Czechoslovakia/9  
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**SITUATION REPORT**

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1. The CPCS Central Committee Session on Education

Summary: The 13th session of the CPCS Central Committee, which was devoted mainly to problems of education, also provided a fresh illustration of the party leadership's unwillingness to introduce any meaningful political reform.

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The 13th session of the CPCS Central Committee took place on March 30 and 31. CPCS Secretary-General Milos Jakes gave the main speech; and Presidium member Jan Fojtik, who is responsible for ideology, presented a report on education.' Speculation that possible changes might be announced in the top echelon of the party leadership, including President Gustav Husak's ouster from the Presidium, proved to be premature. The only change that occurred was at a session of the Presidium on March 24 when Jan Siroky was appointed CC Department Head for Party Work in Industry, Transport, Construction, and Commerce, replacing Karel Erbes, who became Minister for Trade and Tourism of the Czech Socialist Republic. The switch appears to be of relatively little importance.

Jakes's Speech. In his main speech Jakes outlined his leadership's economic and political aims and made clear that Czechoslovakia was not ready for fundamental changes in the system. He again praised the "normalization period" as a "political victory over rightist and antisocialist forces" and denounced the opposition's activities as putting "ruthless psychological pressure" on those who disagree with the opposition. He said that there had been attempts by opposition forces to influence public opinion by casting doubt on the state's right to take action against unlawful activities, [by] disrupting public order, and even [by] launching attacks against the foundations of the social system.... Enemies of socialism both at home and abroad strive to poison social consciousness through uncertainty, to provoke ill-considered acts, [and] to promote political pluralism in the bourgeois sense.

Jakes said that the party firmly rejected the petitions that had been signed by some of the most prominent Czechoslovak artists, and he lashed out at "Church structures" and unidentified Church dignitaries who had been "abusing the religious feelings of people in order to open up another front in the struggle against socialism."

Jakes also ruled out the rehabilitation of the former party leader Alexander Dubcek and his colleagues. He said of Dubcek's recent activities:
Some former leading officials who had to leave the Communist Party have become active. They are trying to present themselves as pioneers of restructuring; and from this they extrapolate the demand for the rehabilitation of the policy of 1968 [and] in particular of people who were active then, including their return to political life . . . . Our view, however, remains unchanged on this question . . . .

Although Jakes criticized the economy, citing low productivity, wasteful use of resources, and the poor showing in trade with the West, he offered no new remedies and again suggested "prestavba" (restructuring). He also indicated a certain uneasiness about the changes that some of Czechoslovakia's allies were undertaking, saying that "people's thinking is influenced by the general situation in the world as well as the complexity of development in some socialist countries."

Jakes indicated that the Czechoslovak and Soviet leaderships had become further alienated from each other, saying that, "we watch with interest the revolutionary changes being implemented in the Soviet society, some of which are inspiring for us." Jakes' statement was more cautious than more recent remarks on the relationship between Moscow and Prague.

Fojtik's Report. While criticizing almost all aspects of the educational system in Czechoslovakia, Fojtik praised the model of the "socialist school" as one of the most "outstanding achievements of the CPCS." He said that the system offered every citizen a chance to obtain an education according to his abilities. This is, however, not the case; not only is there no place for outstanding achievers, but many citizens are barred "from education according to their abilities" for purely political reasons.

Fojtik warned that there was growing opposition among young people to the socialist establishment and said that the party could "not allow antisocialist and often criminal elements to penetrate informal youth groups, aiming their spontaneous activity against socialism." He argued that one of the main goals of a "socialist upbringing" was to prevent young people from becoming alienated from society. He complained about the limited influence of Communists on students, who allegedly are confronted with "various hidden and open attacks on socialism and the policy of the party."

Assessment. The 13th CPCS CC Session failed to show any change in attitudes on domestic policy within the party. Both Jakes and Fojtik made clear that pressure would be countered with further restrictive measures rather than concessions. While several speakers, including Fojtik, singled out problems in education, there were no indications that the authorities had finally worked out a feasible, realistic concept to replace the
constant "reforming" of Czechoslovakia's educational system, which resembles a series of experiments rather than thoughtful, gradual improvements.

Jan Obrman

2. Signs of Rapprochement with the Vatican

Summary: The recent talks between the Vatican and Czechoslovakia on filling vacant bishoprics was another step forward for relations between Church and State in Czechoslovakia. The regime's continuing hostility toward the Church, however, means that the tentative agreement conceals the usual Czechoslovak caution about allowing more religious freedom in the country.

* * *

On April 21 a Vatican delegation led by Archbishop Francesco Colasuonno, an Apostolic Nuncio and envoy to Eastern Europe, completed an 11-day visit to Czechoslovakia, during which it discussed filling Czechoslovakia's 10 vacant bishoprics. At the moment Czechoslovakia has only three bishoprics filled. The Vatican delegation held talks with Czechoslovak Deputy Prime Minister Matej Lucan and with the Director of the Federal Religious Affairs Office, Vladimír Janku. Reports from Prague said that both sides reached a tentative agreement on the names of the new bishops, who must now be approved by Pope John Paul II and the Czechoslovak government. Further details were not available at the time of writing.

An official communique issued after the close of the talks said that both sides had agreed "on the need to ... fill completely the [vacant] episcopal sees" and on "the necessity of continuing official talks on issues of mutual interest." Rude Pravo, the Communists' main daily paper, said that the negotiations had been constructive and had achieved real progress toward solving outstanding problems, especially the question of vacant bishoprics. Other reports from Prague on the talks commented that "the mood is generally optimistic and prospects are now bright."

