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President Havel of Czechoslovakia 10/22/91 [OA 8330] [1]

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

31 OCT 17 9:32

MR. TERRY

October 17, 1991

MEMORANDUM FOR TONY SNOW/DAN MCGROARTY

FROM: John S. Gardner *J.S.G.*
SUBJECT: Havel Remarks

This is really fine work, appropriate to the occasion, and I am sure it will be well received by the Czechoslovaks present. I especially liked the weight given to Slovakia, the notion that the country has earned its place in the councils of Europe, and the concentration on the moral leadership of President Havel.

A few specific suggestions:

1. I'd include a pronunciation guide -- isn't it Va-TSLAV HA-vel?
2. On the next to last line of p. 1, "unleashed" sounds like a transitive verb instead of an adjective, hence the change.
3. On p. 3, the beginning of the second full paragraph is a little confusing. It sounds as though the President is going to make reference to the pains of lustrace -- the whole debate about exposing those who had ties with the old regime, which is really a difficult issue in the CSFR at the moment. But then the paragraph goes on to discuss economics. I think you're right to avoid lustrace, but this needs a bit more clarification.
4. 4. Didn't at least one Czech die in Desert Storm? Should we make some reference to that? *accidental death / mishandling weapon not during combat (170 soldiers) sent combat unit for anti-chemical weapons stressed humanitarian participation - guard embassy after liberation*
5. The third para. of p. 1 in the toast could sound confusing in translation without some clarification such as "free in your spirit" or "free in the inner man."
6. Should there be some further reference to Mrs. Havel and her struggle while her husband was in prison (just a phrase or sentence)?
7. 7. At the end of the toast, would it work to have the President first say the Czech word for freedom, e.g., "gift of all: _____ -- freedom." It might be a nice touch. *svoboda - Czech
sloboda - Slovak*

363-9263
FOX

But all these are minor points. These speeches were great.

Thanks.

McGroarty/Bunton
October 16, 1991
4:30 pm
[CZECH]

31 OCT 16 P6:10

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: ARRIVAL STATEMENT FOR OFFICIAL VISIT OF
CZECHOSLOVAK PRESIDENT VACLAV HAVEL
THE SOUTH LAWN
OCTOBER 22, 1991
10:00 AM

It is my great pleasure to welcome to the White House a man whose moral authority makes him a hero not simply in his own land -- but everywhere that people cherish freedom: President Vaclav Havel. //

I suspect the life of Vaclav Havel, President, would tax even the imagination of Vaclav Havel, playwright. Yet your life inspires us precisely because it shows that greatness begins with small acts of conscience and personal decency -- acts that each one of us can perform.

Confronted with a wall of lies, you summoned the courage to "live in truth:" to shun the silence that allows the lie to live -- to speak out, and risk the consequences. // That courage sustained you through five long years in prison and many more as an outcast in your own country -- to the chill autumn night two years ago when the people of Czechoslovakia came to Wenceslaus Square. At first, a few candles flickered in the night sky. In time, the square was ablaze with light -- the Velvet Revolution had begun. //

Long before that night, Vaclav Havel had written about "the power of the powerless." In the Revolution of 89, the world saw the Czech and Slovak people ~~unleashed~~ -- witnessed the awesome power of the democratic idea. //

unfettered

Your revolution was also a renewal. It celebrated the universal principles that bind my country to yours -- principles enshrined in Czechoslovakia's own Declaration of Independence, issued here in the United States in 1918 by your first President, Tomas Masaryk (TOE-mas MASS-ah-rick), and Milan Stefanik (MEE-lan SHTEH-fah-neek), proud Slovak patriot. // [[I am proud to announce that this founding document -- preserved for so many years in our Library of Congress -- will return with you to Czechoslovakia.]] //

Almost one year ago now, on the first anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, I had the honor of becoming the first American President ever to visit Czechoslovakia. Mr. President, when I addressed your country's Federal Congress, I brought copies of the American Constitution and our Bill of Rights -- not as a blueprint, a set of rules for you to follow, but as a gesture of friendship between fellow democracies. //

