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1. Water Pollution -- A Persisting Problem

The Slovak National Council will discuss the problem of protecting water resources at the end of June, Radio Bratislava (7 June 1977) announced. The same newscast said that although the supreme party and government bodies and congresses have outlined the way toward improvement, implementation is lagging. The plan to construct waste-water recycling plants has not been fulfilled, chiefly because of shortcomings in project work but also because of lack of interest in such demanding jobs on the part of the construction industry. Even when new industrial facilities are built, these plants are forgotten or only built as an afterthought. Although the situation had improved in the past few years, small sources of pollution are on the increase.

Of late, complaints about the environment have become more frequent, particularly in Slovakia. A single issue of the weekly for politics, culture, and the economy, Nove Slovo (2 June 1977), contained several articles dealing with protection of the environment. Of these, the longest and most detailed is an interview with Slovak Deputy Prime Minister Julius Hanus. As stated in the introduction, the first major analysis of the environment in Slovakia was discussed by the Slovak government in 1972, when it adopted short-term measures for improvement. At the same time, it decided that a comprehensive plan for the protection of the environment up to 1990 had to be made. This was done, and approved in 1974. The present interview is thus concerned with the results of the critical analysis of the state of the environment and on the above-mentioned plan which proposed various improvements.

As far as water is concerned, the survey found that 60 per cent of Slovakia's territory has insufficient ground water supplies; 30 per cent of it has supplies that can just meet the demand; and only 10 per cent has a water surplus. This lies mainly in part

of the Zitny Ostrov north of the Danube River. According to Technicke Noviny (8 March 1977), 22.7 per cent of Slovakia's total water consumption comes from ground water, and 77.3 per cent from surface water. An analysis of the water's purity disclosed that 1,400 km. out of the 5,100 km. of registered water courses are polluted to the highest degree, that is, grade four. This means that life can no longer exist in that water. This is the reason why the above-mentioned comprehensive plan, which was used in compiling the sixth five-year plan, calls for a radical correction to prevent an intolerable situation where the purity of the water would continue to deteriorate.

It was ascertained that 500 purification stations are needed if the critical pollution of those 1,400 km. of water courses is to be rectified. During the annual beet harvest, another 400 km. are always affected (Praca, 14 April 1977). Since it is estimated that water consumption will rise from the present 1,438 million cubic meters to 4,360 million cubic meters by 1990, it will be necessary to build 35 additional large water reservoirs during that period. And there would be no sense in filling them with badly polluted water. As Julius Hanus said, care is always taken today to build water recycling plants right along with new industrial facilities, but, he went on to admit that this is no new law, but one that has been circumvented in various ways in the past. And this means that the present day problem in this sphere has been compounded: purification plants that should have been built some time ago, but never were, must now urgently be constructed.

In the fifth five-year plan (1971-1975), 101 water recycling plants were built, bringing the current total up to about 600. In 1976, another 34 were added. The problem is that breakdowns inevitably occur. More than half of the existing plants are over-extended, as was found during a checkup of 186 purification plants last year. Poor performance on the job by the people who operate these installations, as well as the fact that the managements of the plants tend to overlook this, are serious shortcomings. Moreover, out of 183 localities with a sewer system, only 87 have a waste water recycling plant. Of the 531 such plants built by 1974, almost one half are prone to break down frequently. There are plans to provide 50 per cent of the inhabitants of Slovakia with public water systems by 1990. Today, only 28.1 per cent of the population enjoys this amenity, a figure that corresponds neither to the level of similarly developed states nor to Czechoslovakia's own state-wide average (Technicke Noviny, 8 March 1977).

The Slovak capital, Bratislava, has particularly grave problems with obtaining pure drinking water. Up to 1975, the city's drinking water contained oil (Vecernik, 1 August 1975) and Academician Viliam Thurzo wrote in Nove Slovo (2 June 1977) that "it is futile to enlarge upon our current vicissitudes in trying to obtain drinking water for the capital of the Slovak Socialist Republic, since we are quite well acquainted with the relevant problems through having experienced them ourselves." Another source refers to mobile water tank used to supply some Bratislava housing settlements with drinking water. Yet, in the vicinity of the city, there exists a unique source of ground water not matched by anything similar in Central

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Europe. It is estimated to hold 30,000 to 40,000 million cubic meters of ground water which is pure enough to be used for drinking without needing any processing. It is anticipated that it will be possible to draw about 520 liters of water per inhabitant from this source alone by the year 2015, while the population of Slovakia will have increased by 2,000,000 persons by that time, which means drinking water for approximately 36 per cent of the population. The purity of these ground waters is, however, now being jeopardized by Bratislava industrial plants, chiefly Slovnaft and the J. Dimitrov Chemical Works.

