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THE REVOLT OF THE INTELLECTUALS:
THE ORIGINS OF THE PRAGUE SPRING AND THE
POLITICS OF REFORM COMMUNISM

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With the possible exception of the Soviet Union in the Gorbachev years, the Prague Spring of 1968 remains unsurpassed as an attempt from within a Communist regime to build a more democratic form of socialism. Much of the impetus for fundamental reform in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s came from the intelligentsia, yet much of this same intelligentsia had, as we shall see below, helped bring a Stalinist regime to power a mere two decades earlier. The ideological odyssey of the Czechoslovakian intelligentsia -- or, at least, its dominant left-wing component -- from orthodox Communism to reform Communism is thus an integral part of the story of the Prague Spring.

As one of many instances where intellectuals have clashed with Communist Party authorities, the Czechoslovakian case raises broader issues about the politics of the intelligentsia in state socialist societies. Yet it should be emphasized at the outset that most of the intellectuals active in the Prague Spring were themselves members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (hereafter referred to as the CPC) and remained faithful to the ideals of socialism. In a sense, then, the struggles between "reformist" intellectuals and "conservative" party apparatchiki was also a conflict within the CPC elite over the future of socialism. Nevertheless, the question remains: how was it the majority of the Communist

intelligentsia came to see the Party apparatus as its adversary?

A provocative, if somewhat abstract, answer to this question is provided by Frank Parkin, who argues, in an influential 1972 article on "System Contradiction and Political Transformation," that there is an inherent conflict between the intelligentsia and the Party in state socialist societies. Working within a theoretical framework indebted to both Weber and Marx, Parkin argues that the key antagonism in such societies is between the "party and state bureaucracy," whose power "rests upon their control of the political and administrative apparatus of the state, giving them effective legal guardianship of socialized property" and the "intelligentsia," whose power "inheres in its command of the skills, knowledge, and general attributes held to be of central importance for the development of productive and scientific forces in modern industrial society" (Parkin, 1972:52). Elaborating upon the sources of this conflict, he makes the essentially Weberian point that elite legitimation in state socialist societies such as the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia is based on two distinct and competing principles, with expert knowledge the source of the intelligentsia's claim to leadership and party office the basis of the bureaucracy's claim. Ultimately, however, Parkin insists that the conflict has an economic as well as an ideological foundation; indeed, in a formulation whose Marxist roots are made explicit, he suggests that crises in

state socialist societies tend to arise "as a result of the forces of production coming into direct conflict with the social relations of production"; in other words, "the legal and political order buttressing the command [economic] system "has become a 'fetter' on the further development of productive forces" (Parkin, 1972:51).

Seen from this perspective, the Prague Spring is an "ideal typical" example of the conflict between the apparatchiki and the intelligentsia, respectively the main opponents and advocates of reform."¹ For Parkin, "Czechoslovakia was an exceptional case only to the extent to which the latent but ever-present tensions between these two groups erupted into open political conflict -- a showdown precipitated by the inability of the existing system to cope with economic crisis." As long as the "ascendant class in socialist society is not the class which wields political power," the system will be in "disequilibrium." According to Parkin, "equilibrium could be restored by the accession to power of the intelligentsia and the displacement of the apparatchiki" (Parkin, 1972:50-52).

As a particularly dramatic instance of the political mobilization of the intelligentsia in a state socialist society, the Prague Spring offers an exceptional opportunity to examine critically not only Parkin's formulation about the roots of conflict between the intelligentsia and the bureaucracy, but also the larger dynamics of political

accommodation and opposition among intellectuals under Communism. Moreover, the Prague Spring poses very graphically some of the dilemmas raised by attempts to fundamentally reform Communist regimes from within. Before we can grasp the critical case of the Prague Spring in its particularity, however, a detour into the history of the Czechoslovak intelligentsia and the broader society of which it was a part will be necessary.

The Czechoslovak Intelligentsia Prior to the Communist Seizure of Power

Like the intelligentsias of many East European nations, the Czechoslovakian intelligentsia (comprised of relatively distinct Czech and Slovak parts) derived a special public prestige from its prominent historic role in the movement of national awakening. Indeed, in the nineteenth century, with the Czech and Slovak peoples respectively under Austrian and Hungarian domination, Czech and Slovak intellectuals were the primary carriers of national consciousness. Among their greatest accomplishments was their success in modernizing their seemingly "moribund peasant languages that had previously been insufficiently standardized and elaborated for literacy and even business usage" (Albright, 1976:82). In a sense, intellectuals --through arduous work as translators, grammarians, authors of dictionaries, journalists, poets, novelists, and teachers -- had created modern Czech and Slovak nationalism and constructed a

"European-level" culture. They considered themselves as spokesmen for the nation and seem, for the most part, to have been so regarded by the Czech and Slovak masses.

If the Czech and Slovak intellectuals enjoyed the nationalist prestige also granted their counterparts in other East European countries, they differed from them in being primarily bourgeois rather than aristocratic in origin. The Czech and Slovak lands had for centuries lacked an indigenous nobility (its Bohemian and Moravian remnants having long been Germanized) and, unlike Poland and Hungary, there was no gentry to provide recruits to the intelligentsia. Instead, intellectuals came mostly from the middle class and, on occasion, from the "people" (i.e. the working class and peasantry). One consequence of this was that there was less social and cultural distance between Czech and (to a lesser extent) Slovak intellectuals and the masses than was the case in other East European nations. Indeed, the first two presidents of the Czechoslovakian Republic were intellectuals of modest social origins: Thomas Masaryk, professor of philosophy with a doctoral degree from the University of Vienna, was the son of a coachman; Eduard Benes, professor of economics and sociology with a doctoral degree from Prague University, was the son of a cottager (Hajda, 1976:215).²

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of its population, and forty percent of its national income (Rothschild, 1974:132), moved the political center of gravity among Czechoslovakian intellectuals decisively leftward. Liberalism -- associated above all in the popular mind with the parliamentary democratic regimes of Czechoslovakia's allies, France and England -- had shown itself to be fundamentally lacking in moral, political and military fortitude. As Czechoslovakia was rapidly dismembered, with Slovakia forming an ostensibly independent fascist regime aligned with Nazi Germany, the intelligentsia turned away from a Western-oriented liberalism that, whether viewed domestically or internationally, had proved utterly unable to defend the Republic's sovereignty. Since the CPC had been the most vocal opponent to the Munich Agreement, many intellectuals turned -- especially after the troubling Stalin-Hitler pact of 1939 had been broken by the June 1941 German invasion of the USSR -- toward Communism as the best available vehicle for national liberation (Perina, 1977:30-32). This rapid movement of intellectuals to the left was powerfully accelerated by the viciousness of the Nazi occupation of the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia -- an occupation that systematically brutalized the intellectual and professional classes, from among whom came the majority of the 35,000 to 55,000 Czechs who died in concentration camps during the war or were executed directly (Rothschild, 1989:135-136; see also Seton-Watson, 1956:146-149).

With Communists playing a leading role in the anti-Nazi resistance in the Czech lands as well as in Slovakia (where a major uprising occurred in 1944), and with Soviet prestige rising with every Red Army triumph against the hated Germans, Communism came to seem to many intellectuals and non-intellectuals alike the only viable alternative to fascism -- and a not unattractive one at that. When the Soviet army liberated first Slovakia and then the Czech lands in the spring of 1945, enthusiasm for the "Slavic brothers" from the Soviet Union reached an all-time high.⁴ The Czechoslovakian people were finally free of the fascist occupiers, and they were aware that they primarily owed their emancipation not to the liberal democracies of the West, but rather to their powerful socialist neighbor to the East.

Having had a larger indigenous Communist movement than any other East European country during the interwar years, Czechoslovakia was undoubtedly the nation in the region most favorably inclined toward Communism after World War II. The widespread popular support that the left enjoyed was evident in the free parliamentary elections of May 26, 1946 in which the CPC received 38 percent of the vote nationwide and the Social Democrats an additional 13 percent (Rothschild, 1989:89-90). Support within the working class for the CPC, which was then advocating a specifically "Czechoslovak way" to socialism, was considerably higher than the national average, and in the years 1945-1947 the Party established

effective control over both the trade union movement and the widespread works councils that emerged after World War II (Kovanda, 1977; Bloomfield, 1979). When the CPC seized power in a bloodless coup in February 1948 during a government crisis (in a fashion that was, as Joseph Rothschild has noted, both "constitutional and revolutionary"), it did so with the support of people's militias based primarily in the industrial working class.⁵

As was the case during the interwar years, the intelligentsia was politically divided during 1945-1948, but with Communism a far more powerful pole of attraction than it had ever been before. Many intellectuals enthusiastically welcomed the Soviet army which liberated Prague in May 1945, and Communist intellectuals occupied influential posts in the cultural apparatus of the multiparty National Front government in the immediate postwar years. Communist writers were, moreover, the moving force behind the creation in 1945 of a syndicate of Czech writers which had over 1300 writers by 1946. The CPC-supported program of the syndicate promised to provide apartments for writers, stipends and pensions, and emphasized the financial insecurity of writers before the war. Its general position was that culture should not be left -- as it had been under capitalism -- to the vicissitudes of the market place, but rather should be subsidized by the state. At the same time, the Party -- which was then following the line of a specifically

Czechoslovak road to socialism -- pledged its commitment to artistic freedom and civil liberties (Perina, 1977:35-36).

Despite this appealing and flexible cultural program, segments of the intelligentsia -- especially pre-war liberals and Catholic writers -- continued to contest the Communists. Conflicts took place within the Writer's Syndicate itself and in other parts of the cultural arena (including the press) over a variety of issues, among them whether literature and art should remain autonomous of politics. Though the CPC had powerful and widespread support within the intelligentsia, its efforts to create an inclusive national cultural organization called the Kulturni Obec (Cultural Community) that would be controlled by the Party failed, for it was countered by the rapid formation of a rival non-Communist organization called Kulturni Svaz (Cultural Union). A subsequent merger of the two organizations produced a stalemate of opposing factions (Perina, 1977:38-39).

The existence of serious divisions within the intelligentsia should not, however, be allowed to obscure the extraordinary upsurge in Communist influence after the War, especially among the younger generation. Zdenek Mlynar, later an important Party official and the principal author of the political reform program of the CPC during the Prague Spring, describes in his memoir the magnetic appeal that Communism held for young intellectuals after the War:

My generation was made prematurely aware of politics by the stormy events of that period; at

the same time we lacked political experience. The only experience we had was of the war years and the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia ... One of the chief results of this was a black-and-white vision of the world, with the enemy on one side and his adversary on the other. It was either one side or the other -- there was no middle ground. Thus our unique experience drummed into us that the victory of the correct conception meant quite simply the liquidation, the destruction, of the other.

We opposed the enemy with all the passion of our youth. Given our Manichean view of the world, we naturally believed that the chief political virtues were consistency and radicalism ... we were children of war who, having not actually fought against anyone, brought out wartime mentality with us into those first postwar years, when the opportunity to fight for something presented itself at last.

To the question whom to fight against and in what cause, the age offered a simple reply: on the side of those who were most consistently and radically against the past, who were not cautious, who made no compromises with the past but rather strove to sweep it aside, to overcome it in a revolutionary way. The Soviet Union appeared to be the force and Iosik Vissarionovich Stalin the political personality to lead the fight (Mlynar, 1980:1-2).

Mlynar's evocation of the atmosphere of the period among intellectuals is by no means unique; strikingly similar accounts are offered by the renowned writer Pavel Kohout, the journalist Antonin Liehm, and many others (Kohout, 1972; Liehm, 1974).⁶ Thus, when the CPC came to power in February 1948, it did so with the active consent of much (though not all) of the Czechoslovakian intelligentsia and the enthusiastic commitment of most of its youngest and most dynamic segment.

The Intelligentsia Under Stalinism and Neo-Stalinism, 1948-1961

Once in power, the CPC abandoned talk of a specifically Czechoslovak path to socialism and, especially after March 1949, embarked upon a program of rapid revolutionary transformation along classical Stalinist lines. For non-Communist intellectuals, this meant not only the end of freedom of expression, but also the possibility of expulsion from the university, loss of job, incarceration, and death. Liberal and even Communist-oriented publications that did not hew to the new Party line were closed down, and "socialist realism" was installed as the official Party line on culture (Perina, 1977). Under these conditions, some intellectuals (and many non-intellectuals as well) left the country and many more were intimidated into silence (Albright, 1976; Hruby, 1980).

If part of the intelligentsia fell victim to the new hard-line policies, another powerful segment of it justified these policies as necessary for the defeat of the "class enemy" and the "building of socialism." Many leading intellectuals, especially from the younger generation, adhered to this viewpoint and there was no shortage of argumentation legitimating Stalinist policies. To take but one example, Karel Kosik -- later an internationally renowned Marxist philosopher in the humanist tradition and a leading radical during the Prague Spring -- justified the purges that swept the Party in 1950 and 1951 as follows:

such is the logic of history! Who does not faithfully serve the people becomes a lackey of slave-dealers. Such is the fate of bourgeois hirelings, such is the fate of traitors to the workers' class ... Only cosmopolitan bandits and wreckers of the type of Slansky, Svermova, Sling and Co., whom the people threw out from its midst, could dare to touch our alliance with the Soviet Union ... We are led by the great pupil of Stalin and the greatest man of our nation, dear comrade Gottwald (Hruby, 1980:189).

Similarly, Jiri Pelikan -- a well-known reformer during the Prague Spring and a director of Czechoslovakian television in 1968-- was a key participant in the large-scale purging of students and professors deemed politically "reactionary" as 1948 Chairman of the Association of University Students in Prague (Hruby, 1980:212-213). Many other instances could be cited, but the larger point is clear: intellectuals were not simply the victims of Stalinist terror, but were not infrequently promoters of it.

