

S I T U A T I O N R E P O R T

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1. The Ninth Trade Union Congress

The ninth all-trade-union congress was held in Prague on 25-28 May 1977 under the motto "The Full Strength of the Trade Unions Is Devoted to Implementation of the 15th CPCS Congress and for a Happy Life for the Working People." The congress was attended by 1,306 Czechoslovak delegates, representing the circa 6,600,000 members of the united trade union organization who make up 97 per cent of all workers in the country. Some 2,700,000 of the members are women. Some 500 foreign guests and about 280 journalists and technical personnel were also present. The congress was the culmination of a great deal of political, organizational, and preparatory work. It was preceded in April by Czech and Slovak trade union congresses and prior to these by regional and district trade union conferences and national and federal congresses of 17 individual trade union associations. At the lowest, shop-floor level, the congress preparations began as long ago as in the fall of last year. They comprised about 250,000 annual meetings of trade union sectors and nearly 50,000 annual meetings and conferences of shop-floor and primary organizations (Radio Hvezda, 25 May 1977).

The trade union movement has a long tradition in Czechoslovakia. It dates back to the time before the founding of an independent Czechoslovak state. The first trade union organizations originally came into being as narrow common-interest organizations in the Czech Lands, as well as in Slovakia, as early as under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The growth of the trade union movement reached a peak after the enactment of the Coalition Law of 1870, which permitted the constituting of state-wide trade union associations in which individual societies and groups from the whole of Austria-Hungary were concentrated. In January 1897, an independent Czech trade union center -- the Czechoslovak Trade Union Association (OSC) was founded, which supported the social democratic party. In the same year, the All-Trade-Union Commission of the National Social Party was also founded which in 1902 became the Czech Workers Community (COD).. In the same year, a Christian Trade Union Center

also came into being. Until the founding of Czechoslovakia, the Slovak trade union organizations came under the jurisdiction of Budapest. The Slovak trade union organizations with a Christian social orientation established an independent center, the All-Trade-Union Association of Slovak Christian Workers, at their first congress in Zilina in 1921.

In the first years of the independent Czechoslovak state, the trade union centers OSC, COD, and the Liberec Commission, in which the German trade union organizations in the Czech Lands were associated, were the strongest ones. In the fall of 1922, the supporters of the International Association of Revolutionary Trade Unions, founded in 1921, who had been expelled from the individual associations and centers, founded the International All-Trade-Union Association, known as the Red Trade Unions. As a consequence of the rift in the Czechoslovak trade union movement at the end of 1928 and beginning of 1929, which reflected the struggle within the CPCS, the members and officials with a revolutionary orientation established a new center, the Center of Red Trade Unions, in May 1929. Up to World War II, the reformist and revolutionary trade unions did not unite. After the Nazi occupation in 1939, the Red Trade Unions were disbanded and the National Trade Union Center of Employees was founded under direct control of the occupying power.

Immediately after the war, the CPCS demanded that the trade union movement in Czechoslovakia be unified. This occurred at the plenary session of the Central Council of Trade Unions, which was controlled by the Communists, in June 1945. Subsequently, on 16 May 1946, the National Assembly passed the law requiring a united trade union organization in the country. The trade unions, with their 2,000,000 members, became not only the most numerous societal, socialist-oriented organization, but also an important power base. The Communists were well aware of this and used it for their own purposes in the crisis days preceding the coup d'état in February 1948. As stated in Dokumentacni Prehled CTK (27 April 1977), the united trade unions "at that time made an important contribution toward the victory of the working people" and also participated in the "regeneration" -- i.e., the purge -- of the National Front.