Now in 1991, as America celebrates the Bicentennial of the Bill of Rights -- as Czechoslovakia and its Republics craft their own constitutions -- we affirm these simple truths: That democracy means far more than free elections. That majority rule requires respect for minority rights. That democracy cannot survive unless we safeguard the freedom of all men and women to live, work and worship as they wish. ///

Today, the electricity of Revolution has given way to the sober business of democracy-building. / Czechoslovakia faces the challenge of three revolutions: first, an economic

revolution, to replace the failed system of command and control with a market that responds to the rules of supply and demand. Second, a political revolution -- to replace the totalitarian travesty with democratic government, and the tyranny of men with the rule of law. Third -- and critical to the success of the other two -- a moral revolution: the process of building public trust, trading the cynicism ^{not for} that helped people survive the old regime for the idealism that will help you build a new one. ///

Mr. President, for forty years, the regime that ruled your country fed your people nothing but lies: a steady diet of quotas fulfilled, record harvests, unanimous support for this or that state policy -- an elaborate fantasy that fooled no one. / Today, you lead a people who recognize that being free means facing the truth -- preferring fact to fiction -- no matter how harsh the truth may be.

The struggle to shrug off the dead weight of communist rule ^{and socialist economics} is far from over. Everywhere, from the streets of Prague to the smallest village, you've felt the strains -- the dislocations and depressed standard of living -- and I know the transition has hit particularly hard in Slovakia. //

Yet your country has made progress. Czechoslovakia has taken decisive steps to privatize state-enterprises, to liberalize trade and investment, to lift restrictions on private enterprise. Each barrier you sweep away unleashes the energies of free enterprise -- liberates the Czech and Slovak people to pursue their ideas and ideals. //

One year after the Revolution, nearly half-a-million private entrepreneurs have registered to do business. You have increased trade with Western economies. When I visited your country one year ago, only 15 American businesses had offices in Prague. Now nearly 100 have established themselves in your capital, with more on the way.

America stands ready to help -- not with torrents of government-to-government aid that breeds dependency, but with market-tested advice and assistance, initiatives that encourage business-to-business contacts. Our Czechoslovakia Enterprise Fund will channel Western capital to Czech and Slovak entrepreneurs ready to put it to work. OPIC -- the U.S. Government's Overseas Private Investment Corporation -- has just completed a mission to Czechoslovakia, linking American companies to new business opportunities in your country. //

As Czechoslovakia transforms itself into a vibrant democracy, it also has claimed its place in the councils of Europe. You now work closely with Poland and Hungary to chart a common course in democracy-building. / Mr. President, as a founder of Charter 77, you lived through the days when the secret police ransacked homes for papers related to the Helsinki Accords. You must marvel that Prague now serves as home to the headquarters of the CSCE. //

Czechoslovakia's vision extends beyond the confines of its own continent. Mr. President, your nation knows better than most countries the harsh lessons of history -- what happens when

aggression goes unchecked. // When Iraq invaded Kuwait, the Czech and Slovak people stepped forward to take their place in the international coalition against the aggressor. Even as it struggled to secure its own fragile independence, Czechoslovakia came to the defense of a nation in need. ///

This visit gives us me an opportunity to learn more about the transformations underway in your country -- and to discuss with you the prospects for lasting peace and prosperity, in Europe and the world beyond. //

Once again, Mr. President, it is an honor to meet with you today. Welcome to the White House -- and may God bless the Czech and Slovak people.

#

McGroarty/Bunton
October 16, 1991
3:30 pm
[CZECH.TST]

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: TOAST AT THE STATE DINNER IN HONOR OF
CZECHOSLOVAK PRESIDENT VACLAV HAVEL
THE WHITE HOUSE
OCTOBER 22, 1991
7:30 PM

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you to the White House. / Our distinguished guest tonight set out to make his name as a writer of plays. Instead he finds himself center stage in a compelling drama: a Revolution that marked the end of a long era of suffering and opened up a new world of hope. //

Vaclav Havel has been called a "reluctant politician." Certainly, he takes a different tack than most public servants. Others might toss around budget statistics or quote the latest opinion polls, but not President Havel. When he addressed Congress last year, he spoke of what he called his "one great certainty" -- and I quote: "Consciousness precedes Being, and not the other way around." // [[Members of Congress are still scratching their heads about that one. Maybe I can explain what my friend meant in my next State of the Union address. //]]