Compared with other East European countries, the Stalinist terror in Czechoslovakia was particularly ruthless and protracted -- perhaps, some have suggested, because of the very strength of the democratic traditions that needed to be crushed in order for the Communist Party to establish a true monopoly of power (Skillling, 1976:828). The first victims of the purges were non-Communist officials, many of them with ties to the pre-war Republic, but the terror quickly spread to members of the CPC itself. Between May 1949 and February 1951, CPC membership dropped from over 2.3 million to under 1.7 million, with much of the reduction in membership caused by expulsion. By the time the purges

ended in 1954, nearly 10,000 persons had been tried and condemned, some to death (Suda, 1980:233-256).

Among the earliest Communist victims of the terror were so-called "Slovak bourgeois nationalists," who included among their number Vladimir Clementis, Minister of Foreign Affairs and an independent-minded Communist intellectual who had denounced the Stalin-Hitler pact of 1939. Other prominent Slovak intellectuals who were arrested included Eduard Goldstucker, Ladislav Novomesky, and Evzen Lobl. Clementis was subsequently executed and his Slovak counterparts received lengthy prison sentences (Perina, 1977:41-43).

The centerpiece of the terror, however, was the notorious "Slansky affair." Rudolf Slansky, the orthodox Stalinist Secretary-General of the CPA and number two in the Party behind only Klement Gottwald, was arrested on trumped up charges of espionage in November 1951. In a highly publicized and well-choreographed "show trial," Slansky was tried with 13 other defendants -- 11 of them, like Slansky himself, of Jewish origin -- in November 1951 on charges of being "Trotskyist-Zionist-Titoist-bourgeois nationalist traitors, spies, and saboteurs, enemies of the Czechoslovak nation, of its People's Democratic order, and of Socialism" (Rothschild, 1989:136; Szulc, 1971:104; Skilling, 1976:26). On December 3, 1952, 11 of the defendants, including Clementis and Slansky himself, were hanged, with the other three given long prison sentences (Suda, 1980:238-251).

While antisemitism was obviously a factor in the Slansky trial, the full range of motivations behind it remains a subject of vigorous debate.⁷ Yet whatever the cause of the Slansky affair, its effect was clear: to create an atmosphere of intense fear among the populace. Within the intelligentsia in the early 1950s, public dissent was apparently unthinkable; revealingly, the Stalinist regime did not even establish an office of censorship until April 1953 (Albright, 1976:113). Dusan Hamsik, later an editor of the prestigious publication of the Writer's Union, Literarni Noviny, captures the atmosphere of the period well:

In those days it was the writers themselves who were their own best censors; the few who thought differently never offered their words for publication -- indeed never committed them to paper in most cases. For it was unthinkable that any discordant voice should raise itself (Hamsik, 1971:108).

Those intellectuals (and there were many of them) who thought the trials necessary and sentences justified, however, were vocal in expressing their approbation. Antonin Liehm, for example, traced both the "anti-state conspiracy" of Rudolf Slansky and the "doctor's plot" against Stalin to Zionist organizations financed by the United States. Taking a rather similar view, Literarni Noviny editorialized: "A thousand hardships could have been avoided, our lives already today might have been easier ... had it not been for these Trotskyite-Zionist poisonous snakes" (Perina, 1977:54-55). As with the Moscow Trials of the late 1930s, many intellectuals sincerely believed the

charges that had been leveled against leading Communist figures whose commitment to the cause of socialism had long been considered beyond reproach. Opportunism and fear may, of course, have been implicated in the hyper-orthodoxy of the Stalinist intellectuals of the period, but it seems likely that the main factor was genuine ideological conviction.

At the same time that intellectuals were justifying the execution of "enemies of the people," many of them were also busy hailing the "construction of socialism." Radoslav Selucky, later a major reform economist known for his criticisms of the "cult of central planning," wrote in 1951 that "In a socialist society there are no expropriators and no expropriated ... There are only free working people ... with enthusiasm they are building steps to an even more perfect and more beautiful Communist way of life" (Hruby, 1980:61). Meanwhile, authors of fiction were writing within the frame of "socialist realism," at once extolling the virtues of proletarian culture and urging the workers onto ever higher levels of productivity. Since those segments of the intelligentsia with different views had been effectively silenced, the public increasingly came to see intellectuals as part of the Party apparatus -- and with considerable justification. The net result of all this was that the intelligentsia became discredited in the eyes of the public. Indeed, one Czech historian, writing in 1969, has gone so far as to claim that between 1948 and 1953 "the concepts

intelligentsia and intellectual acquire in Czech and Slovak a distinctly abusive connotation" and in fact came to be used "more or less as insults" (quoted in Perina, 1977:56).

It was not until 1956, at the Second Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers in April, that the intelligentsia would begin the long process of regaining the trust of the public. Much of the impetus had been provided two months earlier, when Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin at the historic Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union undermined the ideological orthodoxy upon which Communist intellectuals and the Czechoslovak regime had based their entire political program. The horror and sheer magnitude of the crimes revealed in Khrushchev's indictment shocked Communists throughout the world, but its impact upon the Czechoslovak intelligentsia was especially profound. For the commitment of many Czechoslovak intellectuals to the Communist cause had deep moral and philosophical roots that were impossible to reconcile with what had been revealed to be the brutal reality of Stalinism (Suda, 1980:273-274). Crimes of a similar character had apparently occurred in Czechoslovakia, and for the first time many intellectuals began to recognize their moral complicity.

In the weeks immediately before the Writers' Congress, Literarni Noviny (the official organ of the Writer's Union) published a series of unsigned editorials that outlined some of the grievances of the intelligentsia. Openly denouncing

Stalinist cultural policy, the journal declared that "art is not the servant of anyone or anything, and this truth must be repeated until it becomes part of the public consciousness ... art above all must be art, and this then allows it to fulfill social, or even political functions." More specifically, the editorials called for more information about Western literature, reform of the "centralization and monopolization of publishing house", and more literary journals; in addition, a separate editorial attacked the leadership of the Union itself for dogmatically regimenting writers. While remaining within the bounds of Communist orthodoxy by calling for a return to Leninist teaching to restore a true Marxist spirit to ideology, these editorials had undeniably expanded the limits of publicly permissible discourse (Perina, 1977:93-94).

When the Second Congress of the Union of Writers finally convened its week long session on April 22, 1956, it did so with 530 participants, including guests from 30 countries and Czechoslovak President Antonin Zapotocky. What transpired was the first major confrontation between the intellectuals and the Party leadership since the Communists had seized power in February 1948. By the second day, the writers had captured control of the proceedings and voted to suspend the scheduled speeches and replace them with open discussion. Displaying a willingness to participate in public debate that was remarkable for the period, 95 writers expressed their views, with another 20

unable to do so only because of a lack of time (Perina, 1977:95-98).

The writers' complaints were many, and special passion was directed against the persecution of writers and intellectuals that had taken place in Czechoslovakia. Jaroslav Seifert, a former Communist (expelled from the Party twice, once in 1929 and again in 1950) who was later to win the Nobel Prize in literature for his poetry, called for amnesty for writers and other citizens unjustly imprisoned, and others joined him in denouncing Stalinist cultural policy (Szulc, 1971:128-129). A recurrent theme -- and one which was to be echoed in later years -- was that writers found utterly unacceptable their reduction to the status of loyal and obedient state servants. The Slovak writer, Ladislav Mnacko, captured the mood perfectly when he thundered: "I said and I say again -- I do not serve! I create! I am a co-creator of values" (Perina, 1977:103).

As an alternative to their recent subservience, several authors suggested that the writer's proper role was as "the conscience of the nation." This rather grandiose conception harkened back in many ways to the nineteenth century tradition of Czechoslovak writers as the creators and carriers of the national consciousness, but in the particular context of 1956 it may also be considered a plea for cultural integrity and moral regeneration. On the last day of the Congress, the writers -- in a forceful expression of their newly found sense of autonomy -- elected (by secret

ballot) to the new Central Committee of the Writers' Union a heavily progressive slate which, despite a vigorous ideological counter-attack by President Zapotocky, included Jaroslav Seifert (Perina, 1977:04-108).

This unprecedented outburst of public dissent from the writers was soon to subside. Shortly after the Congress, Party Secretary Antonin Novotny directly attacked the writers, declaring that the speeches had often strayed "in the direction of unprincipled liberalism" (Perina, 1977:114). Unlike in Poland and Hungary, where the discontent of workers became manifest in dramatic large-scale rebellions later that year, the working class in Czechoslovakia -- where the economy, which had been the most advanced in Eastern Europe prior to World War II, was still in reasonably good condition -- remained quiescent.⁸ Indeed, with the exception of a brief student rebellion in May (Golan, 1971:4; Szulc, 1971:129-130), the incipient reformism of the intellectuals failed to produce any real allies. In the face of forceful and united opposition from the Party leadership and in the absence of any visible popular support, the nascent reform movement of the intelligentsia had little choice but to retreat.

The years 1957-1961 saw the consolidation of a kind of neo-Stalinist regime in Czechoslovakia. Under Antonin Novotny who following Klement Gottwald's death in 1953, had shared power with Antonin Zapotocky until the latter's death in 1957, Czechoslovakia avoided the type of relatively far-

reaching de-Stalinization that had occurred in Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union itself. Having himself been involved in the Slansky case and, indeed, in the many trials following Slansky's execution, Novotny was understandably disinclined to encourage unbiased inquiries into the crimes of the past -- one of the hallmarks of genuine de-Stalinization. It was therefore not surprising when a special investigative commission headed by Rudolf Barak concluded in 1957 that Slansky's death sentence had been "just and equitable" (Szulc, 1971:157). Nevertheless, a number of victims of the trials had already been (and continued to be) quietly released, albeit without "rehabilitation" (Skilling, 1976:32-35).

For intellectuals, neo-Stalinism meant a renewed effort to coerce them into adhering to the Party line and a sustained assault on heterodox ideas. As part of the offensive against "revisionism," the CPC newspaper Rude Pravo published an article by a leading Party spokesman bemoaning the existence of "a very numerous intelligentsia class which all too easily succumbs to the political and ideological influence of the bourgeoisie" (Skilling, 1976:37). Where such ideological exhortation failed, the Party was quite willing to employ "administrative measures," including the closing down of publications and the removal of editors. Thus Kveten (May)⁹, a modernist journal founded in 1956 that had angered Party leaders, was closed in 1959, and Literarni Noviny was forced that same year to purge nine

"progressive" members of its editorial board, including the rising young writer Milan Kundera (Perina, 1977:134).

Yet the worst period of Stalinist terror was over by the late 1950s, and intellectuals -- while facing very real threats of expulsion from the Party, loss of job, and even imprisonment -- no longer feared for their lives. Moreover, new modes of critique of the status quo were able to insinuate themselves into the established discourse; already in 1960, for example, reform-minded economist Radoslav Selucky mounted a technocratic critique of the government for being single-mindedly concerned with quantitative production and for failing to modernize the economy (Perina, 1977:145). Such critiques, which tended to focus on issues of efficiency were more palatable to the authorities than the kinds of moral critiques mounted by writers and philosophers.

The situation of reform-oriented intellectuals nevertheless remained profoundly insecure as the 1960s began, for the Party was capable at any moment of reversing what little latitude it had permitted on cultural matters. In 1961 a new campaign was launched against cultural modernism. At a specially convened national conference on artistic criticism, the Party's principle speaker, Ladislav Stoll gave a five hour lecture denouncing Western avant-gardism as an expression of the decadence of bourgeois society. And Zdenek Nejedly, former Minister of Education and Culture, declared flatly: "We don't have any avant-

garde socialism; we have orderly, honest socialism. And that is why we need orderly art and orderly criticism" (Perina, 1977:151).

Czechoslovakia thus lagged behind other Communist countries in de-Stalinization in the early 1960s. If some of the intellectuals, especially in the younger generation, were proving troublesome, their threat to the regime did not seem serious, for their criticisms -- which were, in any case, more cultural than political -- had evoked few popular echoes. Furthermore, the second Five-Year Plan of 1956-1960 had been quite successful, with annual industrial growth in the 1958-1960 period averaging 11 percent (Golan, 1971:11). With an orthodox Communist regime firmly in power, the prospects for a thaw seemed bleak indeed. Yet such a thaw was to begin in 1962, and it was to provide the intellectual and cultural foundations of the Prague Spring.

The Thaw, 1962-1966

As the CPC prepared for the Twelfth Party Congress, held in early December 1962, Czechoslovakia found itself in the midst of an unanticipated and serious economic crisis. Already, in 1961, major shortages of consumer goods had become visible, but it was not until the summer of 1962 that the Party admitted the gravity of the situation and announced that the Third Five-Year Plan, barely begun, would have to be abandoned. By mid-1962, Czechoslovakia's industrial growth rate was the lowest in Eastern Europe, and the year ended with a mere two percent increase in industrial production (in contrast to a planned increase of over nine percent). Over the 1961-1963 period, the previous pattern of rapid growth ground to a total halt -- an event that was then, as Skilling has noted, without parallel in the Communist world (Skilling, 1976:57-62; Golan, 1971:11-15).

Since the crisis in the Czechoslovak economy was occurring at a time of world prosperity and in a country that was the most advanced in Eastern Europe, the breakdown raised troubling issues for the leadership. Technocrat critiques of Party economic policy were likely to find a ready audience, and reform-minded economists were quick to seize upon the opportunity. One of the earliest such critiques was offered by Radoslav Selucky,¹⁰ who in 1962 called for a decentralization of economic planning and an increased emphasis on consumer goods (Perina, 1977:164-166).

