortunately include the whole impoverishment of our society and the complete collapse of the old system of government under which a certain sort of politicians calmly and quietly compromised themselves at our expense. Truth, then, is not winning the day; truth is merely what remains when everything else has been frittered away. So there is no reason for national jubilation; simply for fresh hope.



At this moment of hope, albeit hope still threatened, we turn to you. It took several months before many of us believed it was safe to speak up; many of us do not think it safe even yet. But speak up we did, and we exposed ourselves so far that we have no choice but to complete our plan to humanize the regime. If we did not, the old forces would take a cruel revenge. We turn above all to those who so far have only waited. The time now approaching will decide the issue for years to come.

The time now approaching is the summer holiday time, when our inclination ingrained by habit will be to let everything slip. But it is a safe bet that our dear adversaries will give themselves no summer breathing-space: they will rally everyone who is under any obligation to them and take steps, even now, to ensure themselves a quiet Christmas! Let us watch carefully how things develop, let us try to understand them and have our answers ready. Let us drop the impossible demand that someone from on high should always provide us with a single explanation and a single, simple moral. Everyone will have to draw his own conclusions on his own responsibility. Common, agreed conclusions can only be reached in discussion, which requires freedom of speech – the only democratic achievement to our credit this year.

But in the days to come we must gird ourselves with our own initiative and make our own decisions.

To begin with we shall oppose the view sometimes heard that a democratic revival can be achieved without the communists, or even in opposition to them. This would be unjust, and foolish too. The communists have their organizations ready built, and in these we must support the progressive wing. They have their experienced officials, and they still have in their hands, after all, the crucial levers



and pressbuttons. On the other hand they have come before the public with their Action Programme. This is a programme for the first evening-out of the crassest inequalities, and no one else has a programme in such specific detail. We must demand that they produce local Action Programmes in public in every district and community. Then the issue will suddenly revolve around very ordinary and long-awaited acts of justice. The Czechoslovak Communist Party is preparing for its Congress, where it will elect its new Central Committee. Let us demand that it be a better Committee than the present one. Today the Communist Party says it is going to rest its position of leadership on the confidence of the public, and not on force. Let us believe that to the extent that we can believe the people it is now sending as delegates to the Party's district and regional conferences.

People have recently been worried that the democratization process has come to a halt. This feeling is partly a sign of fatigue after the excitement of events, but partly it reflects the truth. The season of astonishing revelations, dismissals from high office and heady speeches couched in language of unaccustomed daring—all this is over. But the struggle between opposing forces has merely become somewhat less open; the fight continues over the content and formulation of the laws, over the scope of practical measures. Besides, we must give the new people time for their work, the new ministers, prosecutors, chairmen and secretaries. They are entitled to time in which to prove themselves fit or unfit. Of the central political bodies, this is all that can be expected at present, though they have made a remarkably good showing despite themselves.

The everyday quality of our future democracy depends on what happens in the factories, and on what happens to the factories. Despite all our discussions, it is the

economic managers who have us in their grasp. Good managers must be sought out and promoted. True, we are all badly paid in comparison with people in the developed countries, some of us worse than others. We can ask for more money; money can be printed and so devalued. Let us rather ask the directors and the chairmen of boards to tell us what they want to produce and at what cost, who they want to sell it to and at what price, what profit will be made, and of that, how much will be reinvested in modernizing production and how much will be left over for distribution. Under dreary looking headlines a hard battle is being reflected in the press – the battle of democracy versus soft jobs. The workers, as entrepreneurs, can intervene in this battle by electing the right people to managements and works councils. And as employees they can help themselves best by electing as their trade union representatives natural leaders, able and honourable men without regard to party affiliation.

Though one cannot at present expect more of the central political bodies, it is urgent to achieve more at district and community level. Let us demand the departure of people who abused their power, damaged public property, acted dishonourably or brutally. Ways must be found of bringing them to resign. To mention a few: public criticism, resolutions, demonstrations, demonstrative work brigades, collections to buy presents for them on their retirement, strikes and picketing at their front doors. But we should reject any illegal, indecent or boorish methods, which they would exploit to bring influence to bear on Alexander Dubcek. Our aversion to the writing of rude letters must be expressed so completely that the only explanation for any such missives in future would be that their recipients had ordered them themselves. Let us revive the activity of the National Front. Let us demand public sessions of the National Committees.



For questions which no one else will look into, let us set up our own civic committees and commissions. There is nothing difficult about it: a few people gather together, elect a chairman, keep proper records, publish their findings, demand solutions, refuse to be shouted down. Let us convert the district and local newspapers, which had mostly degenerated to the level of official mouthpieces, into a platform for all the forward-looking elements in politics; let us demand that editorial boards be formed of National Front representatives, or else let us start new papers. Let us form committees for the defence of free speech. At our meetings, let us have our own staffs for ensuring order. If we hear strange reports, let us seek confirmation, let us send delegations to the proper authorities and publicize their answers, perhaps putting them up on front gates. Let us give support to the police when they are prosecuting genuine wrongdoers, for it is not our aim to create anarchy or a state of general uncertainty. Let us eschew quarrels between neighbours, and let us avoid drunkenness on political occasions. Let us expose informers.

The summer traffic throughout the Republic will enhance interest in the settlement of constitutional relations between Czechs and Slovaks. Let us consider federalization as a method of solving the question of nationalities, and otherwise merely as one of several important measures designed to democratize the system. In itself this particular measure may not necessarily give even the Slovaks a better life. The problem of government is not solved by having separate governments in the Czech lands and in Slovakia. Rule by a State and Party bureaucracy could still go on; in Slovakia indeed it might be strengthened by the claim that it had "won more freedom."

There has been great alarm recently over the prospect of foreign forces intervening in our developments. Whatever superior forces may face us, all we can do is to stick to our own positions, behave decently and start nothing ourselves. We can show our Government that we will stand by it, with weapons if need be, if it will do what we give it a mandate to do. And we can assure our allies that we shall observe our treaties of alliance, friendship and trade. Irritable reproaches and ill-argued suspicions on our part only make things harder for our Government, and bring no benefit to ourselves. In any case, the only way we can achieve relations of equality is to improve our domestic situation and carry the regenerative process so far as to elect one day statesmen with enough courage, honour and political sagacity to create such relations and keep them so. But this is a problem that faces all governments of small countries everywhere.

This spring a great opportunity came to us again, as it came after the end of the war. Again we have the chance to take into our own hands our common cause – which for working purposes we call socialism and give it a form more appropriate to our once good reputation, and to that fairly good opinion we originally had of ourselves. The spring is over and will never return. By winter we shall know all.

So ends our statement addressed to workers, farmers, officials, artists, scholars, scientists, technicians and everybody. It was written on the initiative of the scholars and scientists.

The attached signatures do not represent a complete list of our supporters, but a sample of members of various groups of the public whom we happened to reach.

**Beno Blachut**, National Artist, member of the National Theatre Opera in Prague; **Jan Brod**, Doctor of Medicine and Science, Professor and Director of the Prague Institute



for Diseases of the Blood Circulation; **Marie Buzkova**, pig breeder of Chotebuz; **Bohumil Bydzovsky**, Academician, Mathematician; **Jiri Cvekl**, Assistant Professor, doctor, philosopher; **Vera Caslavska**, Olympic medallist; **Zdenek Cechrak**, CKD (Ceskomoravska Kolben Danek-heavy industrial combine in Prague-liben) worker; **Zdenek Fiala**, CKD technician; **Milan Hanus**, CKD worker; **Jiri Hanzelka**, engineer, writer; **Miroslav Holub**, Doctor of Medicine, scientific worker of the Microbiological Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences; **Zdenek Holec**, CKD worker; **Rudolf Hrusinsky**, actor and stage manager; **Dusan Hruza**, CKD worker; **Jan Chocena**, private farmer of Chotebuz; **Jaromil Jires**, film producer; **Vilo Jurkovic**, Doctor of Medicine and Science, Professor and Head of the Second Internal Polyclinic of the Medical Faculty of Charles University in Hradec Králove; **Vera Kadlecova**, Doctor of Science, Head of the Ophthalmic Clinic of the Faculty Hospital of Charles University in Prague; **A. Knop**, Assistant Professor, Doctor, Pedagogical Institute in Ostrava; **Karel Kosik**, philosopher; **Jaromir Koutek**, Academician, geologist; **Otmar Krejca**, stage manager; **Jiri Kral**, Doctor of Medicine and Science, Professor and Head of the Prague Institute for Sports Medicine; **Miroslav Kral**, engineer and Candidate of Science of the Higher Political School of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee; **Karel Krautgartner**, Conductor of the Czechoslovak Radio Dance Orchestra; **Vladislav Kruta**, Doctor of Medicine and Science, Professor and Head of the Physiological Institute of J. E. Purkyne University in Brno; **Vilem Laufberger**, Academician, Head of the Laboratory for Graphic Research Methods in Prague; **Pavel Lukl**, Doctor of Medicine, Professor, Head of the Internal Clinic of Palacky University in Olomouc, Chairman of the Cardiological Society, and Vice-President of the European Cardiological Society; **Zuzana Marysova**, Chotebuz