Slovnaft, an enterprise with 8,000 employees which produces 50 per cent of all gasoline and lubricating and heating oil in the CSSR from Soviet crude oil "contributes" toward making ground water impure through chemical seepage, as well as discharging polluted waste water: 15 tons daily into the Danube and up to 20 tons into the Little Danube (Praca, 21 May 1976). Even the oil pipelines with a service life of 15 years, embedded directly in permeable pebble layers so that nothing prevents oil leakage, endanger the purity of the waters. Added to this are the porous terra cotta piping used within the plant itself, seepage that occurs while filling tanks, etc. These were the main causes for the pollution of Water Source No. II in Podunajske Biskupice some time in 1971, when according to Zemedelske Noviny (29 May 1974), "100,000 cubic meters of oil and oil byproducts seeped from the plant into the vicinity of the Zitny Ostrov, which are now being syphoned off through boreholes drilled into the ground." According to Lud (22 March 1977), 38,550 m³ of various forms of oil accumulated below Slovnaft during 15 years of production were drawn off in this manner, and 112 boreholes now hold the situation in check, preventing aggravation of the pollution.

This system of so-called hydraulic protection of ground water is said "to be a reliable method of preventing spread of soluble carbohydrates." Even so, the current level of oils and lubricants in the waters of the Danube and Little Danube could cause pollution of the ground water of the Zitny Ostrov, in which case at least 11,000 million Kcs would be required to provide new sources of water. Should the Slavnaft petrochemical complex, under construction for several years, start operation before its mechanical-chemical-biological water recycling plant is ready, the pollution of the two above-mentioned rivers would rise markedly (Praca, 21 May 1976).

In addition to the above purification plant, the following installations are scheduled to be constructed: automatic equipment for the incineration of residues and a mechanical purification plant for cooling water. These are not due to become operational until 1980 to 1983, nor is it certain that they will be ready according to schedule. For the time being, pebble strata purify ground water, but these strata cannot fulfill this function for much more than another decade (Svet Socializmu, 12 April 1977), which leaves little leeway for the finding of a new solution.

The J. Dimitrov Chemical Works in Bratislava are another major source of pollution. But Stage No. I of the neutralization station

-- the water purification plant -- is not expected to be operational until 1980. Yet five out of seven hectoliters of waste water are heavily contaminated with chemicals. This waste water is drained through a nine-km. long canal, opened as an experimental installation in 1965, with an anticipated service life of 15 years. The piping used did not, however, withstand the destructive effects of the gushing waste water, and checking stations along the canal have registered seepage into the surrounding soil. The Slovak government ordered a new canal and the already mentioned purification plant to be built. Both are scheduled to start operations in 1983 (Praca, 9 March 1977).

Sewage from Bratislava, which also contains waste water from other Bratislava factories, is another source of pollution. Only in the past few years, however, has the city begun to build a central purification plant. The first, mechanical part, is scheduled to be completed in 1979, the second, the biological part, in 1983.

Agriculture also contributes increasingly to the pollution of ground as well as surface water all over Slovakia. This pollution is caused by a high concentration of farm animals and by the growing use of chemicals in farming -- industrial fertilizers and protective agents. Repair shops for agricultural machinery and, apparently, the reckless use of oil products also do their bit. The "sins" of motorization in general are additional factors. As Smena (29 April 1977) reported, up to 330,000,000 liters of motor oil are annually consumed in Slovakia with most of that amount apparently ending up in drainage systems, brooks, and elsewhere after use. Similar problems also exist with other Slovak rivers whose purity is often endangered by cellulose factories.