The Twelfth Party Congress of the CPC ended without any major concessions on Novotny's part, but it had become apparent that the Party Secretary was under increasing pressure from progressive elements within the Central Committee and, above all, from the Slovaks, who resented the centralization of power in Prague and Novotny's contempt for Slovak nationalism (Golan, 1971:7-11). The thorny issue of launching an investigation into the trials of the 1950s was again raised at the Congress, with the Slovaks, still aggrieved over the characterization of some of their comrades as "bourgeois nationalists," in the forefront of those calling for an inquiry. Novotny reluctantly accommodated them by promising the completion of an ongoing review of the trials held between 1949 and 1954 (Golan, 1971:8; Skilling, 1976:42).

Intellectuals were quick to interpret the Twelfth Party Congress as revealing that the space for critical discussion was increasing. In early January of 1963, Selucky escalated his critique of the Party's economic policy and pointedly made reference to "the cult of the plan." The implication that the Party remained fundamentally Stalinist was clear, and Novotny responded to Selucky by name, stating that "he would like to make anarchy and chaos prevail in our economy" (Hruby, 1980:85; Perina, 1977:161). In the same speech, which was delivered in the industrial coal district of Ostrava, Novotny also expressed concern that young people, if left unattended, would "break away from us and make wrong

demands on life." Then, in an apparent reference to the appearance of new modes of cultural expression among the young, Novotny added: "all right, let them dance, but we will not permit these modern dances to degenerate into vulgarisms and thus actually cultivate dark lusts in our people¹¹ (Golan, 1971:29).

The major import of Novotny's speech, however, was that it attempted to set clear limits on permissible criticism. Lest there be any possible misunderstanding, Novotny declared:

We will not allow this decadent capitalist culture to be propagated in our society, and we will not allow the socialist system, won in hard struggles, to be attacked in various ambiguous terms in the television and often also in the theatre ... we need criticism ... but let no one dare touch our Communist Party, its program, or our socialist system. This must be sacred, and it must stay sacred for all ... the Party maintains the right to direct cultural activity, the same as it directs and manages the entire life of the country (Golan, 1971:30-31).

The intent of the speech was clear: to communicate to the intelligentsia that certain kinds of criticism would simply not be tolerated. And by delivering the speech in a stronghold of the working class, Novotny obviously meant to enlist the workers in his conflict with the intelligentsia.

Yet by 1963, reformist intellectuals were far less isolated than they had been at the time of the Second Writers' Congress seven years earlier. Within the power structure itself, the crisis in the economy had clearly weakened Novotny's position; progressives were now present within the Party leadership itself. In addition, the always

latent nationalist grievances of the Slovaks had become manifest, saddling Novotny with perhaps his most formidable problem (Golan, 1971:15-21). Finally, members of the intelligentsia had become much more effective in connecting their own grievances with popular grievances; while continuing their assault on the regime's blunt-edged cultural policies, intellectuals increasingly presented their call for cultural reforms part of a larger program of social and political change to overcome bureaucratic rigidity and incompetence (Perina, 1977:162-163). Bringing together moral and technocratic critiques of the status quo, the intelligentsia was putting forward an agenda for change with appeal to reform-minded elements within both the Party leadership and the larger population.

The struggle between Novotny and the intellectuals involved fundamental political issues, but its peculiar intensity cannot be fully grasped without an appreciation of the cultural dimensions of the conflict. Like much of the leadership of the CPC, Novotny was from a working-class background and had had only a limited education. Having spent virtually his entire adult life as a Party functionary, his cultural horizons were narrow. According to Zdenek Mlynar, who knew him fairly well, Novotny suffered from a kind of cultural inferiority complex and was "vengeful toward anyone who reminded him of his lack of education." Novotny's attitude toward intellectuals was apparently ambivalent, but he could be rude to them and

would, when the occasion warranted, engage in bullying (Mlynar, 1980:72).

To the intelligentsia, Novotny was the very symbol of the uncouth and rigid bureaucrat who dominated the Party apparatus. From the perspective of the well-educated and cosmopolitan Czechoslovak reform intelligentsia, Novotny and his supporters had been responsible for retarding the cultural and economic development of a once-advanced nation. As products of the university system, most Czechoslovak intellectuals were of middle-class origins and were carriers of the sophisticated high cultural heritage of East-Central Europe (Krejci, 1972; Hajda, 1976).¹¹ Their writings reveal a deep-seated contempt for the Party Secretary whom many of them privately referred to as "Comrade Number One" (Hamsik, 1971); To cite one typical example, a prominent Czechoslovak journalist described Novotny as follows:

He was neither highly intelligent nor especially capable. He was such a poor speaker that he always read his public speeches, which were written by a number of ghost writers. When he tried to improvise something of his own, he would begin to falter and commit unheard-of atrocities against the rules of Czech grammar ... He was always the embodiment of mediocrity, half-educated and without imagination ... (Journalist M, 1971:9).

Even Mlynar, in a complex and generally sympathetic portrait, notes that "foreign words in his speeches had to be written into the text phonetically so that he wouldn't cause embarrassment by mispronouncing them" (Mlynar, 1980:72).

The point here is not the obvious one that there was personal antagonism between Novotny and the intellectuals, but rather that the larger political conflict between the apparatchiki and the intelligentsia also expressed underlying differences in social origins, educational background, and cultural sensibilities.¹² Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that, by 1963, the Party leadership and the intelligentsia characteristically adhered to different "world views" in the strict Mannheimian sense of the term (see Mannheim, 1936). Over the next five years these differences in world views were to crystallize even more sharply and were to lead to fundamental conflicts over the reform -- cultural, economic, social, political, and ultimately moral -- of the Communist system.

Yet if Novotny recognized the danger that reformist intellectuals posed to his rule, he was nonetheless unable to bring them under control. Perhaps most crucial, as suggested earlier, was that the sheer terror of the Stalinist period had receded; intellectuals could now speak their minds without fearing for their lives. Meanwhile Novotny, mindful of the 1956 events in Hungary (and, to a lesser extent, Poland), where alliances had been formed between dissident intellectuals and the larger population, may have been reluctant to impose such familiar sanctions as imprisonment or even firing for fear of creating popular heroes (Golan, 1971:22). Moreover, some parts of the Party apparatus, especially in Slovakia, now endorsed the need for

Party reform; for the first time, reformist intellectuals enjoyed the protection of segments of the Party leadership.¹³

The writers, in particular, proved particularly outspoken in their critique of the regime. Among the Slovaks, the well-known poet Laco Novomesky -- a former Education and Culture Minister of Slovakia imprisoned for "bourgeois nationalism" who had been quietly released but not rehabilitated -- published an ode to the executed Clementis in the Slovak party daily in April 1963 (Golan, 1971:35). A few days later, at the April 22 Congress of the Slovak Writers' Union, Novomesky was readmitted and, indeed, elected to the Union's governing committee. At this same congress, a call was issued for the rehabilitation of all of the Slovak victims of the purges (including Gustav Husak, later CPC First Secretary and President of Czechoslovakia during the years of "normalization" after the Prague Spring) and many speakers denounced "political administrative" control of culture. Roughly two weeks earlier, in a shake-up that was widely known in Party circles, but not announced officially until May, Alexander Dubcek had replaced the aging Stalinist Karol Bucilek as head of the Slovak Communist Party (Golan, 1971:32-36).

The Czech writers closed ranks with their counterparts from Slovakia. At the Third Congress of the Czechoslovak Union of Writers from May 22 to May 24, 1963, Czech as well as Slovak speakers denounced the "cult of personality"

period in their country and bemoaned the damage that had been done to Slovak literature by the unjustified campaign against supposedly "nationalist" Slovak intellectuals (Golan, 1971:39). Other speakers supported the emergent reformist program, criticizing "bureaucratic regulation of the arts," cultural isolation from the West, and censorship (Perina, 1977:183). The unity of Czech and Slovak writers was symbolically ratified a few days later on May 27 and 28 at a major international conference held in Prague on the writings of Franz Kafka. Previously condemned in the Soviet bloc as a decadent bourgeois modernist, Kafka's literary reputation was rehabilitated in a vigorous debate that included key interventions by the reformist Czech philosophers Ivan Svitak and Karel Kosik (Kusin, 1971:63-68). In a symbolic act that brought matters full circle, the convenor of the conference was Professor Eduard Goldstucker, a Slovak victim of the Slansky trials and himself a recent beneficiary of political rehabilitation (Perina, 1977:174-175, 345).

The extraordinary prominence of writers (especially novelists, playwrights, and poets) in the Czechoslovak reform movement is striking and warrants examination. Writers are, of course, often centrally concerned with fundamental moral values and -- especially in countries that are subordinated to great powers -- are frequently seen (and see themselves) as carriers of a beleaguered national culture. Especially in Communist regimes, the demands of

"art" may clash particularly sharply with those of "politics" and the demands of "truth" with those of "power," driving intellectuals into an oppositional stance.

Furthermore, there can be little doubt that the hand of the censor is felt as especially onerous by the authors of works of fiction and has played a key role in alienating them from the regime.

Yet it is still not apparent why writers -- as opposed, for example, to journalists -- were at the forefront of opposition to the Czechoslovak regime in the years before the Prague Spring. A key part of the explanation may reside not, as one might expect, in the realm of ideology or culture, but rather in specific organizational features of the occupation of writer in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s. After the Communist seizure of power in 1948, Czechoslovak writers had been organized into a single Union of Writers; in 1949 the Union included only 280 writers, but by 1967 it had grown to about 500 (Perina, 1977:46). In order to fulfill its function as a "transmission belt" for the Party, the Union was given responsibility for administering the so-called Literary Fund, which was financed by levies collected on classics (which were part of the public domain) and assessments on royalties (Liehm, 1973:73). By the early to mid-1960s, under the stimulus of revenues from previously banned foreign and domestic classics as well as increased popular interest in contemporary writing, the Literary Fund had become extremely wealthy, making it one of the few

highly profitable enterprises in the country. Between 1961 and 1967, the Union paid at least 16.5 million crowns to the state, but was able to retain at least that much for its own purposes (Perina, 1977:1981)

The extraordinary financial independence of the Union of Writers gave its members a degree of autonomy that was unequalled in Czechoslovakia. In contrast to journalists, who were salaried employees and hence dependent on those who employed them, the writer was selling a product that could yield an income and, more importantly, could turn to his Union for financial support when necessary (Albright, 1976:116-117).¹⁴ Liehm, an active member of the Union, describes the exceptional situation of the writers as their Union came increasingly under their own control:

they were practically the only members of society capable of independent production. The writers were entirely self-sufficient, since the publishing enterprise which they controlled virtually guaranteed an outlet for their work, while the Literary Fund provided a financial reserve ready to assist individuals who came into conflict with authority (Liehm, 1973:74).

If the writers were more assertive than any other segment of the intelligentsia in their conflict with the authorities and more insistent in declaring their autonomy, it in no way denigrates their courage and commitment to suggest that their militancy may, in part, have been possible because their organization afforded them a degree of insulation from the national sanctions of the regime.

Another group of intellectuals that became more vocal in the 1960s was the increasingly self-confident social

science community. As the failure of neo-Stalinist policies, especially in economics, became apparent, the Party turned in the early and mid-1960s to the technical intelligentsia for solutions. The particular form that this took was typically the formation of interdisciplinary research teams or "working groups" focused on specific problem areas. These teams were usually comprised of large numbers of specialists from various fields, and the principle ones were led by such prominent scholars -- all Communists in good standing -- as Ota Sik, Radovan Richta, Zdenek Mlynar, and Pavel Machonin¹⁵ (Hruby, 1980:137). One important long-term effect of this practice was to strengthen simultaneously the Party intelligentsia outside the central apparatus of power and the current of reform communism within it (Mlynar, 1980:56).

Of the major research teams, the one which unquestionably exerted the greatest intellectual influence was the group on the "social and human implications of the scientific and technological revolution" headed by Radovan Richta, author of the 1963 study Man and Technology in the Revolution of Our Time (Hruby, 1980:97-98). Set up in 1965 with the endorsement of the Central Committee of the CPC, Richta's team argued forcefully in their widely read report, Civilization at the Crossroads,¹⁶ that "science is now penetrating all phases of production and gradually assuming the role of the central productive force of human society and, indeed, the 'decisive factor' in the growth of the

productive forces" (Richta et al., 1969:28). Since economic and social progress, within a Marxist framework, depends upon the further development of the "forces of production," the declaration that science was itself a productive force had vast implications, for it suggested that Czechoslovakia's future depended most fundamentally upon the cultivation of science and technology. This was a perspective that elevated the scientific and technical intelligentsia to a position of enormous import, and its clear implication (obligatory rhetorical claims to the contrary notwithstanding) was that the leading group of the society of the future would be not the proletariat, but the intelligentsia itself. Interestingly, the research of the Richta team had already been approved by the Party apparatus when it was presented at the Thirteenth Congress of the CPC held in late May 1966 (Skillling, 1976:125).

The brilliance of Civilization at the Crossroads as a political document resided in its subtle but insistent claim, presented within an avowedly Marxist framework, that the scientific and technical intelligentsia constitutes a kind of "vanguard" whose interests coincide with those of the Czechoslovak people as a whole. Arguing that the nation's future depended on a successful transition from a phase of "extensive development" emphasizing heavy industry to one of "intensive development" emphasizing knowledge-based services, the Richta team looked to scientific and technical innovation as the major source of the advancement

of the "forces of production." Implicitly criticizing the Party's reliance on loyal and obedient cadres over genuine experts, the report cautioned that:

We must bear in mind that if the apparatus of management is not equipped with substantially higher training it will be unable to keep pace with the dynamics of the scientific and technological revolution. Experience shows that unskilled management drives society along the old paths of extensive industrialization (Richta et al., 1969:286).