State Farm; **Jiri Menzel**, stage manager; **Vladimir Mostecky**, CKD technician; **Josef Neversil**, CKD worker; **Jaroslav Nemec**, CKD worker; **Bozena Patkova**, Doctor of Law, Lawyer in Prague; **Emil Petyrek**, engineer, Corresponding Member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and Director of the Mining Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences; **Otakar Poupá**, Professor, Doctor of Medicine and Science, Corresponding Member and Head of the Third Department of the Physiological Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Prague; **Jaroslav Prochazka**, Doctor of Medicine and Science, Professor and Head of the Surgical Clinic of the Faculty Hospital in Hradec Kralove; **Yvonne Prenosilova**, singer; **Alfred Radok**, National Artist, stage manager; **Emil Radok**, film producer; **Jiri Raska**, Olympic medallist; **Jaroslav Seifert**, National Artist; **V. Sekla**, Doctor of Medicine, Professor and Head of the Biological Institute of Charles University in Prague; **Zdenek Servit**, Academician, Doctor of Medicine and Science, Director of the Physiological Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Prague; **Jiri Slama**, Assistant Professor, engineer, Candidate of Science, Economic Research Institute of Industry and Building in Prague; **Oldrich Stary**, Doctor of Medicine and Science, Corresponding Member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Professor and Rector of Charles University, Prague; **Jiri Snizek**, CKD technician; **Jiri Suchy**, poet; **Vojmir Sevcik**, Doctor of Medicine, Assistant Professor and Psychologist in the North Moravian Region, Ostrave; **Jiri Slitr**, composer; **Karel Silha**, CKD worker; **Vaclav Sroub**, CKD worker; **Jan Svankmajer**, film producer; **Marie Tomasova**, actress; **Ladislav Tondl**, Doctor of Philosophy and Science, Professor, Department of Scientific Theory and Methodology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Prague; **Josef Topol**, writer; **Jiri Trnka**, National Artist, stage manager and figurative artist; **Jan Triska**, actor; **Ludvik Vaculik**,



journalist – the author of the text; **Karel Vojir**, CKD worker; **Jan Vanysek**, Doctor of Medicine and Science, Professor and Pro-Rector of Purkyne University in Brno; **Jiri Veleminsky**, Assistant Professor, Doctor of Medicine, Regional Internist of the North Moravian Region, Ostrava; **V. Vejdovsky**, Doctor of Medicine and Science, Professor and Head of the Ophthalmic Clinic of Palacky, University in Olomouc; **Viktor Voros**, CKD worker; **Otto Wichterle**, Academician, Director of the Institute for Macromolecular Chemistry of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Prague; **Jaroslav Vojta**, National Artist, Member of the National Theatre; **Jan Werich** National Artist; **Emil Zatopek**, Colonel, Olympic medallist; **Dana Zatopkva**, Olympic medallist; **Jindrich Zogata**, engineer, agronomist.

### III

## WHY THE INVASION?

Even in the long history of brutal violence of democratic rights of nations and peoples by the Stalinist Government since 1927, there is no parallel to the military occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet and its allied troops. The news coming so soon after the "standstill" agreements of Ciená and Bratislava has shocked world socialist and working class opinion and is indeed a great gift to all imperialist aggressors who following the Soviet action would now be emboldened to intervene in the internal affairs of smaller nations and colonial countries. Moscow propagandists are desperately seeking to make out that their intervention is in defence of socialism and against "imperialist intrigue," and the ghosts of West German revanchism are invoked. But only the hirelings of Moscow would fall prey to this line.

As recently as August 16th, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Alexander Dubcek, reaffirmed his country's allegiance to the Warsaw Pact and declared: "The alliance with the Soviet Union is the alpha and the omega of our foreign policy." (*The Times*—August 17th). On the same day President Svoboda of Czechoslovakia and President Ceausescu of Rumania, signed a friendship treaty between their two countries, which among other things declared that the two countries would take "all necessary measures against plots and aggression on the part of imperialist, military and revanchist forces." Clearly it is not the threat of a counter-revolution which has impelled the Soviet Union to take the brutal action it has launched against Czechoslovakia.



The immediate cause for Soviet military intervention, as indeed the military manoeuvres, propaganda campaign and the buildup of the war atmosphere in July, was the growing momentum of the process of democratisation which commenced with the overthrow of the Novotny regime in January this year. It is well known, following the sweeping changes of January this year, the Czechoslovakian Government of Dubcek had introduced genuine socialist democracy, restored freedom of thought and expression, and put an end to censorship of the press and other mass media, such as radio and television. These developments themselves were not initiated from above but were the results of a genuine, popular mass movement in the country. It is no exaggeration to say that this movement constituted a political revolution in the country, which while it maintained and proceeded on the basis of the nationalised socialist property relations established in 1948, introduced political democracy to all sections of the working class and socialist intellectuals.

As an integral part of this movement, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had convened for September 9th, 1968, a congress of the party. There is no doubt that this congress would have given its seal of approval to the sweeping democratic measures carried out since January this year, and following the line advocated in the historic appeal of Czech intellectuals and Communist workers contained in their document *2,000 Words* the congress would have cleansed the party and the state apparatus of all elements tainted with the crimes of the old regime.

Also on the agenda of this congress were the new party statutes drafted by a Party Commission headed by the Political Director of the Clement Gottwald Military Academy. These statutes had as their central aim the restoration of inner party democracy within the framework of democratic centralism. The statutes expressly recognised the right of minority



opinion and those holding different opinions were to be specially protected and not treated as outcasts. They were to be given the right to state their position in public, and while organised factions were not permitted, none the less the right of a minority to change Party policy was categorically incorporated in the draft statutes. What this means is that the Czechoslovak Communist Party would have returned to the organisational position and structure of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin as it was till 1921. It is well known that in that year in the wake of the Kronstadt revolt and the conditions of civil war, the Bolshevik Party reluctantly suspended rights of minorities within the party, and Stalin used this temporary measure to create his monolithized, bureaucratic and centralised party machine. The return of even one Communist Party to the rich inner political struggles, differing platforms, debates and free discussions which are in fact the hallmark of Bolshevism, would naturally have spelt danger to the other Communist parties of Eastern Europe.

Everywhere in Eastern Europe the movement of revolutionary intellectuals and advanced workers is for genuine democracy and political freedom. Even within the Soviet Union these forces over the recent period had surfaced, and one need only recall the famous letter written by the Soviet poet, Voznesensky, to the Editor of *Pravda* (Why in the name of socialism must you lie?), the open protest of Pavel Litvinov (grandson of the Bolshevik diplomat, Maxim Litvinov) and the historian Yakir (son of the Soviet General whom Stalin had shot) at the farcical trial of two young Soviet writers, to show that there is unrest amongst the intellectuals who are loyal to the Soviet Union, but are opposed to the police bureaucratic methods of the regime. That is why it was imperative for the Soviet bureaucracy to drown in



blood the democratic socialist revolution of Czechoslovakia. But historically the movement for socialist democracy is more powerful than the most powerful military machine just as the socialist revolution in the capitalist world is more powerful than the greatest military power.

August 22nd, 1968.

Published in *Daily Mirror*, 23rd August, 1968.

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## POST SCRIPT

Since the fact of invasion itself is now "disputed" in certain quarters, the declaration of the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic dated 21st August, 1968, is given below:

1. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic has been today occupied by the forces of five Warsaw Pact countries against the will of its government and National Assembly, as well as against the will of the leading body of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Thus for the first time in the history of international movement an act of aggression by allied forces took place against the state ruled by the Communist Party.

The present state of crisis lasts since the early morning hours, the constitutional organs of the Republic are prevented to function, individual members of the Government, National Assembly and leading body of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and of the National Front as well as the other organisations have neither possibility of communication among themselves nor with the people who have been giving them spontaneous support during the last months.

2. Many members of the government and of the leading body of the Communist Party, the leading functionaries of the National Assembly and others have been interned. The last link of communication remains the semi-illegal Czechoslovak Radio gradually silenced and kept in operation only by the utmost strain of its employees. Under these circumstances the Czechoslovak Government, constitutional organs, as well as the leading body of the Party, try to carry on the constitutional function and to secure the normal life of our country.

3. We call upon you Czechs, Slovaks, citizens of national minorities, all citizens of Czechoslovakia with the following appeal:

- (a) We demand the immediate withdrawal of the troops of the five Warsaw Pact countries, the adherence to the terms of the Warsaw Pact and full respect of the sovereignty of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.
- (b) We appeal urgently to the leaders of the USSR, GDR, Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria to issue orders to stop military actions at which bloodshed and material values are being destroyed.
- (c) We demand the immediate creation of normal conditions for the function of the Czechoslovak constitutional and political organs, the lift of internation of the individual members of these organs in order that they may restore their functioning.

4. We demand the immediate summoning of the full body of the National Assembly which would hear the standpoint of the Czechoslovak Government and its opinion on how to solve the existing situation (**Press Release of the Czech Embassy in Colombo, 23th August, 1968**).



## IV

### WHERE DOES IMPERIALISM STAND?

In the mountain of falsehoods now being piled up by the Stalinist propaganda machine in justification of Soviet military action against Czechoslovakia one lie stands out, viz, "the threat emanating from the counter revolutionary forces which have entered into collusion with foreign forces hostile to socialism." In the official statement issued by TASS, "the foreign forces hostile to socialism" was left vague but this has since been amplified to mean world imperialism. Thus what is now taking place in Czechoslovakia is not the counter-revolutionary suppression of the political revolution but the carrying forward of the anti-imperialist struggle. To colonial peoples in particular this argument has a ready appeal and it is therefore necessary to examine it closely. For this purpose we will have occasion to refer repeatedly to *The Times* and *Economist*. Since these would be dismissed as capitalist journals, which they undoubtedly are, a word of explanation is called for.

*The Times* and the *Economist* are the authoritative voices of the British imperialist bourgeoisie. They are not the mass propaganda sheets of British capitalism like the *Daily Express* and the *Spectator* seeking to "sell" capitalism to the people but the journals which speak the mind of international finance capital and addressed to the policy makers of imperialism. Unlike the mass "penny" newspapers, these have a limited, almost "exclusive" circulation but precisely because they are the vehicle of information to the higher echelons of capitalist society – the captains of industry and finance, statesmen and administrators, top army brass and the high judiciary and the army of modern technocracy – they have to give accurate information and lay down the

broad lines of policy suitable for their special interests. This being so it has been traditional for the Left to turn to the *The Times* and *Economist* for accurate information and news and to know the mind of the City, that is, of Big capital. Anyone who doubts this need only refer to the writings of Lenin where quotations from these journals frequently occur.