Mr. President, your country turned to you because it saw in you a man of moral clarity -- a man of convictions, principles beyond compromise. Even when a criminal regime banned your plays and sent you to prison, you remained free. // ^{in my own spirit}

The people of Czechoslovakia chose wisely. In welcoming President Havel earlier today, I mentioned that Czechoslovakia faces the challenge of not one but three revolutions: first, an

economic revolution, to replace the failed system of command and control with a market that responds to the rules of supply and demand. Second, a political revolution -- to replace the totalitarian travesty with responsive institutions and the rule of law. Third -- and most critical -- a moral revolution: the process of building public trust, creating a sense of society -- trading cynicism about all things public for the sense of civic duty that makes democracy work. //

Mr. President, of the many unforgettable moments in the Revolution of 89, I'd like to recall one I know both of us regard as special -- one that underscores the common cause that links our countries. / It happened at a place called Branik [BRAH-neek] on the outskirts of Prague. A worker dressed in grimy overalls rose to speak at the factory gates. He began his speech to his fellow citizens with these words:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident. That all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, [and] that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." //

In that same spirit, let us raise our glasses:

To our guests, President and Mrs. Havel; to the friendship that links the citizens of this country to the Czech and Slovak people -- and to the most precious gift of all: freedom.

#

New York Times 10/11/71
**Czechoslovakia Halts Export
Of Tanks to Syria Until Talks**

PRAGUE, Oct. 10. (AP) — Czechoslovakia has suspended a shipment of Soviet-designed T-72 tanks to Syria in a gesture of support for the planned Middle East peace conference, a leading newspaper says.

The newspaper, Rude Pravo, reported Wednesday that the Government has decided to suspend the tank shipment and all other exports of heavy convention weapons to the Middle East until the Arab-Israeli peace conference sponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union takes place.

The report said the Government expressed hope that other nations would follow its example.

Earlier this year, Czechoslovakia announced plans to export \$200 million worth of T-72 tanks to Syria, a move sharply protested by Israel and the United States. The number of tanks was never officially disclosed, but reports indicated the shipment would total more than 100.

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Havel's works.
POTUS.
Econ Articles

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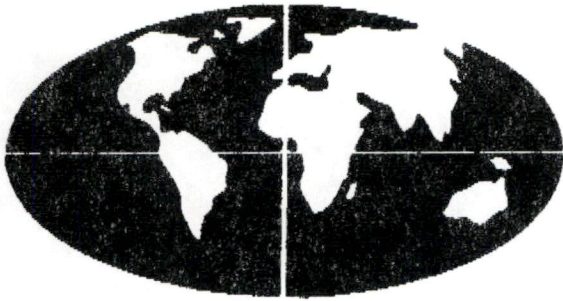
(ECONOMICS) Martin Walter - 363-6319

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(MILITARY) Mr. Tichy

* THE COVER MEMO TO POTUS IS SAVED UNDER FILE NAME: HAVEL. P0

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FET

Foreign Economic Trends and Their Implications for the United States

JULY 1991

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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PREPARED BY
AMERICAN EMBASSY PRAGUE



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
International Trade Administration
Washington, D.C. 20230

Available from the Superintendent of Documents, GPO, Washington, D.C. 20402.
Annual subscription \$60.00 (foreign mailing \$13.75 additional). Single copy \$1.00.

KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS: CZECHOSLOVAKIA**Average Official Exchange Rates***

1991: US\$ = 29 Czechoslovak Crowns (Kcs) 1990: US\$ = 17 Kcs
 1989: US\$ = 14.9 Kcs

<u>Indicator</u>	<u>Units or Value</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>
National Income	Kcs billion (1984 prices)	576.5	576.3	558.2
Growth in NI	percent	2.8	0.0	- 3.1
Income per capita	US \$			10,130
Investment	Kcs billion	178.6	177.1	193.3
Labor Force	million workers	7.5	7.5	7.4

Basic Industrial Output

Hard Coal	mill. metric tons	25.5	25.1	22.4
Brown Coal	mill. metric tons	96.4	90.9	82.0
Electricity	bill. kilowatts	87.4	89.2	86.6
Crude Steel	mill. metric tons	15.4	15.5	14.9
Rolled Steel	mill. metric tons	11.0	11.4	11.0
Trucks	mill. metric tons	50.5	50.5	47.5