The solution, especially in the sphere of science, the Richta group suggested, was "insistence on expertise or competitive selection preparatory to every fundamental decision by leading authorities on fundamental projects" (Richta et al, 1969:281). An unstated effect of this policy of stressing (as the Maoists might put it) "expertise" over "redness" would in fact be the displacement of "incompetent" Party loyalists, often of working-class background, with university-educated "professional" managers, frequently of middle-class origin and tied weakly, if at all, to the Party.

Expressing a sophisticated technocratic vision of Czechoslovakia's future, the Richta team emphasized that the old modus operandi of the Party, which "originated in the heat of class struggle and in the zone of earlier revolutionary goals," relied excessively on "direct command"; as an alternative, Civilization at the Crossroads called for "regulation of the regulators" as a "higher form of management" constituting "the sole means by which to make the process of modern civilization amenable to planning and

control." This, in turn, would allow "the flow of information to be nationalized and then taken over by technical devices, with the greater part of management processes put into an algorithm" (Richta et al., 1969:253, 237, 239).

Under conditions of "scientific and technical revolution," the social, economic, and demographic import of the traditional working class would recede; in fact, the less advanced sectors of the proletariat posed a distinct danger to progress described by the Richta team as:

... the danger of vulgar egalitarianism, resistance to science, technology, and education, a conservative measure on the part of the less skilled, for whom the general objectives of revolution are overshadowed by their traditional attitudes and limited horizons, who debase, constrain and obstruct creative work ... and in their failure to grasp their own dependence on scientific, technological, and cultural progress, spoil the soil for a rapid advance of civilization (Richta et al, 1969:251 emphasis theirs).

Noting that the tendency toward the "healthy equalizing of living standards among workers and intellectuals has degenerated from time to time into a general 'averaging out'," the Richta group declared that this pattern was "incompatible with remuneration according to work, and with the significance of science in society." Developing their anti-leveling theme, they add, moreover, that "many specialists in Czechoslovakia ... are obliged by lack of auxiliary personnel and a mistaken propensity toward egalitarianism to perform jobs that could be taken over by non-professional workers" (Richta et al, 1969:232).

Assaulting "unqualified" bureaucrats and "conservative" industrial workers while identifying the forward movement of society with the labors of the intelligentsia, the Richta team helped lay the ideological groundwork for the intellectuals' claim to power. Little wonder, then, that by 1968 Civilization at the Crossroads had become, according to Iven Szelenyi, "a bible of members of the east European new class" (Szelenyi, 1986-1987:112). It did so, however, without being directly threatening to the Communist Party, for it followed Leninist orthodoxy in describing the Party as the "leading force" in society (Richta et al, 1969:286). Both an expression and a source of the growing reformism within the Communist Party apparatus, the report held out the appealing vision that a revitalized Party could, under the guidance of the scientific technical intelligentsia lead Czechoslovakia to a new and higher stage of socialist development.

While reformist intellectuals of a technocratic bent were exerting a growing influence on the functionaries in the Party apparatus, humanist intellectuals oriented to more radical types of reform were having an increasing impact on the broader intelligentsia, communist and non-communist alike. Beneficiaries of what had become by the mid-1960s¹⁷ -- despite continued waves of repression and the persistence of censorship -- the most tolerant cultural atmosphere in Eastern Europe, the humanist intellectuals escalated their critique not only of the Novotny regime, but also of the

residues of Stalinism throughout Czechoslovak life. The assault of the intellectuals on the status quo touched every major aspect -- cultural, economic, political, and social -- of the existing order. And because the economic and moral crisis of Czechoslovak society was quite apparent, the proposals of the radical reformers attracted a growing audience.

As expressed in such organs of the humanist intelligentsia as Literarni Noviny and Kulturny Zivot, the emergent program of the radical reformers called for the democratization of political life, decentralization of an economy that would remain socialist, increased reliance on those with genuine expertise (as opposed to politically appointed "bureaucrats"), and an efflorescence of "humanism" throughout Czechoslovak life (Perina, 1977:200-216; Kusin, 1971). A recurrent theme was that Czechoslovakia, as an economically advanced socialist country with a strong democratic tradition, could provide a socialist alternative to Stalinism that would serve as a model for the European left. Such a program had a deep appeal to Czechoslovak intellectuals, who had a tradition of preoccupation with the idea of a transcendent national mission, for it suggested that Czechoslovakia -- though a small country -- had something distinctive and precious to offer the world.

Though most of the leading humanist intellectuals were themselves Marxists and members of the Communist Party, their vision of socialism fundamentally diverged from that

of the regime. Perhaps the most profound differences concerned politics, where the radical reformers called for a far-reaching process of democratization that would redistribute power away from the central apparatus and toward the populace; such a transformation would be unlikely, they suggested, in the absence of popular mobilization from below (Perina, 1977:207-213). Another fundamental difference revolved around the issue of culture, where the intellectuals called for a degree of autonomy and freedom of expression that was utterly unacceptable to the regime.

By 1966, the radical humanist intellectuals, whose ties to the power structure were generally far weaker than those of the more moderate technocratic intellectuals of the "working groups," had come to constitute a kind of de facto opposition to the Party leadership (Perina, 1977:223). The increasingly antagonistic character of their relationship with the authorities was symbolized by the decision to publish in Literarni Noviny a major article by Ernest Fischer, the Austrian Marxist theoretician. Entitled "The Intellectuals and Power," the article praised intellectuals as independent creators and as "the conscience of the nation" and called upon them to act as "a counterweight to the old power apparatuses" (Skilling, 1976:133). After years of recurrent tension and conflict between the reformist intelligentsia and the power structure, the stage was being set for a major confrontation.

Confrontation and Revolt, 1967-1968

As the Fourth Writers' Congress approached in late June 1967, relations between the humanist intellectuals and the Novotny regime were wracked with tension. Four avant-garde films had been banned in the regime's latest ideological counter-offensive by the end of 1966, and the issue of press censorship had failed to be resolved by the passage of a new -- and, in principle, relatively liberal -- press law. In addition, the chronic issue of the rehabilitation of writers condemned during the trials of the 1950s continued to present many troublesome issues, among them whether their works could be published and, for those writers still alive, whether they should be compensated for past damages (Golan, 1971:233-236). Finally, the underlying cultural and political conflicts between the intellectuals and the Novotny group took on added sharpness as the two groups divided over the Arab-Israeli war of early June, with the regime following the orthodox Soviet line denouncing "Zionist imperialism" and the intellectuals generally identifying with Israel, which they viewed as a small and precarious country that -- like Czechoslovakia -- had a strong democratic tradition¹⁸ (Szulc, 1971:221-224; Golan, 1971:236-238).

An historic confrontation was to take place later that June between the writers, who constituted the leading edge of the increasingly radicalized intelligentsia, and the

authorities. The character of this confrontation will be examined below, but it may be appropriate first to address a logically prior question: what was it that gave the writers not only the inclination but also the capacity to challenge a powerful and hostile regime? A starting point for answering this question is an acknowledgement that the writers and their rulers were, despite the enormous cultural and ideological differences that divided them, typically members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, as such, their conflict may with some accuracy be described as an intra-elite struggle.¹⁹ Indeed, many of the leading writers had excellent and long-standing credentials as Communists and could claim -- with considerable plausibility -- that their program of reform was more authentically Marxist than the policies being pursued by the regime. The charge that they were anti-communist -- the standard accusation made by Party authorities seeking to silence their critics -- was thus a virtually impossible one to sustain.

If membership in the CPC was a valuable resource for intellectuals in their conflict with the Novotny regime, their de facto alliance with reformist elements within the Party leadership may have been indispensable. With the economy obviously in crisis and the perennial Slovak problem having grown more and more intractable, the regime took on the appearance of being a divided -- and possibly vulnerable -- entity. In such a context, the cultural and political space for criticism -- and especially for assaults on the

increasingly defensive Novotny regime -- was substantial. After all, even the Thirteenth Congress of the CPC in 1966 had cautiously endorsed the need for "reform" (Skilling, 1976:125-156). Although the critiques of the more radical humanist intellectuals often went well beyond the spirit of the limited reform program of the Party, some of them may nonetheless have been useful for the growing anti-Novotny forces within the power structure.

Another crucial resource of the humanist intellectuals was their connection with a large and loyal readership. Since the early 1960s, the increasingly independent tone of the major literary journals had enabled the intelligentsia to gradually regain the confidence of a public that had come to mistrust it during the years of Stalinism in Czechoslovakia. By 1967 the major cultural weeklies -- Literarni Noviny, Kulturny Zivot, and Kulturni Tvorba -- had a combined circulation of 300,000 in a nation of only 14,000,000 people²⁰ (Albright, 1976:131). Readers eagerly awaited the appearance of the weeklies and looked to them to articulate widely held grievances. In this setting, some of the leading writers were able to develop national and even international followings, and accumulated considerable political and economic resources. They could be suppressed only at considerable cost to the government, and the very attempt to do so ran the risk of expanding their mass following (Perina, 1977:329).

In their struggles with the authorities, the humanist intellectuals drew upon ever-increasing levels of solidarity. Ironically, the Union of Writers, initially created for the purpose of controlling authors by bringing them into a single organization under the control of the Party, later played an essential role in heightening their capacity for oppositional activities by bringing them into contact with one another and putting substantial resources under their control (Suda, 1980:272-273). Uniting Czech and Slovak writers in the same organization, the Union of Writers brought together reform-oriented intellectuals who otherwise did not know one another (Hamsik, 1971). And, as noted earlier, the sizable resources of the Literary Fund provided Union members with an invaluable material resource to assist colleagues whose writings had antagonized the authorities.

Sheer membership in the same organization -- even (and perhaps especially) one with considerable resources -- does not, of course guarantee solidarity. The capacity of writers to act together despite differences of personality and background was, it will be suggested here, facilitated significantly by their participation in a shared status culture. Belonging to Czechoslovakia's university-educated elite, most of the humanist intellectuals shared a deep familiarity with European high culture and a commitment to artistic excellence. Their accounts of the period reveal that many of the leading intellectuals, especially in

Prague, knew one another well and associated together informally; Dusan Hamsik, for example, refers several times to the "cook-and-chat" sessions that he regularly enjoyed with such writers as Ludvik Vaculik, Ivan Klima, and Alexander Kliment, and makes reference as well to the "regular fortnightly gatherings" of the group associated with Literarni Noviny for discussions "from which, alas, literary topics were increasingly displaced"²¹ (Hamsik, 1971:49, 79). If a status group, used here in the sense in which Max Weber employs the term (Weber, 1976; see also Collins, 1975), is an associational community consisting of those who share a sense of status equality based on participation in a common culture, then the humanist intellectuals of Czechoslovakia may be considered a status group par excellence. This status group character, which was accompanied by what sociologists would call a high density of formal and informal interaction, helped to make possible the exceptional degree of solidarity that the intellectuals were soon to exhibit.

In the end, however, probably the most powerful factor promoting unity among the humanist intellectuals was the existence of a common enemy: the hated Novotny regime. By 1967 the grievances of the intellectuals were cumulative and profound, but the one that stood out above all the others was the issue of censorship. Though the Novotny regime oscillated back and forth between relative tolerance and repression, the hand of the censor was never entirely still.

Indeed, even in times of "liberalism," discussion of three issues -- the performance of the economy (especially compared to that of other countries), the specification of people's political rights, and, above all, the political trials of the 1950s and the executions that ensued from them -- were effectively prohibited (Hamsik, 1971:97-100).

By its very nature, censorship raised the issue of autonomy in its starkest form: would intellectuals themselves determine what they would say and how they would say it, or would these decisions be made by Party authorities? Though by no means in agreement on every issue, the writers were united in their quest for greater autonomy. Censorship -- and the Novotny regime that stood behind it -- thus provided the humanist intellectuals with a highly visible common enemy around which they could unite. In the process, many of them made the almost imperceptible shift from a reformist stance to an oppositional one.

Having been decisively suppressed by the authorities following their first expression of public dissent at the Second Writer's Congress eleven years earlier, the humanist intellectuals were by 1967 in a stronger position than ever before. The most essential difference, perhaps, was that intellectuals critical of the status quo now possessed allies in the heart of the Party apparatus; furthermore, in contrast to 1956, when the intelligentsia was still severely compromised by its collaboration with the Party during the worst years of Stalinism, reformist intellectuals enjoyed a

vast reservoir of support among the public. With respect to internal organization, the humanist intelligentsia was in a healthier state than at any time in its recent history; the Literary Fund endowed the Union of Writers with unprecedented material resources, and the persistence of censorship -- amidst a general weakening of controls -- provided it with a unifying issue.

Meanwhile, the ruling group was far more divided than it had been in 1956. With the performance of the economy weak and the leadership of the Slovak Communist Party manifestly dissatisfied with the centralization of power in Prague, the Novotny regime was in a potentially precarious state. Overall, the writers were in a far stronger position than in 1956; conversely, the regime was in a substantially weaker position. A confrontation that under normal circumstances would have been no contest thus became, under the peculiar conditions of 1967, a battle with no predetermined outcome.

When the Fourth Congress of the Union of Writers convened in June 27, 1967, there is little reason to believe that the participants realized either their own strength or the vulnerability of the Novotny regime. Nevertheless, the central committee of the Writers' Union had prepared in advance a controversial resolution on cultural policy that was designed for passage by the entire Congress. The key component of the resolution was a statement that said "the Congress of Czechoslovak Writers does not agree with the

contemporary practice of press supervision"; in its place, the committee proposed a law that would confine censorship to matters of national defense (Golan, 1971:240). Prior to the opening of the conference, however, the Ideological Department of the Party's Central Committee had already severely criticized the proposal (Kundera, 1971:167).