After this, however, the Czechoslovak trade unions lost their character as free organizations and became a transmission belt for the CPCS, which used this largest societal organization to push through its policies, through the medium of thousands of officials. While the First All-Trade-Union Congress (19-22 April 1946) dealt with the unification of the trade unions into the united, state-wide Revolutionary Trade Union Movement, the second congress (11-15 December 1949), the first after "the victory of the workers over the bourgeois reactionaries," launched the program of "consolidating and organizing the workers in the struggle for a socialist transformation of society." At this congress, the importance of a continuous growth of labor productivity, an efficiency drive, socialist competition, raised norms, and of efforts to uncover reserves, began to be emphasized. Subsequent trade union congresses were held in the spirit of the party congresses which preceded them. The Third All-Trade-Union Congress (19-22 May 1955), for instance, discussed the decisions

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of the 10th CPCS Congress, the fourth trade union congress (13-17 May 1959) dealt with the conclusions of the 11th party congress, the fifth trade union congress (15-19 May 1963) was guided by the spirit of the deliberations of the 12th Congress of the CPCS. The Sixth All-Trade Union Congress (31 January - 4 February 1967) was held in a period of mounting tension in which trends, later described as revisionist (Prace, 21 May 1977), made themselves felt in the national economy.

The period of the Prague Spring in 1968 had a very great impact on the trade unions. Even after 20 years of systematic ideological indoctrination, those few months were sufficient for the trade unions to come to realize their real mission. The slogan of that time, "Trade Unions Without Communists," may best characterize the wave of criticism leveled at the previous activity of trade unions that had lost their authority among the workers because they did not defend the latter's rights but concerned themselves instead with raising production. The workers asked questions of the trade union officials, such as "what are the trade unions for?" and labeled these officials as "the B Team of the CPCS" (Pruboj, 23 April 1968).

Even after the August invasion, at the seventh trade union congress (4-7 March 1969), "the right-wing forces clearly kept the upper hand." As conceded in "The Lessons from the Crisis Development in the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement Between the Sixth and Seventh All-Trade Union Congresses" -- adopted by the plenary meeting of the Central Trade Union Council (5 May 1972), the Seventh Congress "remains forever a serious defeat of the entire revolutionary trade union movement in the records of the trade unions." That is to say, the seventh congress adopted several program documents of "a right-wing, opportunistic orientation" which the next congress, the Eighth All-Trade Union Congress (12-15 June 1972), "revoked in their entirety as contrary to the interests of the working class and the role of the trade unions under socialism" (Praca, 21 May 1977). After the invasion, "a consolidation process" within the trade union organizations was set in motion, which lasted about two years. The trade union daily Prace (26 October 1970), describing its course, wrote, "It is no exaggeration if we estimate that 70-80 per cent of the functionaries of trade union bodies at all levels have been exchanged in the past two years." This extensive purge was described as a process of recuperation, and the eighth congress in June 1972 was stated to have adopted the conclusions of the 14th CPCS Congress in their entirety, and to have expressed the active support of all workers for the policies of the party (Praca, 21 May 1977).

The ninth state-wide congress was preceded by national congresses -- the Czech Trade Union Congress (15-16 April 1977), and the Slovak congress (5-6 April 1977). Both of these congresses sent letters addressed to the party and to the Central Council of Trade Unions, in which the current situation in the Czechoslovak

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trade unions was briefly reviewed. The letter from the Slovak congress to the party stated that the results of the preceding trade union meetings implied "an unreserved expression of support for the CPCS and the determination actively to participate in the implementation of the party's economic and social program during the current five-year plan." The Slovak trade union officials, aware of the demanding nature of the economic tasks, promised in the letter that, under the leadership of the party, they would more intensively engage in educating the workers and influencing their production, working, and civic activity and political commitment. Moreover, they would generally endeavor to bring about the action, organizational, and ideological unity of the workers, to improve political-organizational and educational work, to develop creative working activity and -- this merely as the last point -- to improve the working and living conditions of the workers. Nor was the obligatory tribute of gratitude addressed to the Soviet trade unions, whose "rich experiences" would be utilized, lacking. Finally, the Slovak trade union functionaries promised in the letter to the party that they regarded it as their duty "to protect and develop the achievements accomplished under the leadership of the CPCS in the past and to fight untiringly against those who try to cause disruption and to distract attention from the results attained." Similarly, in the letter to the party from the Czech congress, the determination is expressed to buttress the leading role of the working class through all forms of trade union work, to protect the socialist system, to reject all expressions of anti-Sovietism and anticommunism and not to permit the friendship with the USSR and the other socialist states to be disturbed.