Tension Continues. On April 24, after Colasuonno had returned to the Vatican, reports from Rome hinted at the possibility of an agreement on filling Czechoslovakia's vacant bishoprics. On the same day, however, Janku indicated that the talks had covered a number of subjects that the two parties would continue to disagree on. He said that "although the talks were open and constructive views remained divergent," and the Czechoslovak delegation was therefore "somewhat disappointed." He criticized some "centers in the West" that wanted confrontation and not agreement between the Vatican and the government. He accused "illegal Church groups at home" and especially the "illegally consecrated [Slovak] bishop" Jan Korec of pursuing the same goals.

Janku then touched on the root of the strains between the Church and the state. He stressed that the regime would not
allow "any discrimination against priests who for many years had not separated their dedication to the Church from their love of their homeland and from their active work for peace." In other words, the regime has not altered its desire to fill at least some of the empty bishoprics with candidates who are members of Pacem in Terris, a priests' association that supports the communist party and has been denounced by the Vatican.

Vague Pragmatism. Czechoslovakia's readiness to maintain a "dialogue" with the Vatican forms an essential part of the regime's ambivalent religious policies that combine repression with attempts to show a degree of tolerance. The fresh attempt by Czechoslovakia's leaders at rapprochement with the Vatican seems to be based on their drive to consolidate their authority at home and to strengthen the country's international image.

Czechoslovakia's intransigence in religious matters has become increasingly inconsistent with the growing openness in the Soviet Union, Hungary and Poland; pressures from Western countries have also been increasing. At home people have been openly expressing their criticism and discontent. Moreover, the regime appears to be under pressure to fill at least some of the vacant bishoprics quickly. If Cardinal František Tomasek were to die (he will be 90 on 30 June 1989), the regime would risk an embarrassing exposure of its relations with the Church, because then 11 of Czechoslovakia's 13 bishoprics would be vacant.

In light of these developments, the regime seems to have begun to upgrade the role of religion in general and Christianity in particular. This was obvious from an interview with Ivan Hodovsky, the Director of the Research Institute of Social Consciousness and Scientific Atheism of the Academy of Sciences.

Signs of Evolution. The first question gave Hodovsky a chance to clarify the aims of the Institute and its research activities. His institute, Hodovsky said, considered "ethical issues" important, since "moral problems appear to be extraordinarily topical." He described the country's religious situation with some statistics revealing that about 30% of the Czechoslovak population were believers. In northern and western Bohemia the number of believers was only 10%, while the share of believers in the population was substantially higher in Moravia and especially in Slovakia. He said that both the 1950s and 1970s had seen substantial reductions in religious observance. In the last 10 years, however, "religious life" had "stabilized," he claimed.

Asked to explain what he meant by "stabilized religious life," Hodovsky explained:

Some time ago the thesis was suggested that religion was weakening and that the few remaining believers would soon disappear from society. This thesis proved to be
incorrect. Human conscience is controlled by more complex mechanisms. Tradition and family life play a major role. Therefore, we are confronted today with the task of creating a qualitatively different [sic] picture of religion. Religion will not only not disappear . . ., but it will remain active throughout the whole period of the socialist build-up.

Hodovsky said that 20 or more years ago most people saw religion as a relic; today they valued it much more:

People point to the significance of religion in moral life; to its stabilizing influence on families; to its influence on children's education, on aesthetic feeling, and on cultural creativity. It would therefore be unwise to be hostile toward . . . [increasing religious observance] when evaluating religion.

Hodovsky was then asked the tougher question of whether religion reflected political attitudes. Not directly, replied Hodovsky; and he admitted that religion was a "phenomenon that is very sensitive to political life in society." He added that "visits to churches and Church rituals can be viewed as a form of political dissent."

Remarking that there was increased interest in religious literature and the Bible, Hodovsky argued that this was due to insufficient information about religion. After 40 years of antireligious propaganda, especially in schools, Hodovsky now declared:

Even high-school and university curriculums have a debt . . . [to religion]. In my view, this is a great fault. Christianity is one of the fundamental roots of European culture and civilization, and even today it is impossible to ignore it in silence.

Hodovsky concluded that it was important not to avoid discussing religious issues; on the contrary, it was necessary to talk about religion "frankly and truly" and to view religion as a real component of socialist life.

Despite these claims, the Czechoslovak record of implementing the CSCE agreements on religious freedom remains seriously flawed.

The American Government Report. The US State Department has just issued its 26th semiannual report on the observation of the CSCE agreements in Czechoslovakia. The report covered the period from 1 October 1988 to 31 March 1989 and showed the continuing discrepancy between the Czechoslovak government's international commitments on human rights and its claims of democratization and social reforms, on the one hand, and its actual performance, on the other.
Referring to the implementation of sections VI and VII of the CSCE agreement on human rights and freedom of thought and speech, the report noted that

Little, if any, progress was registered in the area of religious rights during the period. In apparent contradiction [sic] to the Vienna concluding document, the government bans certain proselytizing groups outright (e.g., example, Jehovah's Witnesses) and intervenes arbitrarily in the operation of all other religious communities. Unofficial gatherings such as privately-celebrated masses, prayer meetings, or educational sessions are forbidden.

The report also said that in February 1989, state officials had registered a new denomination, The Czech Apostolic Church. It said that a previously reported increase in enrollment at theological seminaries had continued, but that this did not offset the reduction in the number of priests.

The authorities did, however introduce some positive religious measures in 1988. After the appointment of three bishops in mid-1988, some concessions were made to meet Catholic demands for more nuns in hospitals, more seminary students, and the creation of deacons; enrollment of children in religious classes was simplified (although harassment of children and their families has continued), and more religious literature was promised.8

Czechoslovak leaders still, however, have a long way to go before other major issues that were listed in the recent 31-point petition demanding more religious freedom in the country are resolved. Some 600,000 people signed the petition in 1987 and 1988.

Peter Martin

1 UPI, AP, and AFP, 21 April 1989; and Radio Hvezda, 21 April 1989, 2:00 P.M. In 1988 for the first time since 1973 the Vatican and Czechoslovakia were able to agree on the appointment of bishops; three were appointed. See Czechoslovak Situation Report/8, Radio Free Europe Research, 3 June 1988, item 4.