It is common ground of the Left that the United States stands at the spear head of the imperialist counter-revolution and is the only power capable of fulfilling the role of a "Super Wrangel" today. Whatever the strength of revanchist sentiment and feeling, the other imperialisms, notably, West German imperialism, cannot yet play this role and they have to function within the ambit of American imperialist policy. And it is now well known that not only has there been a "thawing" of the cold war between the US and USSR but since 1959 there has been a policy of detente between these super powers, a conscious drawing together of the US and the USSR to settle outstanding questions. The basis of the detente in Europe is the recognition that Soviet influence extends to the Elbe and includes Czechoslovakia and that the rest of Europe is a sphere of Western influence, that Latin America is a sphere of American influence and accordingly missiles were dismantled from Cuba, the Middle East a sphere of joint responsibility, etc. In fact it is the policy of detente with the US which is at the basis of the Sino-Soviet dispute since the price for a free hand in Eastern Europe is Soviet "disengagement" from China, denial of economic aid and assistance, etc.

As was to be expected right through the Czechoslovak crisis, the rules of the detente were rigidly observed. During the war of nerves in July, the *Economist* bluntly stated, "They (the Czechs) know, after all that if the Russian Army did



come back to crush them they could not count on any western country giving them anything more than tortured sympathy." (July 20th). The following week, the *Economist* expanded on this theme to explain why the Western imperialist bourgeoisie's stake is elsewhere, and in doing so revealed the cold calculation of bourgeois class interest *sans* shibboleths and slogans. The entire passage is quoted below: "The United States, Britain and West Germany have behaved through all the Czech crisis according to the rules of the detente: as they would pray Mr. Kosygin would do if Italy, say, or Mexico **were being persuaded not to go communist.** Mr. Kosygin of course, would be at the United Nations now, and he would certainly not have troubled to stop East German military games, if the boot had been on the other foot. There is much to be said for the West playing it cool, but not for being utterly frigid and immobile. But that is the trouble. Western policy has come to depend on the familiar system in central Europe as much as the Russians have. The result is that the West seems to have been just as unready to cope with Mr. Dubcek's success as the Russians." (27th July). (Our emphasis)

In plain, everyday English, and not the hypocritical upper middle class language of Eton and Balliol, here is what the *Economist* told the Soviet bureaucrats: "Do what you like in Czechoslovakia today. Tomorrow we will then be free to suppress the workers' revolution in our part of the world. We understand you would have to pretend that you are with the revolting workers and so Mr. Kosygin will need the platform of the UN assembly, just as we too need it in case you resort to a blood letting. We understand each other but it's a pity that there are loopholes yet to let people like Dubcek be independent of us."

And after the invasion of Czechoslovakia things continued in this understanding spirit. The news agencies for mass consumption like Reuters, however, gave the impression of a "shocked" US President learning over Radio Prague of the Soviet invasion. Thus, the *Ceylon Observer* of 22nd August reported as follows: "President Johnson tonight called an emergency meeting of the National Security Council following reports from Radio Prague that Russian troops had moved into Czechoslovakia." But the fact was that in the spirit of the detente, that is, of US-USSR collaboration to police the world, the Soviet ambassador to Washington Mr. Dobrynin personally called on the US President even before the announcement from Radio Prague. *The Times* special correspondent in Washington, Louis Heren, cabled as follows: "..... Mr. Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador called at the White House to inform him of the Soviet action. The meeting took place a few minutes before Prague radio announced that the invasion was in progress." Actually according to the White House Press Secretary, the Soviet Ambassador spent one hour with the President and when pressed to give the gist of the conversation, Mr. Christian made it clear that he could not go "into the specifics of what transpired" between the President and Ambassador. What perfect understanding there must have been between the interventionist in Vietnam and the representative of the interventionist in Czechoslovakia!

While the Ceylon reader was left in suspense about the outcome of the US National Security Council, *The Times* special correspondent already quoted continued as follows: "The National Security Council met in emergency session and it soon became clear that the US would not go beyond referring the matter to the United Nations Security Council. The immediate reaction was one of relief. For instance Mr. Gerald Ford, the minority leader in the House of



Representatives said that the United States should not become involved in a communist family dispute." *The Times* report further continued: "The invasion has sickened most people but a few found some comfort in the super-power exchanges. The Hot Line was not used (it is reserved for dire emergencies) but at least an effort was made to forewarn the other super-power." At the mass level the propaganda newspapers made political capital and presented the picture of concern and agony for a small nation but the special correspondents of authoritative journals of big bourgeois and imperialist opinion like *The Times* informed their exclusive readership the truth, namely, the Russians can do whatever they please in their areas of influence and it is just as well they do, so that the imperialists are free to do likewise in their areas when their time comes.

American imperialism was most understanding of the Soviet action and the Washington correspondent of the *Economist* noted that the President's statement "was restrained and brief. It kept rhetoric to a decent minimum and contained no speculation about what the consequences might be" (24th August). There could be none, since the interventionist in Viet Nam was merely speaking for the record, just what the *Economist* anticipated that Mr. Kosygin would do, if Western imperialism had to drown a workers' rebellion in Italy or Mexico. And in any event, for Mr. Johnson military intervention in another country is a purely formal and routine matter.

And the cave men of American politics, the cold war gossellers, were answered in the influential *Washington Post*: "It is equally nonsensical to conclude categorically that the great forces that have been propelling East and West, however haltingly, towards detente, have been for ever halted because the Soviets came to see a threat to their

empire and their security in the pace and degree of liberalization in Czechoslovakia." *The Times* Washington correspondent quoted the above and added, "This reflects official opinion. Indeed, Mr. George Christian, the White House Press Secretary yesterday refused to concede that detente diplomacy must be brought even to a temporary halt." (*The Times* 23rd August).

The *Economist* too reaffirmed the policy of detente. After rebuking Sir Alec Douglas-Home for being "too gloomy," it continued as follows: "The improvement that has taken place in east-west relations since Mr. Khrushchev's trip to America in 1959 and has lasted through two changes of government in Washington and one in Moscow, rests upon a second premise as well. This is the recognition by the two super-powers that because they possess the power of mutual destruction they must try at least to make sure that they do not get drawn into a fight with each other. This common interest remains, no matter how the Russians have behaved in Czechoslovakia. It is why the superpowers are trying to stop the growth of nuclear armouries, both their own and other people's. It is also a very good reason why they want to regulate the quarrels between their friends and allies in sensitive parts of the world like Germany and the Middle East, so that they will not get dragged into a war some one else began. This shared interest in preserving their own skins, which is at least half of the reason why relations between Russia and America have improved in the 1960s, will not vanish because the Russians have behaved like thugs in Czechoslovakia." According to the *Economist* the clumsiness of the Russians has "probably set the detente back five years" (August 24th).

Perhaps, unknown even to the US, the revanchist West German government organised a "jaunt" of its own, a diversionary activity in collusion with the vestigial remnants of the



Czech capitalist class overthrown in 1948, to harass the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic? But the conduct of the Soviet and West German governments completely belie it. Thus *The Times* Bonn correspondent, David Hotham, reported, "In spite of angry popular demonstrations against the Russians, with tomatoes thrown at the Soviet Ambassador, the Bonn government seems to be leaning backwards to maintain the possibility of good relations with Moscow when the present crisis blows over." (23rd August). There was of course good reason for such hopes in view of what the special correspondent further reported: "Mr. Tsarapkin, the Soviet Ambassador in Bonn, yesterday (i. e. 21st August) handed Dr. Kiesinger a message from his government assuring the Federal Republic that Russian action in Czechoslovakia was aimed at no other state and *emphasizing in remarkably warm terms the "great importance" the Soviet Government sets by good Soviet-German relations.*" The warmth of the Soviet approach was duly appreciated by Dr. Kiesinger, the West German Chancellor, who according to *The Times* "in his televised interview told his listeners that he was convinced that these Russian assurances were seriously intended." (August 23rd). While the Social Democratic Foreign Minister Willy Brandt waxed indignant, the Federal German Chancellor, Dr. Kiesinger, a former diplomat of the Third Reich, played it cool. While this represented a convenient division of labour, there can be no doubt as to who spoke for West German imperialism.

What becomes abundantly clear is that the charge of collusion with "hostile foreign forces" that is, those of imperialism, is a canard against the leadership of the Czech Communist Party. Collaboration, if not collusion, there indeed was, but this was between US imperialism and the Moscow bureaucracy, since that very collaboration is the basis of Washington's acknowledgment that the policing of

Czechoslovakia is the responsibility of Moscow. Perhaps it is not without coincidence that when Novotny the Stalinist boss was overthrown in January this year, his strongman General Sejna fled to..... the United States.

30th August, 1968.



## V

### RIFT IN THE WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

What is most terrifying about the military action of the Soviet Union against the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia is that the power of an ultra modern military machine has been brought to bear in the determination of a political struggle within a Communist Party. This is an important aspect of the conflict now taking place in Czechoslovakia. To be more exact, what the might of Soviet arms seeks to achieve is the restoration to power of the old diehard Stalinist clique - it is immaterial whether it be Novotny or more probably Oldrich Svetka. A clique defeated and overthrown in a political struggle both within the party and the country is now sought to be foisted on them both, solely on the admittedly superior destructive capacity of the mightiest military power of the modern world.