Foreign Trade (Czechoslovak data in Kcs billion)

Total Imports		214.3	214.7	238.2
Nonconvertible currency countries		135.8	131.7	111.0
Convertible currency countries		78.5	83.0	127.2
Total Exports		218.9	217.5	215.3
Nonconvertible currency countries		142.1	130.0	100.8
Convertible currency countries		76.8	87.5	114.5

U.S.-Czechoslovakia Trade (U.S. data - millions of U.S. dollars)

Total Trade		142.7	140.7	176.1
U.S. Exports		55.1	53.7	89.1
Agricultural		15.4	18.0	23.5
Nonagricultural		39.7	35.7	65.6
U.S. Imports		87.6	87.0	87.0
Agricultural		7.3	7.8	12.0
Nonagricultural		80.3	79.2	75.0

* Rates are fixed to a basket of currencies so the dollar rate may vary. In 1990 there were two rates: a commercial rate (given in the table) and a tourist rate of 35 crowns per dollar. Prior to January 1989 several exchange rates existed and the commercial rate had to be multiplied by a coefficient of 2.5.

SUMMARY

In 1991 Czechoslovakia (officially known as the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, or CSFR) embarked on extensive economic reforms with the aim of transformation to a modern market economy. Major reforms which have already been implemented include liberalization of foreign trade and investment, removal of restrictions on private enterprise, creation of a framework for privatizing large and small enterprises, price liberalization, and partial convertibility of the country's currency. The government has combined these reforms with restrictive fiscal and monetary policies designed to keep inflation under control while the economy adjusts to new market-based economic conditions.

The path of economic reform and restructuring has been complicated by external developments. With the disintegration of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA--the former trading system of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union), Czechoslovakia has had to pay more for its raw materials imports from the Soviet Union while it simultaneously has lost most of its markets in the former East Bloc countries. Despite some increase in the country's trade with developed market countries, Czechoslovakia's exports fell and imports rose, resulting in a shift from a trade surplus in 1989 to a deficit in 1990. A deficit is also expected in 1991. Loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international organizations should help to cover the expected increase in foreign debt.

As a result of these external shocks and other factors, both industrial production and national income declined, especially in heavy industry and construction. Private enterprises, particularly in the service sector, burgeoned, but most private firms are still very small, usually only operated part-time. Tourism was one of the brightest spots in the economy, with an increase of over 50 percent. Saving declined, but investment in equipment rose. Unemployment increased to 5-6 percent--still low by Western standards. The removal of many consumer subsidies and price liberalization led to price increases. Nominal wages rose, but did not keep up with the rise in prices.

CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION

During 1990 the economic decline which started in 1989 (by some measures even earlier) continued in Czechoslovakia. Net national income declined by 3.1 percent and gross material product declined by 2.3 percent. However, the Federal Office of Statistics did an experimental calculation of gross national product, including services, which showed an increase of 3.7 percent. The difference may be due to inflation and to a boom in tourism and the growth of other services, especially in the private sector, which was legalized in April 1990. At the end of 1990, 488,400 entrepreneurs were registered--most active only part-time. The majority of private enterprises are in the fields of services--construction, repairs, trade and tourism.

Inefficiency in the use of raw materials and energy, low productivity, slow application of new technologies and low quality of production continue to plague the economy. In addition, for the first time there have been significant price increases and unemployment. Unemployment reached 1 percent at the end of 1990 and has risen rapidly to 5-6 percent during the first months of 1991. Retail prices rose by 10 percent during 1990. After price liberalization in January 1991, prices rose by 25 percent, but the growth in prices slowed to 7 percent in February 1991 and was expected to drop to 4.7 percent in March. However, other price shocks are expected. On May 1, fuel and heating prices increased sharply and housing subsidies may be reduced or eliminated later this year.

Industry

Czechoslovakia has a heavily industry-oriented economy. In 1988, approximately 38.5 percent of employees worked in industry, compared with 29.2 percent in Hungary and 29.7 percent in Poland. Under the previous communist regime, Czechoslovakia became oriented towards heavy, primary industry. For example, in 1989 Czechoslovakia produced 15,465,000 tons of crude steel, about a ton per citizen.