2 21 April 1989.


4 DPA, 24 April 1989.

5 On 13 April 1989, for example, 23 US Senators asked the Czechoslovak government to honor its human rights obligations and halt the oppression of Catholics. On 21 April 1989 60 members of the US House of Representatives
expressed concern about the position of Catholics in Czechoslovakia. They said in a letter addressed to the Czechoslovak ambassador in Washington, Miroslav Houstecky, that there was "grave cause for concern."

6 Zemedelske Noviny, 4 April 1989, p. 1,2.

7 US State Department report on the observation of the provisions of the CSCE agreement, April 1989.

8 See Czechoslovak SR/12, RFER, 11 August 1988, item 6.
3. Economists Discuss Reforms

Summary: At a time when the Czechoslovak leadership seems indecisive about the role of central planning in its reform program, some economists have proposed a series of new economic approaches. It appears, however, that the regime will wish to retain the basic principles of the traditional system.

* * *

Czechoslovakia is to begin implementing an economic reform plan in January 1990, a year earlier than envisioned. The official statements on the reform program are, however, confined to rhetoric, which testifies to the leadership's consistent inability to reach agreement on a policy of effective but painless economic restructuring. On 14 March 1989 a group of Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCS) Central Committee leaders discussed a draft project to reduce central planning and move toward a free market economy. Their discussion was based on a summary of a study by the Prognostications Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. Details are not available, but the debate does not seem to be over. Meanwhile, the regime is under pressure to decide quickly about the role of central planning in the country.

Although the Czechoslovak authorities have been speaking for at least two years about "restructuring the entire economic mechanism" and a "break with past economic practices," they still feel that any major departure from the traditional economic system would be tantamount to a dangerous revival of the economic philosophy of the Prague Spring. Some economists meanwhile have proposed various strategies that range from the traditional support for central planning to a compromise that would rely on market simulation rather than real market competition.

In accordance with current official economic thinking, the reform projects have three main features: they are based on the logic of earlier economic models and deduced from the experience of the past 40 years or focus on "pragmatic solutions," or seek to combine some past practices with some elements of a market economy. An economist from the Economic Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Pavel Kysilka, has published a brief history of economic reforms in Czechoslovakia, showing that organizational reforms have been tried many times before but that halfway solutions have had little effect on economic performance. The study appears to be a warning to officials and economists not to repeat past failures.

In reference to the claim that the projects focus on "pragmatic solutions," an article in Hospodarske Noviny by the Director of the Economic Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy
of Sciences Frantisek Valenta said that "radical changes in the economy could not be based [purely] on pragmatism; this would simply lead to a return to capitalist economic forms." He said that Czechoslovakia's economic theory was in a "dramatic state" and stressed the "urgent" need for a new theory of socialist economics.

Although the reforms are clearly intended to combine past practices with some features of a market economy, there is ample evidence that the regime would reject any attempt to pursue the Hungarian or Polish reform paths.

Discussion Among "Neotraditionalists." In contrast to the moderate economists, some experts have said that the country's economic malaise can be solved by "institutional changes" and by a set of command rules. They have proposed increasing the independence of enterprises and have plead for a degree of market economy in the consumer goods and services sector but only as an instrument of central planning.

The researcher Jaroslav Smrcka has said that state planning will maintain its key role in the new economic system and will follow a "dialogue between the center [central planning authorities] and enterprises." The enterprises, he went on, would provide the central planning authorities with the information needed to prepare the state plan and would then implement the plan. The economist Ruzena Vintrova said that in a socialist state structural changes should not threaten basic social programs. She called for "target-oriented approaches" but rejected "continuity with previous economic systems." Two senior officials at the State Planning Commission, Karel Rybníkár and Josef Kobes, suggested that because of "partial economic imbalances," command tasks and limits should continue to be imposed on enterprises. The central plan indicators would be subject to discussions between the center and the enterprises; and as a result of these discussions, the state would direct economic development in whatever way it wished by relaying orders to industries. preferences. This was seen as the "only way to preserve the advantages derived from state ownership."

Opposition to Central Planning. Some leading economists are trying to tackle the problems of economic stagnation through unorthodox criticism. They reject the pivotal role of central planning and emphasize the need for "balanced investment and financial policies."

The researcher Vaclav Kluson said that the reforms currently being implemented had too often been based on traditional principles, which threatened the stability of the economy, because these traditional methods contained half-way solutions and in the past had had only a marginal effect on economic performance. Kluson called for competition, the liquidation of inefficient enterprises, budget austerity, mobility of financial resources, and prices determined by the market.
The economist Otakar Turek said that new reforms should be used to restore a balance in the economy. Central planning authorities should provide long-term information to ministries, enterprises, and economic institutes; develop national economic strategies; eliminate monopolies; and stimulate entrepreneurial activities. Turek said that the central management authorities should only indirectly control the economic transactions that influenced the money supply and at the same time were influenced by financial factors. If priority were put on retaining social programs instead of keeping the economy on course, "a whole chain of risks would emerge." Economic performance would fail to improve, while incomes would rise along with inflationary pressures. He concluded that such factors would stimulate moves to bring back the command type of economic management.

Two researchers, VACLAV MALY and SVATOPLUK HERC, said that "in a period of more rational economic developments, the goal of the economy is to satisfy rapidly changing and constantly emerging new needs." This could not be achieved with traditional command planning. This type of economic policy, therefore, had to be changed into one that would create a climate that would encourage enterprises to take over the management of social programs. Another economist, JIRI HLAVACEK, warned that the lack of self-regulating mechanisms in the economy would, in turn, bring about the need for rigid planning.

**Political Aspects Emphasized.** In contrast to the experts whose views are outlined above, another prominent economist, VALTR KOMAREK, called for a general reform of economic policies, including "wider political and social aspects that cannot be separated" from them.