Morality apart, the "reactivation" by the instrument of war of political issues already settled by factional struggle within the Czechoslovak Communist Party and a political revolution within the country - the superstructural changes in Czechoslovakia since January 1968 come within the definition of a political revolution - introduces a highly dangerous principle, the law of the jungle, into the relations between "fraternal" parties and in the internal life within these bureaucratized and hierarchic parties. The implications of the Soviet action are so palpably frightening that not even the most exceptional circumstances, even if true, and the reasons given in the official statement by Tass are downright lies, could induce even the most docile Communist Party to acquiesce in the barbarous action of the Kremlin oligarchy.

The precedent is too deadly! Hence for the first time a large number of Communist Parties have asserted their independence from Moscow, and among them are the large mass parties of Italy, France, Japan, the Scandinavian countries, etc.

The equivocal stand of Cuba and the support of the North Viet Nam party are explained by their total dependence on Soviet aid in their immediate struggle against US imperialism. Among the supporters of Soviet military intervention are the parties of the US, West Germany and the Greek Party in exile in Moscow, while the Ceylon Communist Party echoing the official version has made adequate provision to change its line. This small qualification represents considerable progress for the Ceylon Communist Party and no doubt the forthright stand of the SLFP and the LSSP rescued it from the ignoble servility of the "letter box" Communist organisations of the US and West Germany.

The undeclared war of the Kremlin bureaucracy against the regenerated workers' state of Czechoslovakia marks the final nemesis of Stalinism. A little over forty years ago, it emerged under the peculiar historical conditions of isolation and backwardness of the first workers' state, the product not of Bolshevism which created that state but the backlash of the Czarist empire which Bolshevism overthrew. On the social and economic foundations of the October revolution of 1917 – the nationalized property relations, state monopoly of foreign trade etc – there now mushroomed a political apparatus worthy of the old Czarist regime. Not only into the life of society, but into the Bolshevik Party the repressive police methods of Czarism were introduced, and before long, even Ivan, the Terrible, assumed a more human character.



But as Stalinism expanded into Europe and Soviet society recorded its economic successes, the contradiction between the socialist economic relations and the totalitarian political structure was further sharpened. The destalinization measures of Khrushchev staved off a show down within the Soviet Union, but these, in their turn, sparked the movement for political reform in the other East European countries. Belatedly Czechoslovakia joined but all the more thorough was the democratization programme. And this is the source of danger to the Moscow bureaucracy, but the irony is that in attempting to crush the Czech political revolution, it is only hastening the political revolution within the Soviet Union. The invasion of the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Red Army has brought the politics of Stalinism to the point of utter absurdity that the Soviet people face the challenge to overthrow it to wipe the shame of the cowardly act of 21st August. Only by this supreme act will the Soviet people settle their account with history.

And the ferment of ideas within the Soviet Union, as reflected immediately in the growth of the movement of dissidence among the intellectuals, amply bears out that prospect. There cannot be the slightest doubt that a substantial minority, at the very least, would have from the very commencement opposed the Brezhnev adventure. It is now known that a full meeting (members and candidates) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was summoned on the day before the Soviet invasion and that it was in session till a few hours of the actual march of Soviet troops into Czechoslovakia. The need for such a meeting would signify that the praesidium of the Central Committee was sharply divided and the unusually long meeting of the Central Committee that opinion within was by no means unanimous.

As the monstrosity of the latest crime is realised and the resistance of the Czech people produces its impetus on the already existing movement of revolt within Soviet society, there can be no doubt that the Czechoslovak developments of the last 6 months will occur in the Soviet Union itself, and that the Soviet Communist Party will produce its Dubcek and Smrkovsky.

26th August, 1968.



## VI

### BOURGEOIS AND PROLETARIAN DEMOCRACY

The living agony of Czechoslovakia has posed anew an old problem of the international revolutionary movement—the question of proletarian democracy. Once the irrelevancies, falsifications, slanders, lies, threats and menaces are excluded from the official Soviet documents and Stalinist propaganda, it is this question which emerges as the heart core and of the dispute between the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its allies. Not surprisingly the question has arisen not in a general and abstract way but in a specific and concrete manner, viz. the freedom of expression. The Soviet Communist Party and its allies insist that the Czechoslovak Communist Party reimpose censorship of the press, radio and television which the new leadership of Dubcek had abolished as part of the programme of democratization since January 1968. This is the only **specific** demand addressed to the Czechoslovak Communist Party leadership by the 5 Communist Parties which met in Warsaw in the early part of July. According to their letter, “the cause of the defence of the power of the working class and all working people, of the socialist conquest in Czechoslovakia demands.....seizure by the **Party** of media of mass information – the press, radio, and television.” (Our emphasis).

Under the reform programme of Dubcek censorship of mass media was removed and, according to the Warsaw letter, “Anti-socialist and revisionist forces have gained control over the press, radio and television and transformed them into a tribune for attacks on the Communist Party, for

the disorientation of the working class and all working people, for unbridled anti-socialist demogogy, for the undermining of friendly relations between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and other socialist countries." In the Warsaw letter express mention is made of the Czech document "2000 Words" and this was characterized as "anti-socialist" and denounced as "an organisational-political platform of counter-revolution."

In its reply the Czech Communist Party while clearly dissociating itself from the sentiments of that document noted that "the consequences of the appeal 2000 Words did not threaten the Party, the national front and the socialist state." It conceded that unorthodox views found expression in the press, radio and public meeting but declared that the solution is a long term task and resort could not be made to "old administrative and power structures." The Czech reply further stated that "the campaign and unjustified slanders against various functionaries and public officials - including members of the new leadership of the party - which are conducted from extremist positions both left and right, are still a negative aspect of our situation." Having declared that the leadership has come out against these methods in specific cases, the letter stated: "We know that this situation is facilitated by the abolition of censorship in our country and the enactment of freedom of expression and of the press. What had been spread in the form of "whispered propaganda" etc., before can now be expressed openly." The praesidium of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party thereafter asked whether such phenomena as the ending of censorship and the institution of free discussions could be considered as "forfeiture of the leading political role of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia under pressure of reactionary counter-revolutionary forces," and concluded



that it was not so but a necessary phase of development, or in its own words, "this is only part of our present political situation."<sup>1</sup>

In any other situation the question of censorship will not merit discussion, least of all among revolutionary Marxists, since even bourgeois liberals would be opposed to it. Censorship is invariably associated with police regimes, reactionary military dictatorships and Fascist states which being regimes of acute crisis need the "security" of censorship to remain in power, and with priest ridden and institutionalized religion which needs to maintain a system of censorship to keep out the liberating air of scientific and secular ideas. While even the Roman Catholic Church has not added a book to its prohibited index in the last ten years, today more than 50 years after the October revolution which ended capitalist rule and domination, the Soviet Communist Party which claims the moral authority of that revolution has demanded, and has sent its armies to enforce that the Czech Communist Party reintroduce censorship of the mass media which it had lifted 20 years after the overthrow of the capitalist system in that country. In making this preposterous demand the principles of Marxism and Leninism have been invoked that it is necessary to examine whether the police-bureaucratic demand of censorship finds any place in the system and in doing so discuss the broader questions of bourgeois and proletarian democracy.

### **Limitation of Bourgeois Democracy**

Even the most democratic bourgeois republic is in actual fact a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie which suppresses the working class and the other oppressed masses. This is not a Marxist quip but an accurate summation of bourgeois society. In the words of Lenin: "In explaining the class nature of bourgeois civilisation, bourgeois democracy and

the bourgeois parliamentary system, all socialists have expressed the idea formulated with the greatest scientific precision by Marx and Engels, namely, that the most democratic bourgeois democratic republic is no more than a machine for the suppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie, for suppression of the working people by a handful of capitalists”<sup>2</sup>

While the task of a socialist revolution is the overthrowing and smashing of this machine of oppression and the creation of a new instrument, Marxists always emphasized the severe limitations of the most democratic of bourgeois democracies. Lenin stressed this as follows:

“In capitalist society, providing it develops under the most favourable conditions, we have a more or less complete democracy in the democratic republic. But this democracy is always hemmed in by the narrow limits set by capitalist exploitation, and consequently always remains in effect a democracy for the minority, only for the propertied classes, only for the rich. Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slave owners. Owing to the conditions of capitalist exploitation, the modern wage slaves are so crushed by want and poverty that “they cannot be bothered with democracy,” cannot be bothered with politics; in the ordinary, peaceful course of events, the majority of the population is debarred from participation in public and political life.”<sup>3</sup>

Despite the formal recognition of democratic rights and the “legal” equality of all persons to their exercise and enjoyment, the real world of capitalism with its sharp class divisions and polarization—with wealth and influence at one end and poverty and degradation at the other — makes a



complete mockery of bourgeois democracy. In the words of Lenin,

“Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich—that is the democracy of capitalist society. If we look more closely into the machinery of capitalist democracy, we see everywhere, in the “petty”—supposedly petty—details of the suffrage (residential qualification, exclusion of women etc.), in the technique of the representative institutions, in the actual obstacles to the right of assembly (public buildings are not for “paupers!”), in the purely capitalist organisation of the daily press, etc, etc., — we see restriction after restriction upon democracy. These restrictions, exceptions, exclusions, obstacles for the poor seem slight, especially in the eyes of one who has never known want himself and has never been in contact with the oppressed classes in their mass life (and nine out of ten, if not, ninety-nine out of hundred, bourgeois publicists and politicians come under this category); but in their sum total these restrictions exclude and squeeze out the poor from politics, and from active participation in democracy.”<sup>4</sup>

And not infrequently the bourgeois essence of capitalist democracy is brought out in daily life. Lenin had occasion to remind Kautsky of this in the following words:

“Take the fundamental laws of modern states, take their administration, take freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, or ‘equality of all citizens before the law,’ and you will see at every turn evidence of the hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy with which every honest and class conscious worker is familiar. There is not a single state, however democratic, which has no loopholes or reservations in its constitution guaranteeing the bourgeoisie the possibility of despatching troops against the workers, of proclaiming martial law, and so forth, in case of a ‘violation of public order,’ and actually in case the exploit-

ed class "violates" its position of slavery and tries to behave in a non-slavish manner."<sup>5</sup>

Even the "freest" bourgeois democracy is a democracy only for the bourgeoisie, while at the same time it is a dictatorship which sits heavily on the oppressed. To quote Lenin,

"In other words, under capitalism we have the state in the proper sense of the word, that is, a special machine for the suppression of one class by another, and what is more, of the majority by the minority. Naturally, to be successful, such an undertaking as the systematic suppression of the exploited majority by the exploiting minority calls for the utmost ferocity and savagery in the matter of suppressing, it calls for seas of blood, through which mankind is actually wading its way in slavery, serfdom and wage labour."<sup>6</sup>

Bourgeois class rule expressed itself in the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the exploited masses and in a democracy the different sections of the bourgeoisie alone had the privileges and rights of democracy, while under exceptional circumstances even the bourgeoisie was denied these democratic rights. Similarly, the dictatorship of the proletariat signifies a dictatorship of the proletariat over the expropriated exploiting classes and *the widest democracy of the working class*. The difference in the two dictatorships or class rule, is that the violence, compulsion and force inevitable in state power is now exercised by the majority against a minority, whereas in the old order, a minority of exploiters used the machinery of state to keep the majority of exploited and propertyless in subjection. In the words of Lenin, "Democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e. exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people – this is the change democracy undergoes during the transition from capitalism to communism."<sup>7</sup>



### **How the Proletarian Dictatorship Ensures Genuine Democracy**

From its very institution, the dictatorship of the proletariat puts an end to the bourgeois system of democracy under which the bourgeoisie by virtue of its ownership of the means of production and property enjoyed the democratic rights of expression and assembly, while the working class was in effect denied the exercise of these same rights. It created the conditions for the free and genuine exercise of these rights by the toilers. It achieved this by implementing the revolutionary measures of capitalist expropriation. In the words of a resolution adopted by the first Congress of the Communist International:

“The workers know perfectly well, too, that even the most democratic bourgeois republic ‘freedom of assembly’ is a hollow phrase, for the rich have the best public and private buildings at their disposal, and enough leisure to assemble at meetings, which are protected by the bourgeois machine of power. The rural and urban workers and the small peasants – the overwhelming majority of the population – are denied all these things. As long as that state of affairs prevails, ‘equality,’ i.e. ‘pure democracy,’ is a fraud. The first thing to do to win equality and enable the working people to enjoy democracy in practice is to deprive the exploiters of all the public and sumptuous private buildings, to give the working people leisure and to see to it that their freedom of assembly is protected by armed workers, not by scions of the nobility or capitalist officers in command of down-trodden soldiers. Only when that change is effected can we speak of freedom of assembly and of equality without mocking at the workers, at working people in general, at the poor. And this change can be effected only by the vanguard of the working people, the proletariat, which overthrows the exploiters, the bourgeoisie.”<sup>8</sup>

And so it is with the other great democratic right, that of free expression. In the words of the same document,

“Freedom of press’ is another of the principal slogans of ‘free democracy.’ And here too the workers know – and socialists everywhere have admitted it millions of times – that this freedom is a deception while the best printing presses and biggest stocks of paper are appropriated by the capitalists, and while capitalist rule over the press remains, a rule that is manifested throughout the world all the more strikingly, sharply and cynically the more democracy and the republican system are developed, as in America for example. The first thing to do to win real equality and genuine democracy for the working people, for the workers and peasants, is to deprive capital of the possibility of hiring writers, buying up publishing houses and bribing newspapers. And to do that the capitalists and exploiters have to be overthrown and their resistance suppressed. The capitalists have always used the term freedom to mean freedom for the rich to get richer and for the workers to starve to death. In capitalist usage, freedom of the press means freedom of the rich to bribe the press, freedom to use their wealth to shape and fabricate so-called public opinion. In this respect, too, the defenders of “pure” democracy prove to be defenders of an utterly foul and venal system that gives the rich control over the mass media. They prove to be deceivers of the people, who with the aid of plausible, fine sounding, but thoroughly false phrases, divert them from the concrete historical task of liberating the press from capitalist enslavement. Genuine freedom and equality will be embodied in the system which the Communists are building and in which there will be no opportunity for amassing wealth at the expense of others, no objective opportunities for putting the press under the



direct or indirect power of money, and **no impediments in the way of any workingman (or groups of workingmen, in any numbers) for enjoying and practising equal rights in the use of public printing presses and public stocks of paper.**"<sup>9</sup> (Emphasis added)

It is well known that Lenin sharply denounced the posing of the question of democracy in general and dictatorship in general, as was done by liberals and their fellow-travellers in the labour movement. He probed the class nature of democracy and following Marx said that bourgeois democracy was in fact the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat and a democracy for the bourgeoisie, while the dictatorship of the proletariat was a dictatorship over the old exploiting class and a full and genuine democracy for the proletariat. To quote Lenin, "It follows that proletarian dictatorship must inevitably entail not only a change in democratic forms and institutions, generally speaking, but precisely such a change as an unparalleled extension of the actual enjoyment of democracy by those oppressed by capitalism – the toiling classes. And indeed, the form of proletarian dictatorship that has already taken shape, i.e. Soviet power in Russia, the Rate-system in Germany, the Shop-Steward Committees in Britain and similar Soviet institutions in other countries, all this implies and presents to the toiling classes i.e., the vast majority of the population, greater political opportunities for enjoying democratic rights and liberties than existed ever before, even approximately in the best and most democratic bourgeois republic."<sup>10</sup> The proletarian democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat signified "*an unparalleled extension of actual enjoyment,*" and "*greater practical opportunities for enjoying democratic rights and liberties*" than even "in the best and most democratic bourgeois republic."

The pre-conditions for such a wide extension of democracy, besides the creation of conditions for the genuine exercise of democratic rights like freedom of assembly and expression, are the recognition to independent existence of oppositional parties i.e. parties which are independent of the ruling party but submit and function within the new state structure created by the revolution and the toleration by the ruling party of the minority views of these oppositional parties. Indeed there can be no talk of democracy whether bourgeois or proletarian, unless such rights were duly recognised and properly enforced. In other words, a one party state whether it exists under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the proletariat is by definition a complete negation of bourgeois or proletarian democracy, depending in which context it arises. This proposition is so elementary that it is needless to say that it was the premise on which Lenin and the Bolshevik party enunciated their theory of Soviet proletarian democracy. In view of the vulgarization of Lenin by later Stalinist "theoreticians" it must be repeated again that a single party state was not *a priori* principle of Bolshevism. The entire history of Bolshevism under Lenin is the refutation of this policeman's conception of the historical process.

### Historical Experience

The Bolshevik Party organised the insurrection of November 7th 1917 after it had obtained the majority at the 2nd Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The Soviets – what ever be the name in each individual country – are the organisations which the masses create when they enter the openly revolutionary phase of their struggle against the old order. All currents of the working class fight within them for leadership. The multi-party character of the soviets is inherrent in the very nature of the organisation since they are the widest mass organisations



of the people in revolt. All tendencies, currents and political nuances find expression within them, reflecting the varying degrees of consciousness of the newly awakened masses. From February 1917, while the Soviets were controlled by the S. R. and Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks a minority—the latter none the less called for the overthrow of the bourgeois provisional Government and the vesting of power in the Congress of Soviets, although this would have meant a S. R. — Menshevik dominated Soviet Government with the Bolsheviks an oppositional party.

The multiparty character of the Soviets is its most obvious and striking feature. The Bolsheviks' acceptance of this was clearly implicit in their central slogan before they came to power — "All power to the Soviets." Their own readiness to work in this milieu of controversy, debate, discussion and party strife was epitomized in the declaration which the Bolshevik chairman made when he assumed office after the Bolsheviks had gained the majority in the Petrograd City Soviet in September, 1917. According to a contemporary record the first Bolshevik President, Leon Trotsky, stated as follows :—

"We are party people and we shall have to cross swords more than once. But we shall guide the work of the Petersburg Soviet in a spirit of justice and complete independence for all factions; the hand of the Praesidium will never oppress the minority."<sup>11</sup>

The Bolshevik recognition of the multi-party character of Soviet democracy was further emphasised in the "compromise" which Lenin offered the SRs and Mensheviks, a few weeks before the Bolsheviks seized power. Having stated that "our party, like any other political party, is striving after political domination for itself," Lenin called upon

the SRs and Mensheviks "to form a government wholly and exclusively responsible to the Soviets, the latter taking over all the power locally as well."<sup>12</sup>

In exchange, Lenin stated, "the Bolsheviks would advance no other condition, trusting that the revolution would proceed peacefully and party strife in the Soviets would be peacefully overcome thanks to really complete freedom of propaganda and to the immediate establishment of a new democracy in the composition of the Soviets (new elections) and in their functioning,"<sup>13</sup> that is, he undertook to work within the legal and constitutional frame work of the Soviet organisation.

Lenin proceeded to declare: "The Bolsheviks would gain the opportunity of quite freely advocating their views and of trying to win influence in the Soviets under a really complete democracy. In words, "everybody" now concedes the Bolsheviks this freedom. In reality, this freedom is impossible under a bourgeois Government or a Government in which the bourgeoisie participates, or under any Government, in fact, other than the Soviets. Under a Soviet Government, such freedom would be possible (we do not say it would be a certainty, but still it would be possible). For the sake of such a possibility at such a difficult time, it would be worth compromising with the present majority in the Soviets. **We have nothing to fear from real democracy, for reality is on our side,** and even the force of development of trends within the SR and Menshevik parties, which are hostile to us, proves us right."<sup>14</sup> (Our emphasis).