The opening speech of the Congress, a brilliant and provocative address by Milan Kundera, set the tone for what was to follow. Kundera, a member of the Union's Central Committee and the author of the recently published novel The Joke, began by drawing attention to the fact that the central apparatus of the Party had interfered in the affairs of the Union by trying to modify its proposed resolution even before the Congress had convened. Then, in a statement guaranteed to arouse the ire of the authorities, he ringingly denounced the censorship that continued to afflict Czechoslovak life:

All suppression of opinions, including the forcible suppression of wrong opinions, is hostile to truth in its consequences. For the truth can only be a dialogue of free opinions enjoying equal rights. Any interference with freedom of thought and word, however discreet the mechanics and terminology of such censorship, is a scandal in this century, a chain entangling the limbs of our national literature as it tries to bound forward (Kundera, 1971:175-175).

Freedom on expression, Kundera declared, was "the basic moral principle of modern civilization" (Kundera, 1971:174).

As Kundera made clear, it was his profound conviction that neo-Stalinist philistinism threatened the health not only of Czechoslovak culture, but of the nation itself.

Sounding the theme of national mission so dear to many

Czechoslovak intellectuals, he continued:

'It is a matter of general knowledge,' wrote Palacky, 'that it was the Czech writers who, instead of letting the nation perish, brought it to life again and gave it noble aims to accomplish.' It is the Czech writers who were responsible for the very existence of the nation and remain so today. For it is upon the standard of Czech literature, its greatness or meanness, its courage or cowardice, its provincialism or universality, that the answer to the nation's existential question large depends, namely: Is it survival worth while? Is the survival of its language worth while? (Kundera, 1971:176).

Kundera's conclusion, which astutely merged the issue of cultural liberalization with that of national integrity, was a somber one: "Everyone who, by his bigotry, his vandalism, his want of culture or liberality, thwarts the new blossoming of our culture threatens the very life of the nation as well" (Kundera, 1971:177).

Kundera's speech was but the first of many that would enrage the Party authorities in attendance. Following an address by Alexander Kliment emphasizing ethical matters and raising the issue of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's recent letter to the Fourth Congress of Soviet Writers, Pavel Kohout strode to the platform and proposed reading the contents of Solzhenitsyn's officially illicit document, which called upon his Soviet colleagues to "demand and obtain an end of all censorship" (Szulc, 1971:226). A vote was taken, with only one out of about 500 participants in opposition and two abstaining. As Party spokesman Jiri Hendrych (thought by

many to be number two to Novotny himself) stormed out of the hall he paused just long enough to say to several writers "You have lost everything, absolutely everything" (Hamsik, 1971:46).

Alarmed by developments on the first day of the Congress, conservative writers such as Jan Drda and even a few some-time liberals such as Jarmila Glazarova and Vladimir Minac signed a letter urging the Congress to confine itself to literary matters and to avoid political issues (Golan, 1971:241). In contrast to 1963, most of the Slovaks (with the notable exceptions of Laco Novomesky, who forcefully argued for an end to censorship, and a few strong liberals) were silent on the major issues -- perhaps because they did not want to endanger their specifically "national" interests by aligning themselves too closely with the outspoken Czechs. Yet in the months after the Congress, the Slovak writers -- despite divisions between those who stressed national autonomy and those who emphasized democratization -- were to give their Czech colleagues crucial support (Golan, 1971:243-254).

Despite the misgivings of some participants, the tone of the Congress remained decidedly confrontational as it entered its second day. The most radical speech -- one which was destined to become as celebrated among the reformist intelligentsia as it was detested by the authorities -- was delivered by Ludvik Vaculik, the prize-winning author of the autobiographical 1966 novel, The Axe.

Born in 1926 and a member of the Party, Vaculik powerfully articulated the sentiments of a generation of disillusioned communists. His speech was stunning in the crystalline ferocity of its denunciation of the authorities who ruled over the intellectuals and the nation, and it is worth quoting at length:

My eyes and my ears tell me that power only retreats when it sees and hears strong resistance ahead...I see a continual desire to go back to the bad days, and a continual danger that this will happen. For what do they amount to, these reminders that we have got our Writers' Union, that we have got our Literary Fund and our publishing house and our newspaper? They amount to a threat to take them away if we do not behave. If I could tell myself that the things were originally theirs, I could say what my sister always says: One day he gives, another day he takes away. But are these men really lords of creation? What are they prepared to leave in hands other than their own? Nothing at all? Then there is no need for us to be here at all? Let them say this, if they mean it. Let it be publicly shown that a handful of people, when you come to count them claim the right to make life-and-death decisions about everything, about what is to be done, what thoughts are to be thought and what feelings felt (Vaculik, 1971:193).

Vaculik's speech, infused with the moral passion characteristic of many Czech writers, ultimately had a simple message: "none of us was born," he declared, "to make life easy for our rulers" (Vaculik, 1971:190). He then went on to explicitly propose that the Writers' Union, perhaps in collaboration with the Journalists' Union and other bodies of the intelligentsia, take the initiative in revising the Czechoslovak Constitution.²²

Within a few hours of Vaculik's speech, all the Communist Party members of the Writers' Union received a

telegram from the Party's Central Committee ordering them to arrive at a "fraction meeting" (i.e. a meeting at which non-Party members were excluded) the following morning at 9:00 (Hamsik, 1971:64). At this meeting, representatives of the Party center attempted to stack the membership of the Union's next central committee by removing eleven of thirty previously approved names. This effort was met with concerted opposition by Party writers who -- in clear violation of the sacred Leninist principle of democratic centralism -- refused to cooperate. Eduard Goldstucker, a pre-war Communist with a deserved reputation for loyalty and moderation, led the opposition, saying that he would have to withdraw his own candidacy lest he serve on what would obviously be an unrepresentative body. One after another, other Party writers pronounced their decision to withdraw their candidacies as well (Hamsik, 1971:69-70).

In the end, the writers did reluctantly agree to the withdrawal of the nominations of four of the most outspoken reformers (Ludvik Vaculik, Pavel Kohout, Vaclav Havel, and Ivan Klima), but the 45-member central committee of the union remained predominantly in reformist hands (Perina, 1977:241). Though the Party center succeeded in blocking the nomination of the reformist Jan Prochazka to chair, the writers retaliated by refusing to elect a substitute and succeeded as well in blocking the appointment of a new presidium (Golan, 1971:241). Having confronted the representatives of the Novotny regime face-to-face, the

writers had managed to hold them at a standoff through courage and solidarity .

In the aftermath of the historic Fourth Congress of the Union of Writers, relations between the intellectuals and the Party authorities continued to deteriorate. The response of the Novotny regime to the rebellion of the intellectuals was to attempt to reimpose order through a renewed crackdown. Literarni Noviny was denied permission to publish virtually any of the proceedings of the Congress, including the resolution on censorship that was ultimately passed by the writers; indeed, over the course of the first nine months of 1967, there were 141 interventions of the censor in the affairs of the journal compared to only 57 for the entire year of 1966 (Hamsik, 1971:141). Party officials, including Novotny himself, denounced the dissident writers, and a young writer named Jan Penes was actually sentenced to prison for criticizing the regime in a Czech-language emigre publication based in Paris. In September, Novotny reiterated the orthodox line: "our democracy is a class democracy, our freedom in a class freedom;" accordingly, the propagation of views and ideologies judged by Party authorities to be "harmful to socialism" would not be countenanced (Golan, 1971:245-248).

The offensive of the Novotny regime against the writers climaxed on September 26-27 at a meeting of the Central Committee of the CPC announcing that Vaculik, Klima, and Liehm had been expelled from the Party for "attitudes

incompatible with membership;" in addition the Writers' Union was to be "re-organized." ²³ The centerpiece of this re-organization was to remove control of Literarni Noviny from the Union and to place it directly in the hands of the Ministry of Culture and Information (Perina, 1977:248-249). This maneuver, coupled with restrictions placed on the Union's publishing house and welfare fund, was designed to break the back of the opposition of the humanist intelligentsia.

The response of the writers to the crackdown was an extraordinary display of solidarity. Virtually every Union member refused to write for the "scab" Literarni Noviny, and not a single member of the editorial board or technical staff would work with the new journal; resistance was so total that even the designer of the masthead refused further use of his design (Golan, 1971:250-251; Perina, 1977:250). The new journal had great difficulty in finding an editor, and contributors were in extremely short supply. By December 1967, circulation of the regime controlled Literarni Noviny had dropped from 150,000 copies to 60,000 copies per week in the face of what amounted to a readers' boycott ²⁴ (Golan, 1971:250).

Having set out to bring the intellectuals under control, the Novotny regime had instead demonstrated that it no longer had the capacity to employ its ultimate weapon: fear. Other journals, including the Slovak organ of the Writers' Union, Kulturny Zivot, were quick to open their

pages to former Literarni Noviny contributors, and the Slovak writers publicly condemned the recent Party actions against the Czech intellectuals. The film-makers, both in Slovakia and Prague, joined in the chorus of denunciation of the sanctions imposed by the regime, and even the previously docile journalists showed signs of dissent (Golan, 1971:252-255). A campaign that had been intended as a show of decisive strength thus degenerated into a painful public exhibition of the regime's weakness.

In the wake of its unsuccessful campaign against the intellectuals, the Novotny regime found itself in an increasingly insecure position. Its sagging legitimacy suffered still another blow when the police brutally suppressed a spontaneous student demonstration on October 31. The students, most of whom came from the dilapidated Strahov hostel which housed students of the Prague Technical College, had been meeting to prepare still another appeal in response to repeated electrical failures (leading to a loss of light and several heating breakdowns), when the lights failed once again. About 1,500 of them began marching toward the city center chanting "We want light" while carrying candles. They were met on their way by truncheon-wielding police who used tear gas to disperse their demonstration and violently pursued them into their rooms in the hostels ²⁵ (Journalist M, 1971:36-38) Szulc, 1971: 247-249; Skilling, 1971:79-80).

In the tense atmosphere of the fall of 1967, the Strahov incident was taken by many people, including some at the highest levels of the Party, as one more indication of the growing arbitrariness and defensiveness of the Novotny regime. It occurred, moreover, at a time when there was growing sentiment within the Central Committee of the CPC, already visible at its October plenum, that Novotny's continued rule posed a fundamental threat to the nation; the half-measures taken to reform the economy had failed, the issue of the continued subordination of the Slovaks to a highly centralized Prague regime remained totally unresolved, and the appeal of the Party to young people was at an all-time low. The details of the denouement of the Novotny regime -- which include a December visit to Prague by Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, who is said to have told Czech Communist leaders that resolution of the crisis was "their own affair", -- have been described in fascinating detail elsewhere (Skilling, 1976:161-179; Golan, 1971:266-274; Szulc, 1971:237-258; Journalist M, 1971:51-61); suffice it here to say that the revolt of the intellectuals, though unable on its own to topple the regime or even to seriously threaten it, played a key role in generating the crisis that led to its ultimate downfall. On January 5, 1968, after a bitter internal Party struggle that had lasted more than two months, a plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia asked Novotny to step down as First Secretary and named his replacement: Alexander

Dubcek, a moderate liberal reformer and the man who, as Chairman of the Communist Party of Slovakia, had refused to repress the Slovak intellectuals when they had rallied to the support of their Czech colleagues a few months earlier.²⁶

As Dubcek assumed the reins of power, most Czechoslovaks, including the intelligentsia, expected a certain loosening of restraints, but virtually no one envisaged the process of radical reform that was to become known as the Prague Spring. For the intellectuals, one of the first signs that changes would be more than token was the authorization that the new regime gave the Union of Writers in late January to start a new journal essentially identical to the old Literari Noviny; it would be called Literarni Listy (Literary Pages) and would be edited by Dusan Hamsik, the liberal novelist who had edited the journal before its takeover. The first issue of the new journal, whose board of editors was the same as that of its predecessor, appeared on March 1, 1968, and it attained a circulation of 250,000 within four weeks. By the summer months, the journal had reached an extraordinary circulation of over 300,000 (Perina, 1977:257-258; Golan, 1973:104-105).

Perhaps even more noteworthy than the reopening of the Writers' Union weekly was the regime's effective suspension of the political censorship of the news media. Within six weeks of entering office, Dubcek, a relatively obscure Party figure who had not been well known outside of Slovakia, had

presided over an unprecedented expansion of the freedom of the press. Previously submissive journalists filled their publications with pages of new evidence of corruption, purges, economic blunders, and injustices committed over the previous 20 years (Perina, 1977:260-261; Journalist M, 1971:53-62). Already in February, Party publications were launching oblique attacks on Novotny, who remained President despite having been relieved of his duties as First Secretary; by March, the assaults had become more explicit and calls were issued for his resignation not only by Literari Noviny, but also by such previously more conservative publications as Prace (Words, the organ of the Central Council of Trade Unions) and Mlada Fronta (Young Front, the organ of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Youth Federation). On March 22, 1968, after a protracted press campaign against him, Novotny resigned the presidency and, in so doing, symbolically opened the gates to a dramatic acceleration of the pace of change (Albright, 1976:139-246).

The first clear indication of the political program of the Dubcek regime was revealed in the Action Program of the CPC, approved by a plenum of the Central Committee on April 5. The Action Program, which was prepared and written almost entirely by the "working groups" of technocratic intellectuals described earlier (Mlynar, 1980:87-89) is a remarkable document, for it outlines what was by far the most extensive reform program ever approved by a Communist

Party in Eastern Europe up to that point in time. Its drafters included such prominent CPC intellectuals as Radovan Richta, Zdenek Mlynar, and Ota Sik, and its contents provide an extraordinary window into the thinking of reformist Communist technocrats during the Prague Spring.