These heavy industries depend on imports of cheap raw materials and energy from the Soviet Union and on export markets in Eastern Europe and the USSR. Since the disintegration of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), Czechoslovak industries must pay world prices and hard currency for their raw material imports and have great difficulty finding customers for their products. As a result, many enterprises face serious difficulties. Light industries are generally in better shape, although some of these industries were also dependent on exports to CMEA countries.

Industries were also hit in 1990 by the strict financial and monetary policies of the government and by disruptions in energy supplies in the latter half of the year. Financial stringency and loss of Eastern markets continue to affect production in 1991. In addition, privatization, while ultimately likely to benefit the economy, may disrupt production in the short run as enterprises struggle to adjust to market conditions.

In 1990 industrial production dropped by 3.7 percent. Slovakia, with an 4.2 percent industrial decline, suffered more than the Czech Republic, with a 3.5 percent decline. Slovakia has a greater concentration of enterprises which are dependent on the Soviet Union for markets and raw materials. It also has more arms manufacturers which have been hit by the twin policies of arms sales reduction and arms control policies of the new government. The decline in industrial production continued in the first two months of 1991; production was down by 6.7 percent compared with the same period in 1990. Slovakia's decline has been greater--10.2 percent in January 1991--contrasted to a 4.9 percent decline in the Czech Republic.

Construction, Investment and Inventories

The construction industry shrank by 5.6 percent in 1990 by 33 percent during the first two months of 1991. Housing construction fell by 22 percent in 1990. The fall in construction is attributed to the government's strict budget cutbacks leading to smaller budgets for housing, schools, and other government projects. The decline in construction may be less than the official figures indicate, because a number of small, private companies have sprung up and their production may not be fully reflected in official statistics.

Despite the fall in construction, overall investment rose by 5.7 percent in 1990. A 17.1 increase in machinery and equipment compensated for the fall in construction. Inventories grew by 7.7 percent in 1990, compared with 1.7 percent during the previous year.

Agriculture

In contrast to some of its neighbors, Czechoslovak agriculture was almost entirely collectivized before 1990. During the decade before the Velvet Revolution, Czechoslovakia had succeeded in becoming self-sufficient in most temperate climate crops, but at a heavy cost in subsidies. The countryside prospered because cooperatives were permitted to diversify into various light and service industries. The new government, in keeping with its market orientation, plans to gradually eliminate subsidies to agriculture and to privatize the agricultural sector. A new land law, which will restore the rights of the original landowners and restructure cooperatives, was passed in May 1991.

In 1990 gross agricultural production fell by 3.7 percent. This decline was not evenly reflected in all crops. The crop of cereals rose by 4.3 percent. However, potato production fell by 17.2 percent, causing a shortage which was alleviated by imports. Milk production fell by 2.4 percent and meat production by 1.2 percent. Price liberalization led to higher retail prices and lower demand for many foodstuffs, especially dairy products and meat.

Energy

Czechoslovakia has been almost completely dependent on the Soviet Union for supplies of oil and natural gas. It is self-sufficient in refining capacity. In 1989, Czechoslovakia imported 17,632,000 metric tons of crude oil, but in 1990, this amount was sharply cut to 13,354,000 metric tons, a fall of almost a quarter. As a result, Czechoslovakia temporarily stopped exports of petroleum products and raised domestic prices. In December 1990, the country began to import small amounts of crude oil from Iran. No problems occurred in supplies of natural gas; imports from the USSR rose by 9.6 percent in 1990.

The largest part of Czechoslovakia's electrical production comes from highly polluting coal-fired power plants, but a significant proportion is from nuclear generators. In 1990, Czechoslovakia generated approximately 87 billion kilowatt hours of electricity, of which 25 billion came from nuclear generators. Czechoslovakia has extensive coal reserves, mostly lignite coal. In 1990 coal production was 107,573,000 metric tons, down by 9.9 percent from 1989.