In the letter sent to the Central Council of Trade Unions, the Slovak trade union officials again expressed their "unreserved" loyalty toward the CPCS and promised, in this year of the 60th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, to lead the workers toward the consistent fulfillment and overfulfillment of the targets of the state plan, primarily through socialist competitions and developing tested methods of work, and to struggle for peace and against enemies at home and abroad. The Czech letter to the Central Council of Trade Unions also includes the promise to fulfill the tasks of the current year, to increase efficiency and the quality of work, and to improve the quality of political-organizational and ideological-educational efforts at places of work. Attention would also be focused on settling the working and living environment, it was said (Prace, 7 and 18 April 1977).

These demands and tasks were also expressed in the congress speeches. In the opinion of the chairman of the Central Council of Trade Unions, Karel Hoffmann, one of the present-day trade union demands is "to condemn the recent attempts made by enemies of all kinds to force upon our people imported, inimical, alien opinions and concepts and their aim to disrupt our society, to disturb our fraternal relations and our alliance with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, and to turn the Czechoslovak people away from the communist party."

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Hoffmann's irritation is a reaction to Charter 77, whose Document No.7 deals with the subject of the trade unions, whose role this document characterizes as an appendage to the party and economic apparatus that fails to express the wishes of the workers or to defend the interests and rights of the Czechoslovak working people. According to this Charter document, the so-called right to work actually denotes the duty to work and the supposed non-existence of unemployment actually is hidden unemployment, for which every working person has to pay eventually. Similarly, the document explains that the high rate of employed women, 44.5 per cent in the production branches and 59.6 per cent in the other branches in 1975, is the consequence of necessity, because one wage in a family is not enough to provide that family with a decent standard of living. The document further criticizes the duration of working hours which, after including Saturday, Sunday, and overtime work, are among the longest in Europe.

The results of a survey quoted in the document are disturbing: according to these findings, until August 1968, 66.9 per cent of the workers were better pleased with their labor than previously, while after August 1968 this was so only in the case of 3.5 per cent of the workers. The Czechoslovak workers know the greatest right of a working person, the right to strike, only from reports about strikes in the West, which regime media interpret as a justified struggle against exploitation. Accidents at work in the West are also attributed to exploitation under the capitalist system. On the other hand, if something similar occurs in Czechoslovakia, in most instances only what cannot be avoided is admitted, for the sole reason that it can no longer be kept secret nowadays. This is what happened, for example, following the disasters at the Staric Mine on 3 January 1977, in which 43 miners perished, and at the Czechoslovak Army Mine on 22 March 1977, which cost 37 lives. The accident at the nuclear power station "in which there was no loss of life, by pure chance," was not even reported in the press. Only at the trade union congress did Minister of Fuel and Power Vlastimil Ehrenberger briefly mention this accident (Hornik a Energetik, 5 May 1977).

Charter 77 and its follow-up documents have undoubtedly "touched a raw nerve." This is evident from the speeches made at the Ninth All-Trade Union Congress, not only by Central Trade Union Council Chairman Karel Hoffmann, but also by party leader and Chief of State Gustav Husak on 25 May 1977. Hoffmann declared that the firm stand of the millions of working people, trade union members, "obliges us to proclaim once more, addressing ourselves to all enemies, that no pamphlets, charters, or other similar products of ideological subversion will turn the attention of our people from efforts to implement the program of the 15th party congress, nor can they detract from the proven successes of socialist construction and shake the trust of the working people in the revolutionary line of our country and in the activity of the united trade unions, which results in demonstrable success for them." Later, Gustav Husak criticized "bankrupt individuals" who, while pretending to try to improve socialism, want to undermine the basic roots of socialism, that is,

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"the power of the working class," in the hope that, afterward, "it will crack up by itself." He expressed the assurance that there would not be any "upsetting of the position of the working people" in Czechoslovakia and that "we shall take care of the protection of the revolutionary achievements of the working class, the working people, and socialist society."