Hence the conservation of Slovak waters depends on the construction of a sufficient number of purification plants. As far as the past is concerned, the time when Slovak's industry was being intensively built, the means appropriated for building such plants were certainly insufficient. The guidelines for the fourth five-year plan estimated only 640,000,000 Kcs for the construction of purification plants in Slovakia between 1966 and 1970, and even this was 200,000,000 Kcs more than in the preceding five-year plan (Praca, June 1965). For the years 1971 to 1975, as much as 1,500 million Kcs was anticipated. How much was actually spent is another question, although the Slovak government issued a number of decrees for this purpose, such as No. 385/1960, No. 949/1961, and Government Order No. 19/1966. The plan is to build 95 purification plants in 1977, nine of them new ones, with a total capital expenditure of 470,200,000 Kcs. In the first quarter of 1977, however, less than 8 per cent of this amount -- 35,680,000 Kcs -- was spent on these investments (Pravda, 6 June 1977).

There was never any lack of legislation to protect water in the past. It was "safeguarded" by Law No. 11/1955 on water management with Enabling Decree No. 14/1959, Order No. 136/1960 on state water management supervision, Order No. 16/1966 on penalties for emitting polluted or insufficiently purified waste waters into waterways, Order No. 120/1966 on fines for violation of the obligatory

protection of water, and Order No. 35/1972 on the protection of water from pollution by petroleum substances (Technicke Noviny No. 3, 15 January 1974). Nevertheless, as Hospodarske Noviny (15 October 1976) makes clear, it was always more advantageous in the past for an enterprise to pay the not very high fines than to build and maintain expensive purification installations. Of the latest legal measures in this field, the following must also be mentioned: Law No. 138/1973 on water, Slovak Government Decision No. 3/1973 and Slovak Government Decree No. 30/1975, which set standards for permissible levels of water pollution, and Slovak Government Decree No. 31/1975 on fines for violation of obligatory water management standards. Furthermore, it must be noted that a number of agencies deal with the environment. As early as 1971 a Council for the Environment, an advisory, initiatory, and coordinating board, was established and a Commission for the Plan and Budget for the Environment was set up at the Slovak National Council (Technicke Noviny, 8 March 1977).

It can be seen from all this that the regime is playing a double role here. It issues a great many legal and other measures designed to improve the environment, even spending large amounts on the construction of necessary installations at present, but it acts like a powerless agent unable to make its legislation stick, despite all the means at its disposal. Hence, unless it also guarantees the necessary facilities for the construction of purification installations, at the expense, for example, of the construction of other new production facilities and at the cost of a slower growth of industrial production, no decisive turn for the better can be expected.

2. The Present Situation of the Literary "Self-Critics"

In the years between 1973 and 1975 the regime scored several victories in the cultural-political sphere. Three prominent representatives of contemporary Czech poetry and prose, former officials of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers, publicly expressed self-criticism. The first of them was the poet Miroslav Holub (Prace, 18 August 1973, and Tvorba No. 35, 29 August 1973), followed by the prose writer Bohumil Hrabal (Tvorba No. 2, 8 January 1975), and lastly the seriously ill poet, novelist, and playwright Jiri Sotola (see Czechoslovak Situation Report/14, RFER, 10 April 1975, Item 3). The other Czech authors avoided public self-criticism.

Thus, this harvest is actually rather a poor one, inasmuch as these "self-critics" did not rush into cultural-political work. The second congress of the Union of Czech Writers at the beginning of March 1977 clearly demonstrated this. None of the "self-critics" stood out at the congress, and not a single literary contribution of theirs has appeared in the only Czech literary periodical of the union now in existence, Literarni Mesicnik. The books written by these authors also represent a very poor output: even after his self-criticism, Miroslav Holub did not produce a single collection published in the CSSR; abroad, in the FRG, only one volume of his poetry has come out. For the time being, Bohumil Hrabal and Jiri Sotola have had one book each published: Hrabal's prose work Postriziny [The Haircut] and

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Sotola's historical novel Kure na Rozni (Mr. Chicken on the Grill), which had already been published earlier by the Bucher Publishing House in Lucerne, Switzerland. Both these books had come out in Czechoslovakia "illegally," however, in the so-called Edice-Petlice samizdat edition (Svedectvi No.50/1975). The party and union reviewers virtually ignored Hrabal's Postriziny and Sotola's Kure na Rozni, while the daily press was most reticent in its coverage.