The government's aim is to diversify energy sources and to integrate into the European energy market. The government plans to build new pipelines connecting with the West. Currently, Czechoslovakia depends on pipelines linked with the Soviet Union for deliveries of oil and natural gas. The government also plans to connect with the Western European electricity network, if technical difficulties can be worked out. These plans are, however, dependent on obtaining capital. For environmental reasons, the government expects to reduce the use of coal and increase use of natural gas. Nuclear energy production will also increase as a less environmentally damaging alternative to coal.

Income, Consumption and Savings

Under the communist regime, the material living standard of Czechoslovak citizens was one of the highest in the region. The selection and availability of consumer items was good by Eastern European standards. However, compared with Western Europe, Czechoslovakia, which had had one of the highest standards of living in all of Europe before World War II, was falling further behind.

The government reduced subsidies and raised prices of many consumer goods in July 1990. Retail prices rose 10 percent in 1990, compared with 1.4 percent in 1989 and 0.2 percent in 1988. Nominal incomes also increased rapidly, by 8.7 percent. The average monthly gross nominal wage of workers in the state and cooperative sector rose by 3.8 percent (to 3,380 Kcs); the average net wage was 2,755 Kcs. However, the cost of living rose faster: by 9.9 percent for workers and employees; 10 percent for peasants and 10.2 percent for pensioners. Real wages thus decreased by 5.6 percent.

Expenditures increased by 12.3 percent in 1990. The index of savings fell to only 0.3 percent, compared with 3.5 percent in 1989 and 3.7 percent in 1988.

Foreign Trade

Czechoslovak statistics for 1990 trade show a sharp drop in trade with Eastern (and some formerly) centrally planned economies and a rise in trade with the developed market economies. Total trade turnover fell by 7.6 percent, but while

trade with CMEA countries and other socialist countries fell by 17.6 percent, trade with developed market countries increased by 3.3 percent.

Total exports fell by 1 percent, and imports rose by 10.9 percent, resulting in a negative balance of 22.9 billion Kcs compared to a surplus of 2.8 billion Kcs in 1989. The fall in exports was most dramatic with the former CMEA countries. Exports to advanced market economies also declined by 3.1 percent. Imports rose by 10.9 percent. The rise was due to imports from developed market economies, since imports from CMEA countries declined.

Czechoslovakia's largest trading partner remains the Soviet Union followed by Germany and Austria. Germany is expected to overtake the USSR in 1991. The Soviet Union is Czechoslovakia's main supplier of raw materials. It is also an important market for the country's manufactures, many of which are specialized for the Soviet market. The decline of trade with the Soviet Union will have serious consequences for many firms, particularly those in the heavy machinery sector.

Tourism

Tourism is one of the most promising sectors for development in Czechoslovakia. In 1990 approximately 46.8 million foreign tourists visited Czechoslovakia, more than half again the number in 1989. However, the country lacks the infrastructure to take advantage of its tourist potential. Under the previous regime, tourism, like other service sectors, was neglected. There are an estimated 55,000 hotel and motel beds, many fewer per 1,000 people than in Western European countries. Only about a third of these beds meet Western European standards. Prague, which is the destination of an estimated 90 percent of foreign visitors, needs about 16,000 hotel beds to meet current demand.

The government is looking to privatization and foreign investment to improve the tourist infrastructure. In the next two years, modern hotels with a total capacity of about 5,000 beds are to be built in Prague. These new hotels and several existing ones are joint ventures with Western European partners. There are about 1,600 private tourist agencies in Czechoslovakia, compared with 15 state and cooperative agencies under the previous regime. The largest state travel agency, CEDOK, continues to exist, but was divested of its chain of hotels.

Foreign Debt

Foreign debt rose by \$200 million over 1990. At the end of 1990 gross debt in convertible currencies was \$8.1 billion according to the Czechoslovak State Bank. To some extent the country's debt is offset by foreign assets; unfortunately many of these assets are claims on Third World countries which may be

uncollectable. Official predictions are that foreign debt will rise to approximately \$11 billion during 1991, due to the expected trade deficit. To financing this deficit, Czechoslovakia is relying on the IMF, which is providing \$1.7 billion for a 14-month stabilization program. This amount includes compensation for oil price rises, which may or may not occur. The government has also been promised \$1 billion from the group of 24 industrialized nations.