One of the most striking features of the Action Program is its frank acknowledgement that Czechoslovakia was suffering from a "profound social crisis." To bring the nation out of this crisis, which the authors of the Action Program characterized as having led to "moral and political defects in human relations," the Action Program called for "a new intensely democratic model of a socialist society." Noting that this effort at "far-reaching" reform was taking place in a nation with a "relatively advanced material base, unusually high standards of education and culture of the people, and undeniable democratic traditions," the Action Program put forward as its goal the "creation of an advanced socialist society, rid of class antagonisms, economically, technically and culturally highly advanced, socially and nationally just ... characterized by comradely relations of mutual cooperation among people and free scope for the development of the human personality" (Central Committee of the Communist Party, 1969:91, 93, 135, 136). The realization of this program, its authors note in a characteristically Czech expression of concern about "national mission," would increase the international appeal

of socialism by making Czechoslovakia a model of a society that was at once socialist and democratic.

To Communist conservatives, both domestically and internationally, one of the most disturbing features of the Action Program was its insistence that socialism must safeguard the political and personal rights of citizens. Such rights, the Program observed, include "constitutional freedoms of assembly and association", "freedom of speech", and "freedom of movement", all to be guaranteed by law (Central Committee of the Communist Party, 1969:104-106). Though remaining within the framework of Leninist orthodoxy by advocating a continuation of the leading role of the Party, the Action Program proceeded to call for an increase in the separation of Party and State functions and the formation of voluntary associations to articulate social interests. The proposed departure from the traditional Communist Party practice of penetrating all organizations is noteworthy:

Voluntary social organizations of the working people cannot replace political parties, but the contrary is also true. Political parties in our country cannot exclude common-interest organizations of workers and other working people from directly influencing state policy (Central Committee of the Communist Party, 1971:103, emphasis in original).

Overall, the proposed political and legal reforms, while in principle upholding the hegemony of the Party, constituted a significant move in the direction of pluralism and the reconstitution of what has come to be called "civil society." A few months later, during the Soviet invasion of

Czechoslovakia, Pravda would refer to some of these provisions as providing a "convenient legal platform" for attacks on socialism, the Communist Party, and the USSR (Skilling, 1976:223).

The deeper character of the Action Program is perhaps revealed, however, less by its proposals for political reform than by its repeated references to the nation's need for a drastic increase in reliance on "science" and "expertise." Echoing themes developed in Richta's Civilization at the Crossroads, the Program declared that it is "in the field of science and technology where the victory of socialism over capitalism is decided in long-term perspective" (p. 126). Accordingly, the "development of democracy must proceed hand in hand with strengthening the scientific and professional approach to social management" (p. 101). The Party must, therefore, "strive to link the democratic principles of the social system with expert and scientific management and decision-making" (p. 97). Moreover, "since the real purpose of democratization must be the achievement of better results in day to day work," democracy cannot be allowed "to stand in opposition to discipline, professionalism, and effectiveness of management" (p. 106). Together, these remarks make clear that the authors of the Action Program recognized that the principles of democracy and expertise may sometimes be in conflict and subtly but insistently expressed their preference for the latter taking precedence.

The further progress of the "scientific and technological revolution" in Czechoslovakia, the Program declared, depends upon filling leading posts with "capable, educated socialist cadre experts"; otherwise, "socialism will be unable to hold its own in competition with capitalism" (p. 98). In order to carry out the necessary program of economic reform, loyal but unqualified Party bureaucrats may have to be displaced; for example, in "all central economic bodies, it is indispensable to ensure a high level of specialization, rationalization, and modernization of managerial work, even if changes in cadres are required to do so" (p. 118). Indeed, the role of scientists must not be limited to the spheres of production and management but must extend throughout the society. The Action Program therefore states as Party policy that:

We shall intensify the active participation of scientific institutions and scientific workers in drawing up proposals for political and economic measures. We shall encourage the broadest possible placement of scientific workers in social management and the educational system and create favorable social and economic conditions for activities in these fields. We shall prepare without delay to introduce a binding system of scientific expertise and opposition on important proposals" (Central Committee of the Communist Party, 1969:127).

A more naked statement of the technocratic ambitions of the intelligentsia is difficult to imagine.

With respect to economic reform, the Action Program proposed a policy of decentralization and increased reliance on the "socialist market" (p. 119). The goal was greater competitiveness for Czechoslovak products on the world

market based on "more effective participation in the international division of labor" (p. 120). The Action Program proposed placing "special emphasis on ensuring the independence of enterprises." The operations of these enterprises would be informed by undefined "democratic bodies" within them, but these entities -- described as being in the tradition of the factory councils of 1945-1948 -- would "in no way" reduce "the indivisible authority and responsibility of the leading executives in managing the enterprise" (p. 115).

The anti-egalitarianism of the authors of the Action Program was evident in their critique, common among Czechoslovak intellectuals of "leveling." The Action Program's position on this issue is worth quoting in full:

Today, when class differences are being erased, the main criterion for evaluating the status of people is how the individual contributes toward social progress. The Party has often criticized equalitarian views, but in practice leveling has spread to an unheard of extent and become one of the impediments to an extensive development of the economy and raising the living standard. The harmfulness of equalitarianism lies in the fact that it gives careless, idle, and irresponsible people an advantage over dedicated and delinquent workers, the qualified over the unqualified, the technically backward over the talented and initiative-oriented ...

To apply the principle of remuneration according to the quantity, quality and social usefulness of work, we must put an end to income leveling A socialist society respects those who achieve exceptional results, who are active and show initiative in advancing production, technical, and cultural and social progress; it respects talented people and creates favorable conditions for them to make themselves felt (pp. 97-98, emphasis in the original).

The unusually egalitarian wage policies of the Novotny regime, which had always represented itself as a staunch defender of the interests of the working class, was thus dismissed as a mere obstacle to "social progress."²⁷

The intelligentsia, on the other hand, had long suffered from insufficient reward according to the Action Program; "education, qualifications and ability have been underrated for years" (p. 98). Declaring that the intelligentsia "had become an intelligentsia of the people, a socialist intelligentsia," the Program described it as "a force which ... makes the wealth of science and culture available to all people" (p. 95).

The Action Program therefore describes the task of the Party as follows:

It will combat the recent under-estimation of the role of the intelligentsia in our society. It will combat everything that upsets relations between the intelligentsia and the workers. It will strive for a just remuneration of complex and creative mental labor (p. 95).

Democratic in its proposals for political reform, the Action Program was thus decidedly anti-egalitarian in its proposals for economic reform. This pattern was not, however, an expression of ideological incoherence; on the contrary, it graphically expressed the interests of technocratic Communist intellectuals who felt squeezed on the one side by incompetent Party bureaucrats and on the other by overpaid industrial workers.

If the 1968 Action Program of the CPC was not particularly solicitous of workers' interests, this may have been in part because the Communist Party was less and less proletarian in character; whereas in 1946 the Party was 58 percent workers and 13 percent intelligentsia, by 1966 it was 33 percent workers and 31 percent intelligentsia (Hejzlar, 1973:112). By May 1968, the intelligentsia formed the largest group in the Party: 40 percent of economically active members (Hruby, 1980:142). Party membership in such organizations as the Writers' Union had always been about 50 to 65 percent, and over time the Party had become more of an organization of the "holders of power" than of the working class (Hejzlar, 1973:113).

As the struggle for control of the Party between conservatives and reformers intensified, both groups competed actively for the loyalty of the working class -- the group that did, after all, comprise the majority of the population and in whose name the Party continued to govern (Pravda, 1973). The strategy of the conservatives, both before and after Novotny lost his position as the Party's First Secretary, was to portray the reformers as espousing a program of economic restructuring that would violate fundamental working-class interests by causing layoffs and growing wage inequality. Given that these charges were not without truth, it is probably testimony to growing popular disaffection from the regime that Novotny was unsuccessful

in using them in a last-ditch attempt to mobilize working-class support for his continuation in power.

The preeminent reform figure on matters of economic policy, was Professor Ota Sik, a former hard-line Stalinist who had gradually become convinced of the unworkability of the system of central planning (Hruby, 1980:45-47, 61-65, 87-90, 92-95). Sik, who as a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party had been one of Novotny's most outspoken opponents,²⁸ was the principle architect of the modest economic reforms of 1964-1967 and had grown increasingly frustrated at bureaucratic obstruction of his program of economic restructuring. By the time of Novotny's downfall, he had become convinced that only drastic measures could revive Czechoslovakia's stagnant economy.

Sik, who had since 1963 been Director of the Economic Institute at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, recognized that the workers had, as of the beginning of 1968, seen only the ill effects of the reform: de-leveling of wages and the closure of unprofitable plants (Pravda, 1973:106; Golan, 1971:230-231). Acknowledging that workers had a vital interest at stake in any program of economic reorganization, Sik proposed to involve them in the process through the formation of "enterprise councils." Yet as an economist of pronounced technocratic impulses, he was reluctant to grant ordinary workers too much power; indeed, in 1963 he had written that "the producers themselves cannot take part in management work with the necessary level of

knowledge and their participation in management is restricted by the relatively long working hours and their rather narrow field of knowledge" (quoted in Kovanda, 1974:168).

In the heated political atmosphere of the spring of 1968, however, Sik shifted his position, for he realized that giving more power to workers might advance his program of economic restructuring. Appointed Deputy Prime Minister in charge of economic reform in April, he faced the problem of removing the incompetent managers who were obstructing his program and turned to the workers for assistance (Kovanda, 1976:45-46). In a May 22 article in Rude Pravo, Sik wrote that "Worker's Councils should be established and should be set above enterprise managements." "Most of these members," he continued, "should be elected by the workers from among their own ranks." On the crucial issue of the selection of enterprise directors, he explicitly stated that the "Council would be able to make ... decisions about the appointment and recall of managers." "Only if the factory workers are given more responsibility and authority," Sik added, "will they be able to overcome their feeling of alienation from the factory and their need to ask for everything from someone 'up there'" (Sik, 1973:199-201). Remarkably, these proposals formed the basis for the "framework principles for the establishment of working people's councils" approved in early June by the government (Pravda, 1973:118).

Though the councils did not in fact become widespread until after the Soviet invasion (Pravda, 1973:123), the debate they aroused testified to the growing participation of the working class in the process of reform. The workers, though threatened (at least in the short term) by the so-called "New Economic System" and unenthusiastic about many of its features (Holesovsky, 1968), were generally unwilling to be enlisted in the attempts by old-line members of the Party apparatus to convince them that the reformers were their "enemies." Indeed, on issues of freedom of expression, workers proved to be stalwart allies of the radical intelligentsia and in late April began a movement in the mining city of Ostrava of "Workers' Committees for the Defense of Freedom of the Press" that quickly spread to many other locations (Hruby, 1980:104-105). Yet despite a few spontaneous strikes and some movement toward the formation of independent trade unions, especially among the skilled, the working class was not at the forefront of activity during the months before the invasion (Kusin, 1972:9-43). Workers were, in short, generally cautious but skeptical supporters of the reform movement and threw their weight behind the intelligentsia more on matters of political than economic reform.

If the workers remained at the periphery of the surge in autonomous political activity that occurred during the Prague Spring, radical humanist intellectuals were at its very center. In early April, by the time that the

technocratic Communist intellectuals had obtained the official approval of the Party for the Action Program that they had authored, more radical intellectuals -- Communist and non-Communist alike -- were already pressing the outer limits of the permissible. On April 4, one day before the Action Program was adopted by the Central Committee, Vaclav Havel published in Literarni Listy a highly provocative article entitled "On the Subject of Opposition." Arguing that "democracy is a matter not of faith but of guarantees," Havel called for "public and legal competition for power." Rejecting the idea then popular in Communist circles that "internal democratization of the leading party ... offers a sufficient guarantee of democracy," he insisted that "the only truly logical, and, indeed, in our circumstances, effective way ... to reach the ideal of democratic socialism is a regenerated and socialist social structure patterned on the two-party model" (Havel, 1969:64-67, emphasis in the original). Though professing a commitment to socialism, this article -- which appeared in the official organ of the Writers' Union -- clearly crossed over into the realm of heresy, for it raised frontally a previously taboo issue: the "leading role of the Party" and, behind it, the Communist monopoly of power.

There were other articles and speeches that transgressed the boundaries of the permissible in those months. Ivan Svitak, the radical philosopher who had been expelled from his job at the Academy of Sciences four years

earlier and later expelled from the Party, gave a talk at the Union of Film and Television Artists Conference in which he launched a direct assault on what he called the "totalitarian dictatorship" and on Dubcek's program of moderate reform. Svitak's call was for fundamental structural change:

The present political changes are, so far, changes in the power elite, changes of persons, individuals; they are, so far, not changes in structure. The bureaucracy of a totalitarian dictatorship will reconcile itself easily with personnel changes, while it is afraid of structural changes and will fight them with all its power. Therefore we must ask for structural changes and not personnel changes ...

The demonstration process, so far, is directed from above, by the power elite which itself is extremely antidemocratic and is not directly interested in democracy We do not ask for democratization but for democracy -- which is an enormous difference (Svitak, 1971:44).

As for the sacred Leninist principle of the leading role of the Party, Svitak declared flatly that "it has no theoretical support in the works of Karl Marx." Developed in a backward Russian setting, the "leading role of the Party was institutionalized into Stalinism, which," argued Svitak, "is unsuitable for democratic countries where there are no illiterate people" (Svitak, 1971:45).

While radical humanist intellectuals like Svitak and Havel were undermining the Communist Party's monopoly of power in words, larger forces were at work undermining it in deeds. On March 31 a group called Club 231 was founded and opened to anyone who had been imprisoned under Law No. 231 of 1948; membership was first estimated at 40,000, but later

estimates grew as high as 130,000 (Skillling, 1976:267; Caute, 1988:199). On April 5, a Club of non-Party activists was founded (KAN) to give citizens who did not belong to any party an opportunity to participate in public life and to help construct "a new political system -- hitherto never realized in history -- democratic socialism" (Skillling, 1976:202; Caute, 1988:199). And on May 18, in one of the most serious challenges from the nascent opposition, the old Social Democratic Party, which had been forcibly merged with the Communists in 1948, announced its intention to reestablish itself as an independent party (Skillling, 1976:234).