In a recent television interview Komarek said that

The country's future lies in political restructuring and economic reform; in a structural change in the country's production structures that participate in the international division of labor; [and] in improving living standards in order to motivate people and [stimulate] economic growth.

Komarek repeatedly stressed that it was impossible to build up an economy without taking appropriate political measures, without the creation of democratic guarantees, and without developing an innovative climate among the people. According to Komarek,

many projects prepared in the ministries are [a] far [cry] from economic reforms; rather, they put more emphasis on changing economic instruments and management techniques than on real changes in economic policy.

Komarek clearly rejected analyses that stressed the positive factors of central planning and that led to a distorted
perception, isolationism, and a lack of a sense of reality. On the other hand, he also rejected views that advocated more liberal reforms that would involve massive unemployment and bankruptcies. He proposed a middle way by which the market would become the key factor in the national economy even if this entailed temporary unemployment through the closing of unprofitable enterprises. Similar views on reducing the role of central planning were expressed by three prominent economists—Milan Matejka, Zdenek Haba, and Jozef Minarik—in an interview with Radio Prague.13

An Assessment. The Czechoslovak leadership is clearly under pressure and is expected to implement innovative economic ideas in two related areas: the state planning system and the enterprises.

Ideally, tough central control should be relaxed; and only strategic planning should come from the center. Profitability should be based on quality indicators, and the Finance Ministry and the State Bank should become more powerful at the cost of the State Planning Committee. An enterprise should not be bound by compulsory targets, unless they are discussed in advance with the State Planning Committee. The most creative restructuring device in the hands of central management will be "state orders," which will determine the output of enterprises. Problems will then arise in defining the freedom, or autonomy, of enterprises under the following conditions:

1) if the state dictates the major features of production programs;

2) if manpower, materials, and investments are not guaranteed; and

3) if enterprises' self-financing is tied to state-imposed pricing, wage, or tax systems.

Peter Martin


2 Politicka Ekonomie, no. 2, 1989, pp. 219-233; Czechoslovak Situation Report/1, Radio Free Europe Research, 17 January 1987, item 6. Kysilka said that from the communist takeover in 1948 until 1987 the Czechoslovak economy had undergone six stages of reform. In the first stage, up to 1952, the economy had the main characteristics of the "administrative and command" economic control developed in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. From 1953 to 1957 the command system was tightened up to the extent that central plans were specified in detail and commands for the fulfillment were sent down to the enterprises. Economic activities were subject to tough central management control.
In the third stage, from 1958 to 1961, criticism of the system increased; and an attempt was made to restrict the "command" specifications of planned tasks and to allow enterprises to have a share of their profits. The enterprises were given increased autonomy in determining investment policies. From 1961 to 1966 the regime reverted to the "administrative and command" economic management model applied from 1953 to 1957.

In the fifth stage, from 1967 to 1968, a second attempt was made to replace the "administrative and command" system with a management model that was based on a market economy; but after the Soviet-led invasion in 1968 the new measures proved no better than the earlier ones.

In 1986 and 1987 the CPECS CC Presidium and the government approved a program called "The Principles of Restructuring the Economic Mechanism"; it is to take effect on 1 January 1990.

3 Hospodarske Noviny, no. 13, 13 March 1989, pp. 1 and 5.
4 Politicka Ekonomie, no. 6, 1988, pp. 785-799.
5 Ibid., no. 3, 1988, pp. 231-245.
7 Politicka Ekonomie, no. 8, 1988, pp. 817-829.
8 Ibid., no. 11, 1988, pp. 1,123-1,138.
9 Ibid., no. 6, 1988, pp. 575-592.
11 Ibid., no. 10, 1988, pp. 1,039-1,052.
13 Czechoslovak ER/20, loc. cit.
4. Prague Artists Boycott Their Union Meeting

Summary: The Prague section of the Union of Czech Dramatic Artists failed to hold its plenary meeting on April 15 because the turnout was too small. Miroslav Stepan, a member of the Presidium of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, addressed those who did show up and said that demands from artists for changes were "political extremism."

* * *

The growing split between Czechoslovak artists and the country's leaders came into the open on April 15, when the Prague section of the Union of Czech Dramatic Artists was supposed to hold its plenary meeting. The purpose of the gathering was to elect delegates to the national Dramatic Artists Union, but only 268 of the 637 invited delegates of the union's Prague section showed up. Czechoslovak Television commented:

No resolutions could be adopted, nor could the meeting elect delegates for the national meeting of actors and directors in June. Despite this [lack of attendance], the meeting took place but [merely] as a discussion.1

Canceling the meeting would have been quite difficult, because it was attended by two high-ranking party officials—Zdenek Horkik, the Mayor of Prague, and Miroslav Stepan, a member of the Presidium of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCS) and the head of the Prague party organization.

Stepan's Speech. According to Czechoslovak Television, the discussion meeting was stormy. A number of topics were broached, including problems with bureaucracy, the difficulties of small theaters, and the complicated structure of the union. One of the speakers, Miroslav Stepan, said that "people will not tolerate it when [artists], strive for political sensations and extremes instead of real art."

This was a clear reference to a recent petition, which dissident sources say, was signed by over 3,000 artists and demanded that the party leaders start consulting the public and release imprisoned dissidents. Some artists, in addition to signing the petition, spoke out on their own. The director Jiri Menzel, for example, gave an interview to the French daily Le Monde in which he criticized Czechoslovak leaders for their repressive policies.2 Still another group of artists has founded a Committee for the Parole of Vaclav Havel, an imprisoned dissident and playwright.3
Stepan described the artists’ demands as “acts aimed at undermining current social developments.” According to Stepan, many individuals were trying to prove that there was a split between cultural workers and the party in Czechoslovakia and that the split could only be solved “by concessions made by the party or by a radical [political] turnaround.”