Referring to arguments in the West that the reason why so many women work in Czechoslovakia stems from the fact that a family cannot make ends on one wage alone, Husak responded that these were "almost feeble-minded assertions," and immediately countered by talking about social disasters in the West. Husak also confirmed the links between the Czechoslovak trade unions and the party when he stated that one of the things the millions of trade union workers were striving for was the program of the CPCS.

On 28 May 1977, the congress elected the leading officials of the Central Council of Trade Unions. Karel Hoffmann retained his post as chairman, nor were there any changes in the election of the vice-chairmen and secretaries. In addition, the delegates adopted a resolution, a letter addressed to the CPCS CC, and an appeal for developing the initiative of the workers in honor of the 60th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the 30th anniversary of the victorious February. The resolution emphasizes "the continued, consistent effort to implement the policies of the CPCS as expressed in the economic and social program of the 15th CPCS Congress," which is described as a practical demonstration of the recognition of the CPCS's leading role. Thus, it is said, the trade unions fulfill a twofold task: "to care for the development of the national economy and growth of production, as well as for the rights of the workers and the conditions of their labor and life." The resolution further calls for "broadly developing socialist competition and other forms of workers' initiative to attain high production efficiency and excellent quality of all work done" -- undoubtedly an urgent problem of the Czechoslovak national economy -- and for efforts to overcome the existing shortcomings in trade union work (Radio Hvezda, 28 May 1977).

Indeed, these shortcomings cannot be minor ones, inasmuch as Karel Hoffmann himself had to admit, at the preceding Slovak trade union congress, that "we have far from fulfilled our fundamental task, which requires the revolutionary trade union movement to be a school of socialism and to draw the majority of the movement's members into continuous and active participation in solving questions concerning the building of a highly developed socialist society" (Prace, 7 April 1977). This is hardly an outstanding result, since even now (with 6,500,000 members) the trade unions employ about 1,500,000 trade union officials for this purpose and another 1,500,000 trade union members hold official posts outside the trade unions (Prace, 7 April 1977).

2. 1976 -- A Record Year for Tourism

Although Czechoslovak media praised the positive development of tourism in 1976 on several occasions and revealed some figures on foreign tourist traffic, the first detailed information was only published in Statisticke Prehledy (No.4, April 1977). According to these figures, the number of foreign visitors increased by more than 3,500 000, setting a new record of 17,373,260 individual trips. This was mainly due to a rise in visitors from the socialist countries (3,446,449 more than in 1975), while the number of Western tourists grew only slightly (63,516 more than in 1975). The number of Czechoslovaks going abroad also rose considerably, from 7,394,775 in 1975 to 7,983,932 in 1976. This figure represents a new record, and was reached by a considerable increase in travelers to the socialist countries (565,369 more than in 1975), as well as by a minor rise in the number of Czechoslovaks going to the West (24,788 more than in 1975). The share of West-bound tourists in total tourist traffic abroad remained stationary (3.97 per cent in 1975 and 3.99 per cent in 1976).

The number of foreign visitors from the socialist countries increased mainly owing to a spectacular rise in tourists from Poland, from 2,948,380 in 1975 to 5,802,977 in 1976, and partly due to a general increase in visitors from the other socialist countries, with the exception of Yugoslavia. In fact, for the second consecutive year, the number of Yugoslavs traveling to Czechoslovakia dropped, from 135,035 in 1974 to 123,936 in 1975, and to 105,777 in 1976. On the other hand, the steady decline in visitors from Bulgaria and Romania was checked, and their number rose substantially in 1976 as compared with 1975. As far as visitors from the Western countries were concerned, of the four countries mentioned in Statisticke Prehledy -- Austria, France, the FRG, and Italy -- only the number of Italians traveling to Czechoslovakia decreased, while the number of visitors from the three other countries increased in 1976. Details are given in the following two tables:

Foreign visitors to Czechoslovakia		Czechoslovak visitors abroad	
	1975	1976	% change
Total	17,373,260	20,873,210	+20.2
From socialist countries	13,926,811	17,373,260	+24.7
From Western countries	3,446,449	3,500,000	+1.6
From Poland	2,948,380	5,802,977	+96.7
From USSR	1,350,000	1,400,000	+3.7
From Czechoslovakia	7,394,775	7,983,932	+8.1
From socialist countries	565,369	1,130,738	+200.0
From Western countries	24,788	29,571	+19.3
From Italy	10,000	12,000	+20.0
From France	8,000	10,000	+25.0
From Austria	6,000	8,000	+33.3
From Germany	4,000	6,000	+50.0
From other Western countries	2,788	3,571	+28.1

Table 1Foreign Tourists from the Socialist Countries

Country of origin	1975	1976
Bulgaria	35,670	79,303
GDR	6,005,923	6,164,886
Hungary	3,625,206	3,983,123
Poland	2,948,380	5,802,977
Romania	8,087	32,298
USSR	211,161	236,303
Yugoslavia	123,936	105,777
Others	<u>70</u>	<u>215</u>
Total	12,958,433	16,404,882

Source: Statisticke Prehledy No. 4, April 1977;
for "others," author's own calculations.

Table 2Foreign Tourists from Nonsocialist Countries

Country of origin	1975	1976
Austria	215,233	245,119
France	31,557	34,741
FRG	327,521	348,831
Italy	59,163	52,132
Great Britain	19,200	n.a.
Sweden	31,689	n.a.
United States	38,477	n.a.
Others	<u>182,022</u>	<u>287,555</u>
Total	904,862	968,378

Sources: Statisticke Prehledy No. 4, April 1977,
Statisticka Rocenka CSSR 1976, p. 406;
and for "others," author's own calculations.

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In 1976 -- as in previous years -- the largest number of Czechoslovak tourists visiting the socialist countries went to Hungary. Their number increased by more than 300,000, but the largest rise of Czechoslovaks going abroad was registered in tourist traffic with Poland, where the number of Czechoslovak visitors increased by more than 600,000. The number of tourists traveling to the other socialist countries dropped, most markedly those going to Romania and Yugoslavia. The number of Czechoslovaks going to non-socialist countries slightly increased, and was the highest yet during the current decade. The most important increase was registered in travel to Austria, which was visited by 101,722 Czechoslovaks in 1976 against 90,901 in 1975. The number of Czechoslovaks traveling to the FRG rose from 76,241 in 1975 to 85,986 in 1976, and slightly exceeded the highest figure so far registered in the 1970s, which was reached in 1974, with 85,547 visitors. The comparison between 1975 and 1976 is given in the following two tables:

Table 3Czechoslovak Tourists Traveling to the Socialist Countries

Country of destination	1975	1976
Bulgaria	440,178	370,194
GDR	1,952,223	1,892,170
Hungary	2,654,187	2,991,214
Poland	1,141,537	1,756,300
Romania	249,865	134,297
USSR	357,208	309,617
Yugoslavia	304,281	210,410
Others	<u>1,387</u>	<u>1,033</u>
Total	7,100,866	7,665,235
<u>Source:</u> <u>Statisticke Prehledy</u> No. 4, April 1977; for "others," author's own calculations.		

Table 4

Czechoslovak Tourists Traveling to Nonsocialist Countries

Country of destination	1975	1976
Austria	90,901	101,722
France	18,120	18,812
FRG	76,241	85,986
Italy	26,649	24,480
Great Britain	11,667	n.a.
Sweden	2,507	n.a.
USA	3,199	n.a.
Others	64,625	87,697
Total	293,909	318,697
<u>Sources:</u> <u>Statisticke Prehledy</u> No. 4, April 1977, <u>Statisticka Rocenka CSSR</u> 1976, p. 406; for "others," author's own calculations.		

Czechoslovak statistics do not give a breakdown by other countries, making it impossible even to estimate -- especially as far as the nonsocialist countries are concerned -- to which countries and in what numbers Czechoslovaks were traveling or how many tourists from the countries concerned visited Czechoslovakia. Despite the slight increase in the number of foreign tourists from nonsocialist countries to Czechoslovakia in 1976, their share in the total number continued to decline. On the other hand, the share of Czechoslovaks traveling to nonsocialist countries slightly increased. Yet, the number of Czechoslovaks visiting Western countries in the past year was the second smallest ever registered.