Perhaps all this was a ruse to hoodwink the enemy, another example of the "amoralism" of Lenin? But the policy of the Bolshevik party after the seizure of power proceeded on the recognition of the multi-party character of Soviets. Although the Mensheviks and the SRs while



they were in the majority in the Soviets did not break with the bourgeoisie, did not seize power and, when the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government, themselves walked out of the 2nd Congress of the Soviets, the Bolshevik party nonetheless offered to collaborate with them in the new Government, provided these parties accepted the legality of the new institutions created by the October revolution.

The very terms that the Bolshevik party offered recognised the multi-party basis of the Soviet system of democracy, as is evident from the following Bolshevik resolution which the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets adopted: "The Central Executive Committee is of the opinion that it is necessary to have in the government representatives of the Socialist parties that are in the Soviets of workers, soldiers and peasant Deputies and which accept the conquests of the November 6 - 7 revolution, the decrees of land and peace, workers control and the arming of workmen. In view of that the Central Executive Committee authorises the continuation of conversations relative to the formation of a government with the Soviet parties," and, thereafter, it laid down conditions, one of which was that in the new government "the candidacy of Lenin and Trotsky for ministerial posts should be insisted upon."<sup>15</sup>

Even the nationalisation of printing establishments and newsprint stocks, far from intending to institute a single party regime or assailing the democratic right of expression was expressly introduced to ensure that the parties represented in the Soviet are assured of genuine democracy, as is made clear from the official Bolshevik resolution: "The suppression of the bourgeois press was dictated not only by purely military needs in the course of the insurrection, and for the checking of counter-revolutionary action, but it is also necessary as a measure of transition toward the establishment of a

new regime with regard to the Press – a regime under which the capitalist owners of printing presses and of paper cannot be the all-powerful and exclusive manufacturers of public opinion.

“We must further proceed to the confiscation of private printing plants and supplies of paper, which should become the property of the Soviets, both in the capital and in the provinces, so that the political parties and groups can make use of the facilities of printing in proportion to the actual strength of the ideas they represent – in other words, proportionately to the number of their constituents.”<sup>16</sup> Trotsky picturesquely summed up the Bolshevik position in his speech on this resolution: “*Novoe Vremia* which has not one vote in the Soviet should not have one word of type or one sheet of paper.”<sup>17</sup> As Lenin envisaged before the revolution and as the Bolshevik decree on the press made it abundantly clear what Soviet democracy sought when it expropriated the capitalist press was not the suppression of the freedom of expression or the introduction of censorship but the extension of the freedom of expression by the allocation of printing facilities and paper to all parties and groups in proportion to their strength in Soviet elections.

But the other Soviet parties – right S.Rs and Mensheviks – far from availing their rights within Soviet democracy and functioning within the constitutional frame-work of the Soviets which the October revolution had “legalised” – looked towards the overthrown and expropriated Russian bourgeoisie behind whom stood world imperialism. In April 1918 the Japanese landed at Vladivostok and the prospect of imperialist intervention now became real and therefore the right S.Rs at their Conference in Moscow in May 1918 called for the overthrow of the Bolshevik dictatorship, while the Mensheviks hopelessly torn by internal



dissension were only united by their hostility to the Bolshevik regime. It is not surprising therefore that in June 1918 the Central Executive Committee should have excluded the right S.Rs. and Mensheviks from the Soviets.

When the civil war broke out these parties were openly on the side of the counter revolution and the Bolsheviks to protect the new state power had of course to take stern measures against them. In the words of Lenin: "In complaining of persecution by the Bolsheviks, the Russian Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries try to conceal the fact that they are persecuted for participating in the civil war on the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. . . . . The majority of the Mensheviks went over to the bourgeoisie and fought against us during the civil war. We, of course, persecute Mensheviks, we even shoot them, when they wage war against us, fight against our Red Army and shoot our Red commanders. We responded to the bourgeois war with the proletarian war – there can be no other way. Therefore, from the political point of view, all this is sheer Menshevik hypocrisy. Historically, it is incomprehensible how people who have not been officially certified as mad could talk at the Berne Conference, on the instructions of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, about the Bolsheviks fighting the latter, yet keep silent about their own struggle in alliance with the bourgeoisie, against the proletariat. All of them furiously attack us for persecuting them. This is true. But they do not say a word about the part they themselves have taken in the civil war!"<sup>18</sup> Although excluded from the Soviets and despite their counter – revolutionary role in the early period of the Civil War, the Mensheviks were not outlawed till 1921. On November 30th 1918, the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets annulled the exclusion of Mensheviks and in February 1919 the same benefit was extended to the SRs. They participated by invitation in the 7th and 8th All

Russian Congresses of the Soviets held in December 1919 and 1920, and Dan and Martov spoke for them. According to an objective bourgeois historian, E. H. Carr, "Throughout 1920 the Mensheviks had party offices and a club in Moscow and issued newsheets and proclamations through friendly printing establishments over the signature of the central committee. . . . In August 1920 a Menshevik party conference was held openly in Moscow and even reported in the Soviet press." <sup>19</sup>

It must also be remembered that between the Bolshevik seizure of power and 1921, the Left SRs had assassinated the German ambassador to the Soviet Republic in an attempt to annul the Brest treaty between Germany and USSR, killed Volodarsky and Uritsky, two leading Bolsheviks and seriously wounded Lenin himself in Moscow. Had the single party State been a principle of Bolshevism, as the later Stalinists held, any one of these acts would have been a sufficient justification for the illegalization of oppositional Soviet parties like the Mensheviks and SRs. While the Bolsheviks rightly came down with a heavy hand on individual acts of violations by these parties, the parties were not banned in this period. This was not a measure of the irresponsibility of the Bolsheviks. On the contrary, implicit in the Bolshevik toleration of even these compromised parties was the recognition of the multi-party character of the Soviets, and that the true functioning of Soviet democracy itself necessitated their legal existence.

In any event, the Bolsheviks saw the solution to this problem, not in the suppression by police-bureaucratic means of oppositional Soviet parties which had resorted to extra legal methods but in the extension to the West European countries of the socialist revolution which the Bolsheviks had initiated. The consolidation of their victory and, therefore, the smooth working of Soviet democracy,



was wholly dependent on the outbreak of successful revolutions in the advanced countries of the West. This was the perspective in which the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917, but by 1921, not only had the anticipated post war revolutions, particularly in Germany, been defeated, but capitalism itself was beginning to stabilize itself. The forward outpost of the world revolution soon became a beleaguered fortress. The October revolution had now to fall back on its own meagre and dwindling "reserves" to defend that revolution.

And the first act of self-defence against internal counter-revolution was to ban the Mensheviks and SRs through whom the overthrown bourgeoisie sought to raise its head. This absolutely necessary step, undoubtedly, represented a severe blow to Soviet democracy, a considerable diminution of proletarian democracy within the dictatorship of the proletariat, and, the Bolsheviks, least of all, had any illusions on this score. It was no accident that very soon, in the matter of a few weeks, the Bolsheviks had to place restrictions on themselves, in the exercise of inner party democracy. This further curtailment merely expressed the gravity of the situation in which the first workers state was after the recession of the post war revolutionary wave.

It is common place that democracy whether bourgeois or proletarian can take root only in a favourable economic climate, and the Russia of this period was tragically deficient in this essential. The pauper economic inheritance of the medieval Czarist monarchy was further ravaged by three years of the first imperialist war, the economic dislocation caused by two revolutions in one year, the damage of the civil war and the war of intervention, the running down of the economy to serve the needs of the front, the requisitions and exactions of "War Communism" and the famine and

devastation which came in their wake. What is remarkable in these circumstances is that the Soviet workers and their Bolshevik party were able to maintain for so long the democratic machinery of the Soviet in the expectation of successful revolutions in the rest of Europe. Once this did not materialize, the inevitable decline of Soviet democracy was a foregone conclusion, and what happened, thereafter, was a purely rearguard action to delay the *denouement* and salvage something for the future revival.

It is not without significance that the first borebodings of the impending nightmare of Stalinism should have found expression through Lenin. Already by 1921, after the unavoidable establishment of single party rule and the curbing of democracy within the Bolshevik Party, Lenin, quick to see the implication of these events, was speaking of the Soviet Union not as a workers' state but "as a workers' state with bureaucratic deformations."<sup>20</sup> And virtually all the published writings of the last year of his life, culminating with the demand for the removal of Stalin from the post of General Secretary, in the postscript to his testament, were concerned with the growing danger of bureaucratism within the state and party and of the ways and means of combating the new threat.

The struggle which Lenin initiated against bureaucratism was continued after his death by Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition, and as was to be expected, an important place in the platform of the united Left Opposition of 1927 was the question of Party and Soviet democracy. The death of Lenin aided the forces which wanted to be free of workers' control at home and world revolution abroad, viz, the new bureaucracy who found in Stalin their spokesman and leader. This new privileged layer drove forward to undisputed power and in that drive completely emasculated Soviet democracy



and, later even juridicially annulled this institution of the October revolution, destroyed even the restricted inner party democracy of the Bolshevik party and transformed the revolutionary party of the Soviet working class into an instrument for the defence of the material privileges of the bureaucracy against the working class, converted the trade unions into mere appendages of the state over which the working class had no control whatever, instituted within the party and the state a reign of terror, massacre, imprisonment without trial, shootings, frame-ups etc. and bloody "civil war" against the advanced elements of the working class and those sections of the Bolshevik party who stood loyal to the programme of Lenin. In a word, this privileged caste completely expropriated the working class of the Soviet Union of all political power and reduced it to an atomized condition within Soviet society. And to maintain its domination and dictatorship over the working class and defend its material privileges against the workers, it introduced a police-bureaucratic regime, with all the reactionary features of such regimes, uncontrolled power of the secret police, censorship, total ban on parties and fractions, lack of free elections, the complete muzzling of all criticism, etc.