Stepan then reprimanded artists who pressed the party for changes:

I find it strange that those representatives [of culture] who in the past have not encountered any difficulties [with the communist system] and have even had good opportunities for discussion with the state leaders now energetically try to use every occasion [to press the party for changes].

Stepan also criticized artists whom the party had previously considered to be its closest allies and whom it had rewarded in the past with state awards.

What I am very much concerned about is the [current] deep silence of some of those who have been willing to speak out in the past; the so-called “always compliant representatives of various collectives or artistic unions.” National Artists, cultural theorists, and directors of some cultural institutions belong to this group.

Stepan then pleaded with the artists to support restructuring. “In culture, we need restructuring most [of all]; ... and to democratize culture means not only that everyone can talk [about culture] ... but that it will be accessible to people [outside the cultural field].” He assured the artists that “a dialogue” between them and the party must and will continue. Stepan added, however, that such a dialogue had to contribute to the development of socialism in Czechoslovakia.

Assessment. The poorly attended plenary meeting and Stepan’s speech to those who attended reveal two things. First, the split between artists and the party is clearly much deeper than Stepan acknowledged. The artists who boycotted the meeting must have known that Stephan would attend. They clearly distrust the party's promises of greater dialogue and do not mind snubbing the leaders who have not only ignored requests from artists for an end to repression but who have attacked the artists for making the requests. Secondly, the party leadership seems to be deeply disappointed with those artists who until recently had been seen as allies of the party and who now seem not to support it.

The behavior of artists who are former allies of the party leaders reflects the changing mood in Czechoslovakia. Artists, who depend on the response of the public to their work much more than that of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, simply cannot
continue to ignore the repressive political atmosphere in the country. The artists probably feel that they risk their own popularity by being associated with the repression and other unpopular policies of the Czechoslovak leaders. It seems unlikely that the leaders will now find new friends among artists. The 369 empty seats during the Stepan's speech to the artists' meeting on April 15 serve as a symbol of the regime's growing domestic isolation.

Jiri Pehe

1 Czechoslovak Television, 15 April 1989, 7:30 P.M.
4 "National Artist" is the highest state award that an artist in Czechoslovakia can receive.
5. **The Era of Normalization Under Fire**

Summary: In recent months Czechoslovak artists have been increasingly criticizing the era of normalization. In most cases, their criticism has been a way of seeking continuity with the liberal era of the 1960s.

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In the early 1970s, when the policies of "normalization" were in full swing, all links with the liberal cultural developments of the 1960s were severed. Scores of books, cultural magazines, films, and plays were banned. Most of the important writers, film makers, theater directors, and other artists were "replaced" by young artists whose political credentials were often more important than their talent.

As Czechoslovak culture emerges from the stultifying atmosphere of the era of normalization, an increasing number of artists, including some of those who owe their careers to the regime have criticized the practices of the last 20 years and have called for their colleagues to be rehabilitated. If culture in Czechoslovakia is to improve, they say, ties with the 1960s must be re-established. It would be difficult to do this, however, because it would require not only lifting the ban on works of the 1960s but also rehabilitating cultural figures, many of whom have become leading critics of the present regime.

Writers. The criticism of the last 20 years as well as calls for the re-evaluation of the works of banned writers emerged with new intensity at a recent meeting of the Union of Czech Writers. The author Petr Prouza said, "During the last 20 years, we have not had many opportunities for a real exchange of ideas." Writing, in his view, has been based on "nomenklatura and other current conditions" that have nothing to do with literature." In an interview with a Czech daily, Prouza said that the relevant institutions would soon have to deal with the fact that the developments of the last 20 years had caused three types of Czech literature to emerge: official, samizdat, and emigre literature.

Michal Cernik, Chairman of the Union of Czech Writers, said at a union meeting that Czech writers had agreed that the 1960s "must be properly evaluated" and that the evaluation should be reflected in dictionaries and books about literature. Cernik also announced that the works of 110 Czech writers whose books had been withdrawn from libraries in the early 1970s were already being re-evaluated. Moreover, the Czech Ministry of Culture had issued an order in January 1989 to return the books of more than 100 banned authors to public libraries. Cernik revealed that works of various authors who until recently had been banned would be published soon. They include Jakub Deml, Jan Zahradnicek, Jaroslav Durych, Ludvik Askenazy, Edvard
Valenta, Egon Hostovsky, Bohuslav Reynek, Jan Cep, and Frantisek Krelina, all of whom were active in the 1930s and 1950s. Cernik acknowledged that "we have not managed to launch a real discussion about the writers of the 1960s."

Turning to the past 20 years, he said:

We have all suddenly started to discover the mistakes of the past as if we had not known about them until now. We are amazed by [emerging] truths that have long been shrouded in silence ... We must acknowledge that some people are experiencing a crisis of trust in the policies of the communist party and the ideas of socialism.

At the same meeting the writer Stanislav Vacha read out excerpts of a letter that he had received from a reader whom he described as a communist Czech writers have always roused the nation from lethargy. Today, when our nation has a chance again after the long period of Stalinist-Brezhnevite oppression, you, as spiritual leaders, should not remain silent but should defend the truth as best you can. The nation will follow you.

In his own criticism of the past, Vacha went further than other writers when he said that three or four years after February 1948 we copied and enforced a certain model of economic and social management, and for 40 years now we have been trying to change it or get rid of it. This 40-year history of conflict between social progress and bureaucratic and administrative stereotypes has been a painful drama for our citizens and, even more, for us writers.

Another writer, Roman Raz, stressed that no books should be banned in Czechoslovakia. The recent return of banned books to libraries, he said, was a nice present to readers; "we were not, however, given any explanation of who banned these books, why, and on what grounds." Raz emphasized that there was still no guarantee "that other books, other films, or other authors will not soon meet the same fate."