There were quite important changes in the shares of individual countries visited by Czechoslovak tourists, especially as far as the socialist countries were concerned. The following tables, calculated on the basis of official statistics, give some details:

Table 5

Foreign Tourists Visiting Czechoslovakia
(in per cent of total)

Country of origin	1975	1976
<u>Socialist countries</u>	<u>93.47</u>	<u>94.43</u>
of which: Bulgaria	0.26	0.46
GDR	43.32	35.48
Hungary	26.15	22.93
Poland	21.27	33.40
Romania	0.06	0.19
USSR	1.52	1.36
Yugoslavia	0.89	0.61
Others	0.00	0.00
<u>Nonsocialist countries</u>	<u>6.53</u>	<u>5.57</u>
of which: Austria	1.55	1.41
France	0.23	0.20
FRG	2.36	2.01
Italy	0.43	0.30
Great Britain	0.14	n.a.
Sweden	0.23	n.a.
USA	0.28	n.a.
Others	1.31	1.65
Total	100.00	100.00

Table 6

Czechoslovak Tourists Traveling Abroad
(in per cent of total)

Country of origin	1975	1976
<u>Socialist countries</u>	<u>96.03</u>	<u>96.01</u>
of which: Bulgaria	5.95	4.64
GDR	26.40	23.70
Hungary	35.89	37.47
Poland	15.44	22.00
Romania	3.38	1.68
USSR	4.83	3.88
Yugoslavia	4.12	2.63
Others	0.02	0.01
<u>Nonsocialist countries</u>	<u>3.97</u>	<u>3.99</u>
of which: Austria	1.23	1.27
France	0.25	0.24
FRG	1.03	1.08
Italy	0.36	0.31
Great Britain	0.16	n.a.
Sweden	0.03	n.a.
USA	0.04	n.a.
Others	0.87	1.09
Total	100.00	100.00

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In evaluating Czechoslovak statistics about tourist traffic, one should remember that they include all trips -- i.e., not only tourist travel proper, but also business trips and the travels of official delegations. In addition, they include tourist traffic restricted to border regions, with trips lasting at least one day, and as far as foreign visitors are concerned even those who are only in transit through Czechoslovakia. Therefore, while the number of Czechoslovaks traveling to three of the four neighboring socialist countries (the GDR, Hungary, and Poland), as well as that of visitors from these countries is high, the average duration of their stay is short. The number of travelers from nonsocialist countries does not correspond to the actual number of bona fide tourists visiting Czechoslovakia. In similar fashion, the number of Czechoslovaks traveling to nonsocialist countries as genuine tourists is substantially lower than recorded in the official statistics.

According to data published in previous Statistical Yearbooks of the CSSR, official trips to nonsocialist countries outnumbered recreational ones, and the shares of visitors from that group of countries merely in transit were also quite sizable. The following table shows the corresponding figures:

(more)

Table 7
Tourist Traffic in 1975⁺

	Total	Average duration of journeys in days	P u r p o s e		
			Tourism	Official business	Transit
Czechoslovaks traveling to: socialist countries nonsocialist countries	7,100,866	5.5	6,595,022	505,844	--
	293,909	11.9	129,868	164,041	--
Foreign visitors coming from: socialist countries nonsocialist countries	12,958,433	4.7	10,787,000	372,385	1,799,048
	904,862	5.4	572,085	170,418	162,359
<p>+) <u>Remarks:</u> Data for 1976 are not available. Detailed figures concerning individual countries were published in <u>Statisticka Rocenka CSSR 1976</u>, pp. 405 and 406.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <u>Statisticka Rocenka CSSR 1976</u>, pp. 405 and 406; for the figure concerning transit of visitors from socialist countries, author's own calculations on the basis of figures in <u>Statisticka Rocenka CSSR 1976</u>, p. 405.</p>					

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Although corresponding figures for 1976 have not yet been published, it may be safely assumed that the shares did not appreciably change. Altogether, it may be said that, while tourism as a whole increased in numbers last year, contacts with the West continues to be operated on a restrictive basis and remain far below the volume of the late 1960s.

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