Such developments put Dubcek, a moderate Communist reformer with a devout albeit idealistic belief in Leninist ideology, in an exceedingly difficult dilemma. On the one hand, the activist intellectuals constituted perhaps the most vigorous advocates of his reform program of "socialism with a human face"; on the other, as leader of the Communist Party, he had to take into account the existence, in the heart of Party apparatus, of thousands of loyal functionaries who felt justifiably threatened by the radicals' demands. And apart from these complex domestic considerations, Dubcek had to take into account the international situation -- above all, whether the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies, already manifestly alarmed, would conclude that the reform process was simply going "too far."

While continuing to insist on the "leading role of the Party and the ban on outright opposition, the Dubcek regime continued its careful program of step-by-step reform. Despite repeated calls for the press to exercise restraint, as the boundaries of permissible discussion expanded far beyond what was initially envisaged, censorship was not reimposed (Albright, 1976). On May 30, the decision was announced to convene the Fourteenth Party Congress in extraordinary session on September 9 -- a move that was widely perceived as likely to accelerate decisively the process of reform (Skillling, 1976:252). And on June 26, in one of the Dubcek regime's boldest acts, the National Assembly formally removed the censorship provision from the Press Law and passed a law facilitating the rehabilitation of victims of past trials and purges (Szulc, 1971:341).

Despite these moves forward, the regime's pace of reform was too slow for radicals worried about the failure of the Party to rid itself of thousands of conservative bureaucratic functionaries. On June 27, Literarni Listy published what was to become the Prague Spring's most famous document: "Two Thousand Words to Workers, Farmers, Scientists, Artists, and Everyone." Written by the plain-spoken Luduik Vaculik, it was signed by 70 people -- some of them workers and farmers, but most of them leading intellectuals, especially from the worlds of arts, science, and scholarship.

Despite the opprobrium later heaped upon it as a "counter-revolutionary" manifesto, the "Two Thousand Words" was in some ways a measured document. Its starting point was strong opposition to "the view ... that it is possible to conduct some sort of democratic revival without the Communists or possibly against them." Noting that the "revival process of democratization ... began in the Communist Party," the statement proposed support for the "progressive wing" within the Party. Yet the "aim of humanizing this regime" remains unrealized and the forces of reform cannot afford to relax over the summer months, with their customary interludes for vacation; in the absence of further progress, "the revenge of the old forces will be cruel" (Vaculik, 1969:198-199).

In order to displace the apparatchiks who continue to block change, a drastic increase in political action from below will be necessary. The "Two Thousand Words" was clear in its call for the use of militant tactics to force the departure of old-line bureaucrats:

Let us demand the resignation of people who have misused their power, who have damaged public property, or who have acted dishonestly or brutally. We must find ways and means to induce them to resign, for instance, through public criticism, resolutions, demonstrations, demonstrative work brigades, collection drives for gifts to them when they retire, strikes, and boycotts of their doors" (Vaculik, 1969:200).

The implication of these remarks is the same as those delivered by Vaculik in this famous speech at the Writers' Congress: power retreats only in the face of pressure. And

in the absence of such pressure, to be applied in this instance by autonomous popular actions, conservative elements in the Party apparatus will survive and ultimately triumph.

The call of the "Two Thousand Words" for the people to take matters into their own hands was a radical one, but perhaps the statement's most controversial section concerned the delicate -- and rarely mentioned -- issue of foreign intervention. Confronting the possibility that "foreign forces may interfere with our internal development ... the only thing we can do is decently hold our own and not start anything." Then, in an audacious declaration, the statement proclaimed: "We can assure our government that we will back it -- with weapons, if necessary -- as long as it does what we give it the mandate to do" (Vaculik, 1969:201). The reference here to the Soviet Union is unmistakable, as is the contingent character of the support offered the regime.

The "Two Thousand Words" highlighted the growing tensions between the Dubcek regime and the radical intellectuals and once again revealed the differences separating its signatories from the more technocratic intellectuals close to the Party center. Thus Ota Sik and Zdenek Mlynar condemned the statement as threatening the success of the reforms (Skilling, 1976:277; Mlynar, 1980:139), a position also taken by Alexander Dubcek himself. By far the strongest denunciation was issued, however, by General Samuel Kodaj, who called it "an open

appeal for counterrevolution" and demanded legal action against those who signed it (Skillings, 1976:276). Yet no such action was taken, and the overall response of the regime was surprisingly mild -- perhaps because many in the power structure agreed with its general thrust, if not its specific proposals.

The international reaction was another matter. A "war of words" had already been going on for some time between Czechoslovakia and its "fraternal allies" in the Warsaw Pact when "The Two Thousand Words" appeared, and its publication contributed to the escalation of the conflict. On July 11, only two weeks after it appeared, the document was attacked in the Soviet paper Pravda by I. Aleksandro as "an organizational preparation for counterrevolution" (Skillings, 1976:285). More ominously still, the "Warsaw Letter" of July 15 -- an official communique of the Communist Parties of Bulgaria, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union -- described "The Two Thousand Words" as containing "an open appeal for struggle against the Communist Party." The Warsaw Letter continued:

This appeal constitutes a serious threat to the Party, the National Front, and the socialist state and is an attempt to implant anarchy. In essence this statement is an organizational-political platform of counter-revolution (Warsaw Letter, 1969:227).

The signatories of the Warsaw Letter went on to state that "the forces of counterrevolution ... have launched a broad offensive against the socialist system without encountering the requisite opposition from the party." Their conclusion

offered a thinly veiled threat of intervention: "Each of our parties bears a responsibility not only to its own working class and its own people but also to the international working class and the world Communist movement and cannot evade the obligations deriving from this" (Warsaw Letter, 1969:228-229).

"The Two Thousand Words" was, of course, but one of many documents that the Soviets and their Warsaw Pact allies could (and, indeed, did) point to as indicating that a "counterrevolution" was under way in Czechoslovakia. Yet the Soviets were correct in their assessment that the reform process in Czechoslovakia was taking on a character that was moving the nation further and further away from the Soviet model. Sadly if understandably, most of the radical intellectuals of Czechoslovakia had looked to the events of 1956 in Poland as a model of what they must at all costs avoid: placing too much faith in one man (Gomulka) and failing to institutionalize reform. Yet in the end, consideration of the seemingly very different events of 1956 in Hungary, which climaxed in an armed uprising, would have proved more instructive, for they revealed what the Soviets would do if a neighboring socialist country transgressed the boundaries of the politically and ideologically permissible.²⁹ The magnitude of this miscalculation was to become apparent only on the night of August 20, 1968, as the tanks of the Warsaw Pact arrived in crush the hopes of those

Czechoslovaks, intellectuals and nonintellectuals alike, who had dreamt of building "socialism with a human face."

Some Concluding Thoughts

The roots of the Prague Spring resided in the peculiar historical experience of a generation of Czechoslovak Communist intellectuals, most of them born between 1918 and 1930, whose deep political convictions led them to traverse the path from Stalinism to democratic socialism. Indeed, many of the most prominent leaders of the Prague Spring -- Ota Sik, Radovan Richta, Pavel Kohout, Zdenek Mlynar, Ladislav Muacko, Karel Kosik, Antonin Liehm, Ivan Svitak -- had been ardent defenders of Stalinist orthodoxy during the early years of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. For many of them, Khrushchev's 1956 speech at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Soviet Union seems to have been a turning point, for it led them to consider the possibility that they were themselves implicated in the terrible crimes that had been committed in their own country. If one of the distinctive features of the Prague Spring was its intensely moral character, this may have been because many of those most involved in it felt a sense of guilt -- and a need for expiation -- because of the contributions that they had made, whether by acts of omission or commission, to the crimes of Stalinism (Skilling, 1976:825).

In order to give meaning to their anti-Stalinist impulses, reformist intellectuals in Czechoslovakia had to

wage a protracted and arduous struggle against much of the Party apparatus. Yet a careful examination of this conflict reveals that it was rather more complex than Frank Parkin's formulation of it as a struggle between the intelligentsia and the Party apparatchiki. Instead, it is better understood as primarily a battle among Communists, with the intellectuals struggling to achieve their ends through control of the Party. The struggle was thus essentially one of competing elites, with the intellectuals every bit as loyal to Communism in their own way as the Party bureaucrats. In this sense, Ivan Szelenyi is perhaps closer to the mark when he describes the Prague Spring as a "struggle between reformed and unreformed Communists" (Szelenyi, 1986-1987:110).

There were, to be sure, important differences within the intelligentsia; after all, not all intellectuals endorsed reform and some remained closely tied to the more conservative segments of the Party apparatus. Yet even among the reformist majority of the intelligentsia, significant divisions were visible. Among the most fundamental of these was the divide between those who were more technocratic and those who were more humanistic in orientation. The former group, whose base tended to be in the social and natural sciences, placed a heavy premium on expertise and were often moderate in their proposals for reform; Richta, Sik, and Mlynar would be typical examples of the technocratic reformers. The latter group, most often

found among writers and philosophers, frequently emphasized moral values and tended to be more radical in orientation. Kohout, Kosik, Svitak and Liehm would be characteristic examples of the humanist reformers. Members of the first group virtually always belonged to the Communist Party and not infrequently had close ties to its center; members of the latter group included such non-Communists as Havel and tended to be more loosely connected to the power structure of the Party. Thought it is something of an oversimplification, it is probably fair to say that the technocratic intellectuals were often concerned with the most effective means to attain specified social and political goals, whereas the humanist intellectuals were preoccupied with the proper ends of social and political life.

The tension between these two groups could be considerable but they were united by a shared antipathy to the Novotny regime. A key element in this common antagonism was a sense that the Party "bureaucrats," often poorly educated and of working class origin, who occupied so many of the key positions in Czechoslovakia, were not up to the task; far better, both the humanist and technocratic intellectuals believed, to replace them with highly qualified, university-trained, professional "experts" -- in short, themselves. In this regard, Parkin's assessment that the intelligentsia in state socialist socialists tends to regard itself as "subordinate to a morally, socially and

culturally inferior political class," though rather baldly stated, seems on the mark (Parkin, 1972:55).

The anti-egalitarian sentiments of members of the Czechoslovak intelligentsia were evident in their relentless critique of "leveling." Indeed, one of the most deeply felt grievances of the intellectuals was that the Novotny regime was committed to excessive wage equality; their program of economic reform therefore called for "de-leveling" of income and substantially increased rewards for educated labor. Alvin Gouldner describes "the fundamental objectives of the New Class" as follows: "to increase its own share of the national product; to produce and reproduce the social conditions enabling them to appropriate privately larger shares of the incomes produced by the special cultures they possess; to control their work and their work settings; and to increase their political power to achieve the foregoing" (Gouldner, 1979:19-20). All of these features were visible, to one or another degree, in the reforms of the Czechoslovak intelligentsia; that such a quintessentially New Class program should elicit only limited support from the working class can hardly be considered surprising.³⁰

Yet it would be unfair to dwell unduly on the elitist and self-serving features -- real though they were -- of the reform program of the intelligentsia. Especially in its vision of a more democratic version of socialism, the intelligentsia was a carrier of proposals for the expansion of human rights and a radical redistribution of political

power away from the party-state and toward a revitalized citizenry. In Gouldner's neo-Hegelian schema, the intelligentsia is a "flawed" class, but it is also a "universal" one. During the Prague Spring, this "universalism" was eloquently expressed in the political program of the intelligentsia -- a program that, if implemented, would have had the effect of breaking the Communist Party's monopoly of power.

In the end, the historic significance of the Prague Spring resided in its attempt to heal the historic rupture between socialism and democracy that was one of the principal legacies of the Bolshevik Revolution. In Milan Kundera's words, it was:

an attempt (and for the first time in the world) to create a socialism without an omnipotent secret police; with freedom of the spoken and written word; with a public opinion of which notice is taken and on which policy is based; with a modern culture, freely developing; and with citizens who have lost their fear (quoted in Hamsik, 1971:161-162).

The great tragedy of the Soviet invasion was that it prevented the Czechoslovaks from finding out -- for themselves and for the rest of the world -- whether their vision of a truly democratic form of socialism could have been made a reality.

FOOTNOTES

1. Writing within the general framework of "new class" theory, Alvin Gouldner and Ivan Szelenyi offer interpretations of the Prague Spring that, while not identical, have striking affinities to that of Parkin. Gouldner, for example, writes in The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class, that the "ultimate expression, thus far, of the contrast between intelligenty and the party officials ... occurred when the Russians sent tank brigades into Czechoslovakia to put down the Czechoslovakian 'spring' that was largely inspired by the plans of the intelligentsia" (Gouldner, 1979:91). In a similar vein, Ivan Szelenyi, co-author (with George Konrad) of the Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power, writes in a recent article that "the Prague Spring ... was a struggle between reformed and unreformed Communists; it was a movement of intellectuals ... [who] believed that they should take charge of the Communist Party, remove the corrupt old-line bureaucrats, and guide society... toward a socialist future" (Szelenyi, 1986-1987:110). While Parkin does not formulate his theory in explicitly "new class' terms, he is in strong agreement with Gouldner

and Szelenyi that intellectuals in state socialist societies have characteristically different interests and world views from Party bureaucrats and that they are in the long run ascendant over them.