In his polemic against Kautsky, Lenin remarked that "the ruling party in a bourgeois democracy extends the protection of the minority only to another bourgeois party, while the proletariat on all serious, profound and fundamental issues, gets martial law or pogroms, instead of the "protection of the minority."<sup>21</sup> One feature of bourgeois democracy is the protection which the ruling bourgeois party accords to other bourgeois parties. Under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie there may either be a bourgeois democracy or Fascism. And the fundamental distinction between bourgeois democracy and Fascism is that in the latter, i.e. Fascism, the protection accorded to other bourgeois parties is with-

drawn, and these parties, along with, of course, proletarian parties, are proscribed, hunted down and a totalitarian regime imposed on society by means of mass terror, control of mass media and total regulation from above downwards.

Under the dictatorship of the proletariat an analogous development or rather degeneration, is called not Bolshevism but.....Stalinism. Both are regimes of acute crisis, one, viz, Fascism was occasioned by the failure of the working class to carry out its historic task of socialist reconstruction of a developed capitalist economy and the other, viz, Stalinism arose out of the attempt of a successful but isolated proletarian revolution to get out of the very backwardness which had impelled that working class to power. By Stalinist methods that original backwardness has been overcome and the isolation ended but the qualified economic advance and the limited expansion into Europe have only served to heighten the contradiction between the socialist property relations of the Soviet Union and the other states of the socialist bloc and the reactionary, almost barbarous, political superstructure of Stalinism.

The overthrow of Stalinism with its police apparatus of repression, censorship, violations of legality and terror, is the essential precondition for the further and all sided economic development of these states. The authoritarian regime of the present intensifies the crisis situation within the economy. The bureaucracy seeks in its own manner to find a solution through "Liebermanism" and other quackery but these only serve to aggravate the crisis which only the introduction of genuine Soviet democracy can resolve. And proletarian democracy is inconceivable without the legalization of Soviet parties and the termination of any form of censorship. It is not without significance that all the movements



of protest – Berlin 1953, Poznan, Budapest, and now in Prague, have had this democratization programme as their underlying aim, however formulated.

What has been common to all is the demand for the introduction of political democracy on the basis of the existing nationalized socialist property relations. Whether expressed or not, this movement is directly aimed at the vast material privileges and power of the ruling bureaucracy. The free participation of the working class in decisions about the distribution of the social product – possible only in a proletarian democracy – would immediately mean a scaling down of the disproportionate share now appropriated by that bureaucracy. Hence the grim determination of the diehard conservative faction. It is this fight against democratization which is presented as the struggle against “counter-revolution.” But the bureaucracy also carries within it the “faction of Reiss” which is not only responsive to the strivings of the working class but represents its historic interests. Many more revolutionary convulsions are inevitable not only in East Europe but within the Soviet Union before the economic base and the political superstructure are brought into accord. And in the completion of this development will lie the supremet riumph and the crowning achievement of the contemporary communist movement.

10th September, 1968

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# ***Appendices***







## **Appendix I**

### **Letter to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia from the Lanka Samasamaja Party**

The First Secretary,  
The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia,  
Prague.

Comrade,

The Lanka Sama Samaja Party has followed recent events in Czechoslovakia and its relation to Czechoslovakia with the utmost interest and with close attention. In doing so, we have been able to use information made available from the Embassy of Czechoslovakia in Ceylon for which we would like to place on record our thanks.

It has been the consistent view of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party that socialism and human freedom go together, and that the rule of the proletariat is entirely consonant with the fullest democracy. It is therefore with the greatest pleasure that we have observed the steps taken in Czechoslovakia in the direction of democratisation. We refer in particular to the following:

1. The abolition of the censorship and the granting of freedom of speech in respect of the mass media of communication.

2. The steps taken towards the separation of the institutions of the Communist Party and of the National Front from the institutions of the state.

3. The announced determination to rest the leading role of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia upon the willing acceptance of the working class and the toiling masses generally, to be won and maintained by the Communist

Party's unremitting devotion and service to, and identification with, their interests, instead of upon a bureaucratic and juridical imposition of that role from above upon the Czechoslovak people.

4. The steps taken towards genuine internal democracy in the Communist Party in the context of the general democratisation process which has been set going in the country,

5. The moves to establish Workers Councils in the factories.

We wish particularly to congratulate the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia for being itself the instrument of this liberating process of democratisation which will undoubtedly serve to strengthen socialism in Czechoslovakia.

In this connection we have to regret that any doubt should have arisen in socialist quarters themselves regarding the purpose and effects of the steps taken in the course of the democratisation process by the Czechoslovak Government and the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Whether from the point of view of countering imperialist intervention and penetration, or from the point of view of the general interests of the community of socialist states, including their common military interests, it is in our view not possible to regard the process of democratisation in Czechoslovakia in the present national and international context as endangering Czechoslovakia or the community of socialist states.

On the contrary it is our deliberate view which we observe entirely coincides with yours that democratisation, itself a part of the difficult struggle to consolidate and develop



the socialist society, will be a source of new strength to Czechoslovakia, to the community of socialist states and to the world socialist and progressive movement.

We believe that it must be a source of real satisfaction to the world socialist and progressive movement that the outcome of the talks at Cierna Nad Tisou and Bratislava has refuted and frustrated the hopes which imperialism and its allies and agents no doubt harboured that the new initiatives of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia would either lead to disruption of the friendly relations within the community of socialist states or have to be halted and even reversed.

In this connection we welcome the re-affirmation at Bratislava of the principles of equality, respect for national sovereignty and independence in the relations between socialist states. The unreserved application of these principles is essential to the forward development of both Czechoslovakia and of the community of socialist states as a whole.

In concluding this letter of friendship and solidarity we should like to state our belief that the development in Czechoslovakia to which we have referred are significant not only for Czechoslovakia but also for the community of socialist states and the world socialist movement. In our view the influence of the ideas you proclaim and of the measures you take in implementing them cannot and will not be confined within the boundaries of Czechoslovakia but must and will spread beyond to the benefit of the socialist community of states to which Czechoslovakia belongs and of the entire world socialist movement to which Czechoslovakia is responsible no less than to her immediate allies.

We wish you increasing success in the task you have undertaken of regenerating socialism in Czechoslovakia and would like to assure you of our solidarity in the carrying out of this task.

Please accept our socialist greetings.

Yours fraternally,

*LESLIE GOONEWARDENE*

Secretary

Lanka Sama Samaja Party

For and on behalf of the Political Bureau of the L.S.S.P.

47, Jayantha Weerasekera Mawatha,  
Colombo 10.

Dated 10th August, 1968.



## **Appendix II**

### **Joint Statement of Mrs. Sirima Dias Bandaranaike and Dr. N. M. Perera on behalf of the SLFP and LSSP**

The SLFP and LSSP in accordance with their announced policy of non-alignment with any military or power bloc, condemn the invasion and occupation of the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia, and the subversion of its lawful government by the armed forces of the USSR, GDR., Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria.

These acts constitute a flagrant violation of the sovereignty and national independence of Czechoslovakia, respect for which had been proclaimed in the solemn agreement signed at Bratislava a few days earlier.

We call upon the invading powers to withdraw their troops forthwith from Czechoslovak soil and to permit the lawful authorities functioning at the time of the invasion to resume their functions.

*SIRIMA R. D. BANDARANAIKE*  
*N. M. PERERA*

Dated 24th August, 1968.

### **Appendix III**

## **Statement of the Central Committee of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party**

In its letter of 10 August, 1968, to Com. Alexander Dubcek, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the Political Bureau of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party welcomed the processes of democratisation which had been set going in Czechoslovakia since early this year, and expressed its solidarity with the C. P. of Czechoslovakia in this connection. In that letter, we also specially welcomed the reaffirmation at Bratislava of the principles of equality, respect for national sovereignty and independence among socialist states.

In the interval between that letter and this statement, on 21 August, 1968 the USSR and four of its Warsaw Pact allies the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria — undertook their infamous armed invasion of the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia, and by blitzkrieg methods completed in a matter of hours the occupation of Czechoslovakia and the subversion of its lawful government, while at the same time kidnapping many socialist leaders of the country. The pretext put forward for this outrage was that hitherto unidentified “leaders” of the Government, National Assembly and Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had called for this interventionist aid — a dishonest and cynical excuse on which it is hardly necessary to comment.

In a statement made jointly with Mrs, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Com. N. M. Perera on 24 August 1968 went on record to condemn the action of the five invaders who have occupied Czechoslovakia and subverted its Government. The state-



ment pointed out that a flagrant violation of the sovereignty and national independence of Czechoslovakia has taken place, and called for the withdrawal of the armed forces of the Five Powers from Czechoslovak soil. The statement called on the Five Powers to leave the lawful authorities existing in Czechoslovakia at the time of the invasion free to function again. The statement was expressly declared to be in accordance with the policy of non-alignment with any military or power bloc — a principle embodied in the Common Programme adopted by the SLFP, LSSP, and Communist Party of Ceylon.

The LSSP, has consistently held that socialism and human freedom go together, and that the rule of the proletariat is entirely consonant with the fullest democracy. We have also consistently been of the view that the further advance of the socialist countries—including the USSR — requires ever fuller democracy, the absence of which has assumed critical significance in blocking their path forward. The positions taken by the new leadership of the CP of Czechoslovakia remarkably coincides with our own thinking that democratisation within the established framework of socialism was essential for the revitalisation of Czechoslovak socialism. In these circumstances, we particularly applauded the following steps taken in Czechoslovakia under the leadership of the Communist Party:—

1. The abolition of the censorship and the granting of freedom of speech in respect of mass media of communication.
2. The steps taken towards the separation of the institutions of the Communist Party and of the National Front from the institutions of the state.