Other writers made scathing attacks on the policies of the past 20 years and called for an unbiased look at Czech literature based on continuity with the past. Jan Cimicky complained that for 20 years the "poetry, ideas, and humor" typical of the 1960s had disappeared from television and radio. "Nothing has been able to replace them," he said.

Other Creative Artists. The criticism of the era of normalization has come not only from writers. The new chairman of the Film Section of the Union of Dramatic Artists, Jiri
Svoboda, has strongly criticized how films were made during the 1970s. Pointing out that the break between the 1960s and 1970s had damaged Czechoslovak cinema, he said:

[In the 1970s] leading film officials had unlimited opportunities to censor films and influence casting . . . . There were entire themes that one was forbidden to touch on . . . . Leading film officials asked important—but for this work, incompetent—figures in society to make judgments about screen plays. They were trying to insure themselves against eventual defeat . . . I think that not only the film industry but the entire cultural field, the arts, and the spiritual superstructure [as a whole] were [adversely] affected during this period.7

A leading drama critic, Vaclav Konigsmark, said at a recent conference on Czech theater that the theater in the 1970s had suffered from "profound discontinuity" with the 1960s. According to Konigsmark:

Of all the art forms, theater depends most on the social climate . . . . [In the 1970s many] directors could not work in Prague . . . some could not be written about. Some names have remained taboo until now, although there are entire periods that we cannot think about without these names coming to mind. We, therefore, continue to write false histories or selective dictionaries of creative artists.

Other theater and film critics have made similar comments. Reflecting on the death of Evald Schorm, one of the best Czech theater and film directors, Jan Bernard strongly criticized the fact that he had been banned and prevented from making films in the 1970s.8 Other critics have reacted in a similar manner. Josef Kovalcuk, a playwright at the Ha-Divadlo Theater in Brno, recently lashed out at the growth of a bureaucracy that feeds on culture and stifles it. He blamed this on the developments of the last 20 years.8

Solutions? While the limits imposed on film and drama during normalization have been stretched a bit in some cases and a few daring films and plays have been produced (with more in the offing), the process is more difficult in literature. Although many films and plays by Czech and Slovak artists are still banned,10 the number of proscribed literary works is much larger and any movement toward greater creative freedom seems to be hindered by the continuing exclusion of authors of the 1960s and of certain topics.

The Union of Czech Writers recently asked the literary magazine Kmen to organize a round-table discussion on the last 40 years of Czech literature.11 While the participants again stressed the need to re-examine the 1960s, the discussion also revealed the depth of problems associated with the process of
rehabilitation. The discussion made it clear that official acceptance of many writers would depend on their "political attitudes." The process will also be hindered by the fact that many writers and critics who played a part in rewriting literary history in the 1970s are still active and will be among those setting the conditions for rehabilitating the work of banned writers.

The same problem will be faced by all artists who criticize the era of normalization. Many of the politicians and cultural officials who actively participated in "the massacre of Czech culture" in the 1970s are still in power. It will be impossible to overcome the devastating cultural effects of that era fully unless those responsible are replaced. Until then, artists who criticize the era will find it almost impossible to re-establish any real continuity with the 1960s and the liberal traditions of Czechoslovak culture. On the other hand, growing pressure from artists to do so may help unsettle the already weakened politicians and ideologists.

Jiri Pehe

1 Kmen, no. 13, 30 March 1989, p. 3.
3 Tvorba, no. 14, 5 April 1989, p. 2.
5 Ibid., no. 14, 6 April 1989, p. 1.
6 Ibid., p. 5.
7 Tvorba, no. 1, 1989, p. 4.
8 Scena, no. 1, 1989, p. 15.
9 Ibid., no. 6-7, 27 March 1989, p. 11.
11 See Kmen, nos. 11 and 12, 16 and 23 March 1989, pp. 4-5 and 4-5, respectively.
6. The New Wave of Political Trials

Summary: Since January more than 20 Czechoslovak dissidents have been tried for political "crimes," and more trials are still to come. This paper provides a list of names of those who have been tried since January and of the sentences given to them together with the names of those who are to be tried in the near future.

* * *

Reacting to growing opposition in the country, the Czechoslovak authorities have imposed the most severe crackdown on dissent in a decade. More than 20 political trials have been held since the middle of January, when thousands of people demonstrated in Prague. Not all of the trials, however, were the result of those demonstrations. Several dissidents have been tried on charges leveled against them last fall for taking part in various demonstrations in 1988. Participants in the demonstrations in January, however, have appeared in the majority of the trials. The Czechoslovak authorities announced in February that 53 people would be charged in connection with the January demonstrations. Most people in this group, however, have been punished by fines.¹

Below is a list of the people who have been tried since January. The names have become available through dissident and official sources. The list only includes those who have been sentenced to jail or given suspended jail sentences. The cases are listed in chronological order.

Jan Krivan, sentenced on January 9 to a four-month prison sentence, suspended for one year, for attending the demonstration in Prague on 28 October 1988.

Tomas Tvaroch, sentenced on January 11 by a court of appeal to a one-month sentence, suspended for one year, for attending the demonstration in Prague in October 1988.

Jiri Fajmon, sentenced on January 31 to a two-month sentence for participating in a religious demonstration in Bratislava in March 1988; the sentence was upheld by a court of appeal on March 2.

Miroslav Sramek, sentenced on February 17 to one month in prison for "violating public order" by participating in demonstrations in Prague in January 1989.

Ota Veverka, sentenced on February 22 to a 12-month sentence on charges of "hooliganism" for attending a ceremony to commemorate Jan Palach; the sentence was upheld by a court of appeal on April 4.
Jana Petrova, sentenced on February 22 to nine months in prison on charges of "hooliganism" for attending a ceremony to commemorate Jan Palach; the sentence was upheld by a court of appeal on April 4.