In the speech which Czech Prime Minister Josef Korcak (who is also a member of the CPCS CC Presidium) delivered at the second congress of the Union of Czech Writers, he declared that the party asked the self-critics not only to admit their mistakes, but also consistently to write in future in the spirit of socialist realism: "Our society can be generous toward those who honestly seek their place in it and want to contribute the fruits of their talent for the benefit of the socialist cause. But those who desert the socialist banner condemn themselves to contempt and oblivion."

Jiri Sotola, who was among the first to condemn Charter 77, attracted attention through a play on a contemporary theme entitled Ajax, which the Zdenek Nejedly Realisticke Divadlo theater in Prague staged on 25 March 1977. This is a comedy situated in Prague. Catherine, the daughter of an average Prague family, becomes acquainted with a Dutchman who is due to come to Prague again in the near future to marry her. The play starts with the individual members of the family expressing differing personal opinions on the whole affair. Many also begin to recall their own personal illusions. The father watches the family's dreaming with dislike. After a long time the Dutchman eventually appears in Prague (the family has dubbed him Ajax -- the name of the famous Dutch soccer team), but after disenchantment and reconciliation, the wedding is called off. The play is supposed to show that life cannot be settled by resorting to illusions and escaping from reality. Stage director Frantisek Laurin produced the play with leading members of the ensemble of the Realisticke Divadlo.

The deputy editor-in-chief of the official publication of the Union of Czech Dramatic Artists, the fortnightly Scena, Josef Jelen, reviewed Sotola's play in a most negative manner. In his opinion it is quite a trivial imaginary story of a girl from a working-class family who has fallen in love "with a foreigner from the West." According to Jelen, Sotola's intention to make fun of lower middle class ways turned against the author himself: "To tell the truth, I don't know what the author wants to say in this play and the staging of it is a mystery to me as well. I believe the theater's ambition to produce original new Czech plays at any price has ceased to be an asset because this thing about 'at any price' is certainly 'no go'" (Scena No.10, 1977). In conclusion, Jelen states that he had expected Jiri Sotola to produce a major ideological drama -- Ajax, however, is nothing of the sort.

Josef Jelen is an interesting figure. A former Catholic priest, he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in the 1950s (see Novy Zivot, Rome, No.9-10/1973). In 1956, he attracted attention with his play Judith. At the time of the Prague Spring he kept more or less to the sidelines, but since 1970 he has become one of the

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leading activists, awarded several party and literary prizes. He is a CPCS member. In 1970, he was appointed director of the play-writing department of the Czechoslovak State Radio Network (Radio Prague, 27 June 1970) and a member of the preparatory committee of the Union of Czech Dramatic Artists (Prace, 19 December 1970). He became the leading editor of the monthly Informace, published by the Union of Czech Dramatic Artists (Informace No.1, May 1971). After the fortnightly Scena appeared, he changed over to be its editor, and was one of the first to sign the "anticharter" (Rude Pravo, 29 January 1977).

Interestingly, the daily Lud, official publication of the Party of Slovak Revival, favorably reviewed Sotola's play. The critic Ivo Tomecek described Sotola's art as "highly mature" and called him a fine storyteller. He also praised the ensemble of the Realisticke Divadlo for "adequately interpreting the author's designs and displaying feeling for the artistic expression of a present-day subject" (Lud, 3 June 1977). It is certainly remarkable that a noncommunist Bratislava newspaper should take Sotola under its wing.

The current situation of the "self-critics" is a highly problematical one. They still meet with distrust from party and Writers' Union officials, although Hrabal, as well as Sotola, signed the "anticharter." While the regime uses them as proof of a normalized literary scene (see, for instance, Jan Kozak's speech at the second congress of the Union of Czech Writers), opposition authors point out that Hrabal, for instance, as a pensioner could without self-criticism continue writing under far more favorable conditions than could the majority of others. The author of a letter from Prague to the Rome fortnightly Studie (No.49, May 1977) asks where -- in view of the actions of the "self-critics" -- active authors can draw **their strength**, when they cannot even sing or play without a public, but must find a livelihood in entirely other ways and lose years in which they might have reached the apex of their creative lives.

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