3. The announced determination to rest the leading role of the Communist Party upon the willing acceptance of the working class and the toiling masses generally, to be won and maintained by the Communist Party's unremitting devotion and service to, and identification with their interests, instead of upon a bureaucratic and juridical imposition of that role from above upon the Czechoslovak people.

4. The steps taken towards genuine internal democracy in the Communist Party in the context of the general democratisation process which has been set going in the country.

5. The moves to establish workers' councils in the factories.

Manifestly, these were the very developments which aroused anxiety and dismay among the ruling circles in the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Poland Hungary and Bulgaria. The fears they expressed regarding the future of socialism in Czechoslovakia as a result of the measures above referred to were in reality fears for the future of their own bureaucratic regimes. They have apparently decided that unless these trends in Czechoslovakia were checked at all costs at the very outset, the movement for democratisation would spread across the borders of Czechoslovakia to their own countries, and ever more irresistibly as Czechoslovakia herself consolidated her socialist democratic regime. Hence the invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia and the subversion of its government whose support among the broadest masses has been so dramatically demonstrated in the last few days.

None will be deceived by the fabrications seeking to suggest that the new movement in Czechoslovakia was nothing but a cover for counter-revolutionaries in league



with interventionist imperialism although we have no doubt that the CIA and other nefarious agencies of imperialism were desperately trying to fish in troubled waters. These fabrications were in fact only further pretext for intervention—perfidiously planned under cover of the Bratislava assurances referred to above.

It is a fact that pre-Dubcek Czechoslovakia was in crisis due to economic stagnation and bureaucratic misgovernment, and that reactionary elements saw in that situation an opportunity to raise their heads. The new leaders of Czechoslovakia were, in our view precisely right in seeking a socialist way out of the impasse through the process of democratisation. It was already evident that they had taken the wind out of the sails of reactionary elements and won a new and wide base of support among the broadest masses. They had successfully begun the regeneration of socialism in Czechoslovakia.

The consequences of this criminal aggression are not limited to Czechoslovakia or the Warsaw Pact countries. Enormous damage has been done to the cause of socialism all over the world. The defence of Vietnam has been morally weakened. Even here in Ceylon, an obstacle has been thrown in the way of the struggle of the popular masses against the UNP-Federal Party regime.

Further, imperialism which has roused the world to anger with its dirty war in Vietnam, has been provided with an opportunity to come forward with characteristic hypocrisy as the defender of the independence of little nations. The World Socialist Movement while manifesting the deepest concern for Czechoslovakia, will unmask this imperialist - capitalist hypocrisy.

On the other hand, it is clear that though the traditions of Stalinism are dying hard, they are undoubtedly dying. The world socialist movement will take heart from the bold condemnation of the attack on Czechoslovakia by nearby Yugoslavia and Rumania, and from the publicly expressed criticism of such Communist Parties as the French, Italian British, Dutch and Swedish Parties.

Again, although the outcome of events in Czechoslovakia cannot be predicted exactly, it is already clear that the bold, though non-violent, resistance of the Czechoslovaks to the bullying armed action of the five invaders and the power of world opinion have already dismayed the aggressors to the extent that they are talking about withdrawal and about compromises. If the Czechoslovak people and the power of world progressive opinion succeed in compelling an early withdrawal of the invading forces without securing their objective of — in one way or another — crushing the reform movement in socialist Czechoslovakia, not only will a great victory have been won in Czechoslovakia, but the day of doom of the bureaucratic regimes in other socialist countries will have been brought much nearer. It would also dismay the imperialists who are always on the watch hoping to make capital out of the misdeeds of the bureaucracies in the socialist countries.

We who cherish the ideas of Trotsky on the subject of bureaucratic deformation of socialist states see in all these events their revindication. The bureaucracies have acted according to their own inner logic. But the socialist countries themselves and the world socialist movement have progressed to the point where the final challenge to Stalinism will soon be thrown down. It is no longer a question of one isolated



socialist country surrounded by imperialism, as in the days of Stalin. The over-all power of the socialist bloc of countries vis a vis imperialism, the tremendous economic and cultural advances made in the socialist countries in the last 20 years, the great advances of the colonial movement — all these have created a climate in which Stalinism finds itself without a shred of historical justification. The events in Czechoslovakia however they turn out, will mark a critical point in the history of the socialist world, and hasten the end of bureaucratic regimes and the pernicious influence of Stalinism over the working class of the world.

26th August, 1968.

## **Appendix IV**

### **Statement of Progressive Artists, Writers and Lawyers**

We deplore the necessity felt by the Government of the U. S. S. R. and its Warsaw Pact allies to invade and occupy the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

We consider that these Governments, in doing so, have (1) committed aggression against a friendly, peaceful and defenceless neighbour; (2) intervened militarily in the internal political disputes of another country which were in the process of being solved democratically and constitutionally; and (3) violated the national sovereignty of Czechoslovakia.

We consider as a dangerous and unacceptable principle the contention of the U.S.S.R. Government that considerations of the military security of its country and its judgement of the danger to Czechoslovakia's political system justify its invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia. The right of one nation to self-determination is not subordinate to the security needs of some other nation. Nor can one nation's legal and constitutional Government be over-ridden or displaced by the Government of some other nation as a means of settling questions of the former's political future.

It is our firm opinion that there can be neither peace nor Socialism nor any kind of civilised society in the world unless all nations, big and small, respect each other's sovereignty and solemnly desist from interfering in each other's internal affairs.



We, therefore, call on the Governments of the U.S.S.R., Poland, Hungary, German Democratic Republic and Bulgaria (1) to withdraw all their troops from the territory of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic without delay; (2) to respect the terms of the Bratislava Agreement which all of them signed, viz. "to do everything in their power for deepening all-round cooperation of their countries on the basis of the principles of equality, respect for sovereignty and national independence, territorial integrity fraternal mutual assistance and solidarity," and (3) to permit the people of Czechoslovakia to choose their own leaders and Government according to the Constitution of their Republic and the statutes of their political parties.

Signed by :— **George Keyt** (Painter); **E. R. Sarachchandra** (Novelist, Poet, dramatist and critic), **Rohan de Saram** (Cellist); **S. Nadesan Q.C.** (Lawyer and Senator); **Felix R.D. Bandaranaike** MP (Lawyer); **Siri Gunasinghe** (Poet, critic, artist and writer); **Henry Jayasena** (Actor and playwright); **Lester James Peiris** (Film Director); **Iranganie Serasinghe** (Actress); **Chitrasena** (Dancer); **Druvi de Saram** (Pianist); **Mervyn St. S. Casie Chetty** (Lawyer); **Theja Gunawardhana** (Author and Journalist); **Reggie Siriwardena** (Writer and critic); **Rhoda Miller de Silva** (Journalist); **Sam H. Silva** (Lawyer and former administrator); **S. W. Bibile** (Professor of Pharmacology); **H. A. Passe** (Professor Emeritus); **Prins Gunasekera** MP (Lawyer); **R. K. W. Goonesekera** (Principal Law College); **J. M. Jayamanne** (Lawyer); **C. D. S. Siriwardena** (Lawyer and Senator); **K. Shinya** (Lawyer); **S. W. Walpita** (Lawyer); **Winston Serasinghe** (Actor); **Harry Pieris** (Artist); **Vajira** (Dancer); **Laki Senanayake** (Designer); **K. C. de**

**Silva** (Lawyer); **Desmond Fernando** (Lawyer); **K. Shanmugalingam** (Lawyer); **M. D. Jesuratnam** (Lawyer); **H. D. Perera** (Lawyer); **Stanley Tillekeratne MP** (Lawyer); **Alex Gunasekera** (Professor of Anthropology) **A. D. P. Jayatilleke** (Professor of Anatomy); **D. H. Kalupahana** (Lecturer in Pali); **M. Sanmuganathan** (Lawyer) **Nihal Jayawickrema** (Lawyer) **L. W. Athulathmudali** (Lawyer); **T. R. Navaratnam** (Accountant); **P. T. Fernando** (Lawyer); **W. D. H. Dias** (Lawyer); **U. C. B. Ratnayake** (Lawyer); **Walter Wimalachandra** (Lawyer); **M. T. M. Sivardeen** (Lawyer); **S. S. Sahabandu** (Lawyer).





"We have reason to believe, on the basis of prima facie evidence, that the United States and the Soviet Union are enacting an understanding which involves the reciprocal support for the crimes of each in its agreed 'sphere of influence.' This is at the expense of the independence and self-determination of other nations, from Europe to Viet Nam. The secret diplomacy of the rulers of the United States and of the Soviet Union threatens the liberty and sovereignty of men everywhere. It is essential that this identity of interests between the rulers of United States capitalism and the bureaucracy of the Soviet Union should be fully understood and opposed in the service of truth.

As four men who are devoted to socialism and who have publicly denounced and fought the crimes of United States imperialism in Viet Nam, we call upon socialists and communists to repudiate the threat to socialism posed by the Bismarckian acts of the Soviet leadership. Its secret dealings are with those who commit genocide in Viet Nam and elsewhere. We do not forget that it was the Soviet Union under Lenin which repudiated the secret diplomacy of spheres of influence in 1917, and which insisted upon the right to self-determination of all peoples, including their own.

The Soviet leaders, by their acts and their policy, repudiate the ideas of Lenin, of socialist internationalism and, thereby, sustain imperialism itself."

**Bertrand Russell**  
**Jean-Paul Sartre**  
**Vladimir Dedijer**  
**Laurent Schwartz**

In a letter to the Editor,  
*The Times* – 9th October, 1968.