David Nemec, sentenced on February 22 to a six-month prison sentence, suspended for three years, on charges of "hooliganism" for attending a ceremony to commemorate Jan Palach; the sentence was confirmed by a court of appeal on April 4.

Petr Placak, Sasa Vondra, and Stanislav Penc, sentenced on February 22 to two months in prison, suspended for two years, on charges of violating public order for attending a ceremony commemorating Jan Palach; the sentence was confirmed by a court of appeal on April 4.

Jana Sternova, sentenced on February 22 to a four-month prison term, suspended for one year, on charges of violating public order for attending a ceremony commemorating Jan Palach; the sentence was confirmed by an appeal court on April 4.

Ivan Jirous, sentenced to 16 months in prison on March 9 on charges of antistate agitation for initiating a petition in April and May 1988.

Jiri Tichy, sentenced on March 9 to six months in jail on charges of antistate agitation for initiating a petition in April and May 1988.

Jaromir Nemec, sentenced on March 9 to an 18-month prison term, suspended for 3 years, on charges of incitement for distributing "antistate literature."

Pavel Dudr, sentenced on March 9 to a 12-month prison sentence, suspended for 3 years, on charges of incitement for distributing "antistate literature."

Tomas Dvorak and Hana Marvanova, sentenced on March 17 to a 10-month prison term, suspended for 30 months, on charges of incitement for participating in the demonstration in Prague on 29 October 1988.

Vaclav Havel, sentenced on March 23 to eight months imprisonment on charges of incitement and violating public order for attending a ceremony commemorating Jan Palach; this sentence was a slight reduction from an original nine-month prison term to which Havel was sentenced on February 21.

Dusan Skala, sentenced on March 24 to a 15-month prison term, suspended for 4 years, on charges of incitement for distributing material about Charter 77.
Tomas Hradilek, sentenced on April 4 to a 13-month prison sentence, suspended for 2 years, on charges of incitement and damaging the interests of the republic abroad for writing a letter protesting about police brutality during the demonstrations in January.

Slavek Popelka, sentenced on April 4 to four months in jail for "violating public order," an offense he committed by distributing leaflets advertising a meeting in Brno that would found a Green Party.

Vlasta Chramostova and Libuse Silhanova, sentenced on April 10 to a three-month prison term, suspended for one year, for writing a letter to state authorities about police brutality during the demonstrations in January.

More Trials Expected. Some Czechoslovak dissidents have called the latest crackdown "very skillful, carefully targeted repression." The regime seems to have punished the leaders of every major dissident group in Czechoslovakia. Two spokesmen for Charter 77, Sasa Vondra and Tomas Hradilek, were given suspended jail sentences. A third representative, Dana Nemcova, is to be tried when she has recovered from an illness. Hana Marvanova and Tomas Dvorak, the leaders of Independent Peace Association, were also given suspended jail sentences. Petr Placak and Ivan Jirous, the leaders of The Children of Bohemia were also among the convicted. Stanislav Penc, one of the leaders of the John Lennon Peace Club, was also given a short sentence. Vaclav Havel, a member of several important independent groups, was put on trial because he is seen as a symbol of the entire dissident movement in Czechoslovakia.

The regime has also decided to punish independent publishers. Dusan Skala has been associated with Lidove Noviny, one of the most important samizdat periodicals in Czechoslovakia. Frantisek Starek, who is to be tried later this year, has been the publisher of Vokno, a prominent underground magazine. Pavel Dudr and Jaromir Nemec were sentenced for distributing samizdat literature.

Other dissidents who will be tried in April and May are Petr Pospichal, an activist of Czechoslovak-Polish Solidarity; Petr Cibulka, an independent publisher and member of several dissident groups; and Stanislav Pitas, an activist of the Independent Peace Association.

Assessment. Although the current campaign against Czechoslovak dissent is extensive, most of the sentences are relatively mild compared with those given to dissidents in the 1970s. This is partly because of growing domestic and international pressure on Czechoslovakia to stop imprisoning dissidents. Since the international campaign for the release of Vaclav Havel from prison reached its peak in March, most of the other dissidents convicted of political "crimes" have received suspended sentences.
This development confirms what commentators on Czechoslovakia have been saying for some time: the Czechoslovak authorities are finding it difficult to preserve their position whatever they do. They are unable to crush their opponents because they fear that would cause even stronger domestic and international reaction that could destabilize the situation in Czechoslovakia even further; they are unable to relax their attitude toward critics, because they fear that such a policy would eventually lead to the overthrow of the regime. The current policy adopted by the Czechoslovak leadership, however, falls between those two options; and instead it does not satisfy anyone.

Jiri Pehe

1 Radio Hvezda, 14 February 1989, 7:00 P.M.

2 AP, 30 March 1989.
7. Eleven Years in Prison: The Story of Walter Kania

Summary: Walter Kania, a prisoner of conscience who spent 11 years in Czechoslovak prisons on trumped-up charges, was allowed to emigrate to West Germany, where he arrived on April 12. He was interviewed by members of RFE's Czechoslovak Research and Broadcasting Departments.

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In 1977, several months after signing Charter 77, Walter Kania was charged with "stealing socialist property" and was sentenced to a seven-year prison term. At the time he was arrested he was about to receive permission to emigrate legally from Czechoslovakia to West Germany, after having applied four times in vain. Kania then spent almost 11 years in Czechoslovak prisons (another 4 years were added to his original sentence). His story is one not only of life in the terrifying conditions in Czechoslovak prisons but also of a 20-year struggle with the communist bureaucracy.

Before 1977. In 1968 Kania, who is an ethnic German, left for West Germany, where he was granted German citizenship. He returned to Czechoslovakia several times in an attempt to obtain an emigration visa for his fiance. During a visit to Czechoslovakia in 1972, Kania was arrested, charged with "leaving the republic illegally," and sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment and the loss of all property. The Czechoslovak authorities maintained that Kania was a Czechoslovak citizen and disregarded his German citizenship.