2. While membership in the intelligentsia was open to children of non-bourgeois origins, the democratic character of the Czechoslovakian intelligentsia between the wars should not be exaggerated; thus, only seven percent of students in classical secondary school and fewer than one-tenth of all university students were from working-class families. Moreover, status difference between the group popularly known as the "masters" or pani (of which intellectuals were an integral part) and the "people" or lid were by no means negligible, with "masters" typically leading a distinctive style of life involving well-defined patterns of dress, speech, etiquette, and cultural consumption (Hajda, 1976:211-216).

3. The electoral figures are provided by Rothschild (1974:110-126) who, along with the classic work by Seton-Watson (1962), provides the best general history of Eastern Europe between the wars. Readers specifically interested in the history of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, including its numerous political twists and turns, may wish to consult Rupnik

(1981), an illuminating history of the CPC up to and including its seizure of power in February 1948, and Suda's (1980) more general history, which covers developments through the 1970s.

4. Unlike their Polish neighbors, much of whose territory had been occupied by the Czarist empire, the Czechs had no tradition of territorial disputes with the Russians and little in the way of anti-Russian sentiment. In addition, Pan-Slavic ideologies had periodically played a powerful role in the history of the Czechs and Slovaks, leading some to look upon Russia (and later the Soviet Union) as a friendly nation. Nonetheless, H. Gordon Skilling may be correct when he states that "what distinguished the Czechs and Slovaks from Poles or Hungarians was the absence of a long-standing anti-Russian tradition rather than the presence of a dominant pro-Russian one" (Skilling, 1976:15).
5. For detailed accounts of the "February events" leading to the seizure of power by the CPC in 1948, see Korbelt, 1959; Bloomfield, 1979; Suda, 1980; and Rupnik, 1981.
6. See Antonin J. Liehm's (1973) The Politics of Culture for a fascinating series of in-depth interviews with 14 prominent Czechoslovakian intellectuals that casts

considerable light on their initial attraction to Communism.

7. The best single source on the Slansky affair and on the period of Stalinist terror more generally is the suppressed Report of the Dubcek government's Commission of Inquiry on The Czechoslovak Political Trials, 1950-1954 (Pelikan, 1971). Also worth consulting are the discussions by Jancar (1971) and Szulc (1971:79-110).

8. It should be noted, however, that Czech workers had risen up against the regime three years earlier in June 1953 in the western Bohemian industrial city of Plzen in a rebellion that required army units from Prague to suppress it; there was, in addition, a lesser uprising in the North Moravian (or Silesian) mining city of Ostrava (Hruby, 1980:55-56; Szulc, 1971:107-109). While the immediate precipitant of the revolt had been an unpopular currency reform, it seems likely that the uprising also betrayed underlying political and social grievances. One indirect indicator that the preceding years may have been characterized by increasing tension between the working class and the CPC is that the proportion of Party members from the working class dropped sharply between March 1946 and February 1950 from 57.7 percent to 38.4 percent (Brown and Wightman, 1975:399-404).

9. Kveten had been an important force in bringing together established writers such as Jaroslav Seifert (born in 1900) and Eduard Goldstucker (born in 1913) and Ladislav Mnacko (born in 1919) with such younger writers as Ivan Klima and Vaclav Havel who in 1957 were, respectively, just 26 and 21 years old in 1957 (Szulc, 1971:156).

10. Selucky, born in 1930, had joined the Communist Party in 1947 and studied at the University of Leningrad 1949-1952. Having been expelled from the Party in 1952, he rejoined it in 1960. In 1961 Selucky received a doctoral degree from the Prague School of Economics (Perina, 1977:355).

11. While the Party was most at ease with intellectuals originating in the working class, large numbers of the radicalized children of the middle class had flocked to it in the wake of the Munich agreement and the Second World War. Antonin Liehm, for example, was the son of a well-known lawyer and Milan Kundera the son of an eminent Moravian musicologist (Perina, 1977:50-51). With some notable exceptions, the socialist intelligentsia in Czechoslovakia was also, at least in terms of social origins, a bourgeois intelligentsia; indeed, even in 1955-1956, seven years after the

Communist seizure of power, the children of workers and cooperative farmers remained -- despite strong preference in university admissions -- a definite minority in Czechoslovak institutions of higher education (Krejci, 1972:52-53). Maintaining Party discipline among the intelligentsia is everywhere a complex task, but it may have been compounded in the Czechoslovak case by such heavily reliance on intellectuals who were in no way indebted to the Communist regime for their middle-class status.

12. In a memorable phrase, Czechoslovak Stalinists privately referred to the period after 1963 -- the point at which Novotny had manifestly lost his capacity to control the intellectuals-- as the "terror of the snobs" (Perina, 1977:200).

13. Since the leaders of the Communist Party in Slovakia had their own grievances against the Czech Novotny, reformist Slovak intellectuals (who were also often nationalist) enjoyed a certain latitude in expressing attitudes critical of the regime. Protection of reformist intellectuals was not, however, limited to Slovakia; thus, Selucky, though bitterly attacked by Party authorities and informally blacklisted, was reportedly saved from a worse fate by the intervention of a high Party official (Golan, 1971:27).

14. Albright, in her study of the role of journalists in Czechoslovakia in 1968, argues that this difference in source of income between writers and journalists "goes a long way in explaining why in the decade before the Czechoslovak Spring, contributors to various literary journals were in the forefront of those who criticized the party leadership's policies and questioned the direction which communism should go in Czechoslovakia - - and why many salaried journalists attacked them for it" (Albright, 1976:117).

15. As often occurs during periods of liberalization, the discipline of sociology -- condemned during the Stalinist years as a "bourgeois pseudo-science" and eliminated from the research institutes and universities -- was revived during the mid-1960s. Advocates of sociology and of public opinion research argued that these disciplines could help render decision-making more "scientific" (Skilling, 1976:98-101). The key figure in Czechoslovak sociology during the 1960s was Pavel Machonin of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism for Higher Schools in Prague. Author of the 1961 book, Roads to a Classless Society, Machonin was head of an interdisciplinary research team on the changing Czechoslovak social structure. The major product of this team was a volume published in

1967 on The Social Structure of a Socialist Society; a later study, the research for which was still in progress in 1968, was published in 1969 under the title Ceskoslovenska Spolecnost.

16. By 1968 over 50,000 copies of Civilization at the Crossroads had been sold, and it had already been translated into several languages (Hruby, 1980:98). In the United States, Daniel Bell hailed the report of the Richta team, calling it a "remarkable study" and interpreting it as a kind of Marxist analogue to his own theory of the "post-industrial" society (Bell, 1973:106-112).

17. One indicator of the relatively liberal cultural atmosphere prevailing in Czechoslovakia in the mid-1960s was the appearance of such acclaimed critical works as Vaclav Havel's play, The Memorandum, Milan Kundera's novel, The Joke, and Kadar and Klos' film, The Shop on Main Street (Perina, 1977:220). It should nonetheless be emphasized that this tolerance was circumscribed and coexisted with repeated waves of denunciation and harassment of intellectuals whom the Party authorities felt had overstepped the bounds of permissible criticism. Thus the philosopher Ivan Svitak, who was espousing a democratic socialist-humanist interpretation of Marx, was dismissed from his

job at the Academy of Sciences' Institute of Philosophy in 1964 (despite the resistance of his colleagues) and later was expelled from the Party (Skillling, 1976:96). And Radoslav Selucky, an outspoken radical critic of central planning, was fired from his teaching job at the Prague Institute of Technology in 1963 (Perina, 1977:355).

18. The Czechoslovak government's campaign against Israel had anti-semitic undertones, and many intellectuals noted disturbing "parallels with the accusations of Zionism leveled against Slansky and his mostly Jewish 'co-conspirators' during the Stalinist era" (Szulc, 1971:222-223). Dusan Hamsik, a writer and later editor of Literarni Noviny, observed that the official Czechoslovak line was purveyed ... with such exaggerated and frantic zeal that readers were reminded of the campaigns of hatred that accompanied the political trials of the 'fifties, or even the boorish anti-semitism of the Nazi era." According to him, "it was the crudity and obscurantisms of the official position which drove popular sympathy further into the pro-Israeli camp than would normally have been the case" (Hamsik, 1971:35-36). The most outspoken of the pro-Israeli intellectuals, it should be noted, were not Jewish; they included the formerly Stalinist playwright, Pavel Kohout, and the renowned Slovak

novelist, Ladislau Mnacko, who actually went so far as to go to Israel to register his protest, leading to his expulsion from the Communist Party and deprivation of his citizenship (Szulc, 1971:223-224).

19. There were, to be sure, a number of members of the Writers' Union who were not Party members, but even they tended to be proponents of socialism. Even Vaclav Havel, whose bourgeois class origins (he is described by Hamsik on page 199 as being "the son of a millionaire who owned a rich slice of the commercial center of Prague") prevented him from being accepted into a university and whose distaste for Marxism was public knowledge, described himself as "always being in favor of socialism in the sense of nationalization of major means of production: and suggested that his "socialist leanings originated in my early childhood and in my sense of shame for the privileges I then enjoyed" (Havel, 1973:380).

20. For purposes of comparison, the equivalent of a circulation of 300,000 in a nation with the population of the United States would be well over 5,000,000. Yet if one were to take The New York Review of Books, The New Republic, and The Nation as the rough equivalent of Czechoslovakia's three major cultural weeklies, one would find a total circulation of well under 500,000.

21. Evidence that reform-oriented members of the Prague intelligentsia had been meeting together for some time and that they had at least loose ties to people in the political power structure is contained in a description by an anonymous "prominent publicist interviewed by Albright:

From 1963-1964 groups of people from various walks of life met at Literarni Noviny on Mondays, for example. Those who were interested knew that such meetings were taking place ... these people with similar views knew about each other and consulted with each other. Sometimes, there were among these people those who had connections with some political figure (Albright, 1976:130).

22. An important sub-theme of Vaculik's speech was that the regime in power selected people of inferior moral and intellectual qualities for positions of leadership and high reward -- a concern that he shared with many other Czech intellectuals. According to Vaculik:

The selection of people ... for their serviceability to the wielders of power is something which has taken place in our country as in others. Preference has been accorded to obedient people, to people who make no difficulties and ask none of the current questions. At every stage of selection it has been the most mediocre men who showed up best while more complex creatures, people with personal charm, and above all those whose work and qualities had made them ... a touchstone of general decency and public conscience -- these gradually

disappeared from the scene" (Vaculik, 1971:186).

Putting the matter even more sharply, he declared boldly that "all of us, Czechs and Slovaks, wherever we work, are inclined to believe that the men who tell us what to do are less competent than ourselves" (Vaculik, 1971:187).

Szelenyi refers to this concern as the problem of "counterselection." Among the East European intelligentsia at the time according to his account, the idea was widespread that socialism was an excellent system but that the wrong people (i.e. Party bureaucrats rather than intellectuals) had power (Szelenyi, 1986-1987:113).

23. At this same session, it was also announced that Kohout had been given an official reprimand and warning, that Party proceedings had been reinstated against Kundera, and that Prochazka would be dropped from his post as candidate member of the Central Committee (Hamsik, 1971:135).
24. Perina, in contrast to Golan, estimates that Literarni Noviny's circulation dropped from an average of 135,000 to perhaps as low as 40,000 after it came under the control of the regime (Perina, 1977:252).

25. It should be emphasized that student unrest had been visible long before the Strahov incident. On May Day in 1965 at the traditional Majales Festival students elected visiting "beat" poet Allen Ginsberg as the Majales King; a week later he was expelled from Czechoslovakia. The May Day demonstrations in 1966 were even larger, and students were joined by young workers and office clerks in chanting such slogans as "We want freedom" and "We want democracy." Twelve leaders of the demonstration were tried later in May and received jail terms ranging from five to seventeen months (Szulc, 1971:207-208; Golan, 1971:101). In December of 1966, Jiri Muller, a radical student leader who argued that the Union of Youth should, if necessary, oppose the policy of the Party, was expelled from the faculty at Prague University and drafted into the army (Skilling, 1976:75-82; Caute, 1988:188).
26. According to Szulc (1971:235), "reliable informants" claim that Dubcek opposed Novotny's September 1967 crackdown in meetings of the Party Presidium, but other sources -- though making reference to splits within the Presidium -- neither confirm nor disconfirm these reports (Golan, 1971:250).

27. The perception that Czechoslovakia in the 1960s had an unusually egalitarian income distribution in the 1960s was not inaccurate. In 1965, while a doctor practitioner with wide experience earned 150 percent of the average wage, and a scientific worker with a university degree earned 202 percent, a lathe operator (eighth wage class) earned 162 percent and a skilled coal-face miner 236 percent (Krejci, 1972:72). The Richta team reported that the "total earned income of a university graduate working in research only catches up with the sum of wages earned by a worker in heavy industry when the former reaches the age of 46 or 47; a doctor reaches this point when he is 52-53, and a teacher never gets there (Richta et al, 1969:232). In addition to having a fairly equal income distribution, Czechoslovakia was also characterized by relatively high rates of intergenerational upward mobility from the working class into the intelligentsia (Krejci, 1972; Evanson, 1985:252-255).
28. Having forcefully criticized Novotny's economic policies at the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1966, Sik launched a devastating attack on Novotny at the decisive plenary session of the Central Committee of the CPC in December 1967 and was the first person to call for his resignation as First Secretary (Golan, 1971:271; Skilling, 1976:169-170).

29. I am indebted to Rudolf Perina (1977:294) for the idea of comparing the relevance of the Polish and Hungarian cases in the thinking of Czechoslovak intellectuals.

30. Despite their insistence that "leveling" had gone too far and that more reliance on market incentives would be needed to revive the economy, it is worth emphasizing that none of the Czech reformers advocated a return to capitalism. The Soviet claim that the Warsaw-Pact countries had to intervene lest capitalism be restored is thus a dubious one indeed; far more plausible is Skilling's claim that the Soviets feared not capitalism but democracy (Skilling, 1976:837).

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