Kania's Trial. According to Kania, the charges of "stealing socialist property" that were made against him in 1977 were fabricated. He was accused of stealing a large number of eggs from the South Moravian Egg Works, where he was employed as driver. At his trial, the chief witness for the prosecution, a bookkeeper at the enterprise, testified that according to the accounts that she had processed, no eggs were missing. Her testimony was disregarded; and following Kania's trial, she was transferred to a different place of work.

In 1982 Kania asked for a new trial, but his request was denied. His appeal against the decision went unanswered for two years and was then turned down. Even after his release from prison in 1988, Kania tried to press the Czechoslovak authorities to reopen his case so that he could prove his innocence. A prosecutor at the municipal prosecutor's office in Brno told Kania, "You have served your jail term, so what do you care? No one will give you back the years you spent in prison." He also explained to Kania, as did an attorney whom Kania later hired, that such court proceedings could take years in the unlikely case that they could be initiated at all.
New Prison Terms. When Kania began serving his seven-year prison term, his wife and his two children, who were four and eighteen months old at the time, were left virtually without any financial support. Kania's wife stopped receiving a child allowance, which she had been getting before his imprisonment. Kania received two letters from his wife in which she described the family's situation; he asked the prison authorities to arrange to have the child allowance payments paid directly to him. He was referred to district financial officials, who responded by advising his wife that she could not claim the child allowance money herself but that her mother could do so if she obtained the appropriate documents. Kania, angered by this bureaucratic maze, wrote to a total of eight institutions, including the Federal Assembly and the Office of the President of Czechoslovakia. He found himself in a vicious circle: state institutions simply referred him to other institutions. He described his predicament in a letter to Prime Minister of Bavaria Franz-Josef Strauss; but the letter was intercepted by the authorities, and in 1981 he was sentenced to two years for "harming the interests of the republic abroad."

In 1983 Kania was sentenced to another two-year prison term for attempting to send letters to his relatives in the West. In these letters, he described his personal situation and asked his relatives to send him medicines that the prison physicians were unable or unwilling to give him. These two additional sentences extended Kania's prison term to the fall of 1988.

Kania's Family. After Kania's imprisonment, his wife was forced to change jobs three times and was subjected to constant intimidation from her employers and the police. When it had become apparent that his children would have a very difficult time in school, Kania sought to persuade his wife to divorce him. She refused several times but eventually agreed. After the divorce, the abuse stopped. Kania and his wife remarried shortly after his release from prison in 1988.

Prison Conditions. Kania served his prison terms in three of Czechoslovak's worst prisons---Mirov, Ostrov nad Ohri, and Valdice. He was in a second category prison until 1983; and from then until his release in 1988 he served in Valdice, a third-category (the harshest) prison. There, he was allowed to have visitors and receive packages only once a year, while in second category prison visitors and packages are allowed twice a year. Prisoners in Czechoslovakia are entitled to see visitors; but the prison authorities can refuse to let them receive packages. For several years Kania was allowed no packages.

His prison cells were an average of 30 square meters and were usually occupied by 16 people. Taking the space filled by bunks, cabinets, tables, and chairs into account, this left approximately 60 square centimeters of space per prisoner. When prisoners were not working in the prison workshops, they were confined to their cells.
Physical abuse from prison guards and other inmates was rampant. Since political prisoner are never put in the same cell, Kania spent the 11 years with murderers and other violent criminals. Although Kania admitted that some prison guards were decent people "just doing their job," most of them were sadistic and beat and abused the prisoners. Greeting another political prisoner while marching to or from work, for example, could be cause for a serious beating. Kania recalled one especially brutal guard in Valdice Prison who repeatedly told him, "Kania, you're not going to make it out of here alive. We'll take care of that." Once, the same guard screamed at Kania, "We'll make your wife a whore and make sure that your children also wind up in prison."

Kania said that some decent prison guards and foremen in prison workshops occasionally informed political prisoners about important broadcasts by Radio Free Europe and other Western radio stations. On the other hand, a number of police informers were planted in cells with political prisoners. Kania also met a number of inmates who were sentenced for political crimes but whose names were apparently unknown to human rights organizations in Czechoslovakia and abroad.

When Kania suffered a heart attack, a prison physician refused to treat him and sent him back to work. Three days later Kania had a second heart attack. His life was saved by a nurse who rejected the guards' claims that there was nothing seriously wrong with him and called a civilian physician. Kania was transferred to a civilian hospital where he remained for two days. On the second day, he was taken back to a prison clinic, because the police claimed that "there was serious reason to believe that he could escape." Although he was being fed intravenously and was hooked up to other medical instruments, he was taken back to prison in handcuffs.

In his 11 years in prison, Kania spent 612 days in isolation for a variety of reasons that were often fabricated in order to break him down mentally.

After His Release from Prison. Kania was temporarily released from prison on grounds of poor health in May 1988, six months before his term was to expire. The step was apparently prompted by the death of Pavel Wonka, another political prisoner, who died in prison the same month. After his release from prison, in June 1988, Kania suffered another heart attack and subsequently asked that the rest of his sentence be waived. The request was granted in February 1989 after a tiresome bureaucratic battle. In October 1988 Kania applied to emigrate legally from Czechoslovakia, and he and his family received emigration visas in February 1989 after another complicated struggle with the bureaucracy.

Postscript. "I think that my release from prison is a result of international pressure," Walter Kania said. "It is a
miracle. If I had had to return to prison after my release in May 1988, I don't believe that I would have come out alive." He thanked international human rights organizations as well as individuals for writing to the Czechoslovak authorities demanding that he be released from prison and given an emigration visa. When asked about his feelings after arriving in West Germany, Kania said: "We were all very happy and excited. The night after our arrival was the first in a long, long time when I slept really well."

Jiri Pehe

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