Economic Restructuring and Reform

Beginning in 1990, the government embarked on a far-reaching program to move toward a market economy. The government appears to have reached a consensus that this move must be complete and speedy. Although Czechoslovakia has been criticized for not moving swiftly enough, the number and scope of the economic reforms enacted by early 1991 is impressive, especially considering the profound political changes which had to be instituted at the same time. Below is a summary of the major economic reform measures passed since the beginning of 1990:

- Legalization of private enterprise (April 1990) -- Removed the restrictions which had limited private industries to small family businesses.
- Amendment to Joint Venture Act (April 1990) -- Legalized 100 percent foreign ownership of enterprises and permitted joint ventures with private Czechoslovak companies and individuals. Further regulations allow repatriation of profits and remove requirements to file for authorization for joint ventures with private companies or wholly-owned foreign companies. A new joint venture law is also being drafted.
- Amendment to Foreign Economic Relations Act (April 1990) -- Abolished the monopoly of state-controlled foreign trade companies and removed most limits on rights of individuals and enterprises to engage in foreign trade. Further regulations allow any company registered in Czechoslovakia to engage in foreign trade. Other regulations to further open the market are planned.
- Copyright (May 1990) -- Revised and strengthened copyright protection.
- Small privatization (November 1990) -- Set up the framework for privatizing shops, restaurants, and other small businesses.
- Small Restitution (November 1990) -- Allows restitution of businesses nationalized during 1959. Most large businesses had already been nationalized by 1959, but in that year even small shops and family workshops were taken over by the state.
- Patents (November 1990) -- Strengthened patent protection. Copyright protections were also strengthened under separate legislation.

-Foreign Exchange (November 1990) -- Allows businesses to freely purchase foreign exchange for use in current account transactions.

-Price Liberalization (November 1990) -- Allows most prices to be set by market, but retains controls on many to prevent monopolies from exploiting their advantages. After its implementation on January 1, 1991, approximately 80 percent of prices were freed of state control.

-Indirect Tax Reform (November 1990) -- Replaced the system of turnover taxes with a value added tax system and simplified the rate structure.

-Labor (December 1990) -- Amendments to the labor law governing collective bargaining.

-Safeguards Legislation (December 1990) -- Prevents illegal transfer of sensitive military or dual-use technology. Led to the easing of U.S. and COCOM export controls for Czechoslovakia.

-Extra-Judicial Restitution (February 1991) - Created the framework for restoring companies and properties nationalized after 1948 to their previous owners or heirs. The act permits restitution only to Czechoslovak citizens who reside in Czechoslovakia.

-Large Privatization (March 1991) -- Sets up the framework for privatizing large state enterprises. Under the act, each state enterprise must draw up a privatization plan setting out how the firm will be privatized and information of interest to potential investors. Some companies will be sold outright to foreign or domestic investors. Others will be privatized according to a controversial "voucher" scheme, under which each Czechoslovak citizen would be entitled to purchase vouchers for a nominal amount which could then be used to purchase stock in Czechoslovak companies.

-Land Law (May 1991) -- Privatizes the agricultural sector.

-Commercial Code (pending) -- Later this year the Federal Assembly is expected to pass legislation revising the commercial code to conform to new market conditions.

-Tax Reforms (underway in 1991) -- Revisions of the income and business tax systems are needed. Ministry of Finance officials estimate that reforms of the tax code will not be complete until 1993.

Copies of Czechoslovak laws may be obtained from the Department of Commerce under a new legal text program which compiles and makes available the legal texts from most Eastern European countries. For an index of these texts, contact Commerce's

Eastern Europe Business Information Center (see page 12) or to order texts, contact the National Technical Information Service, (800) 553-NTIS, or in Virginia, (703) 487-4650.

Joint Ventures and Foreign Investment

In 1990 Czechoslovakia liberalized its foreign investment legislation, permitting 100 percent foreign-owned companies and simplifying the procedures for getting permission to form a joint venture or to register as a foreign company. The government welcomes foreign investment and foreign investors are eligible for certain tax benefits.

As of December 1990, there were 1168 firms with foreign capital participation in Czechoslovakia: 909 companies in the Czech lands and 259 in Slovakia. 20 percent of the companies are wholly owned foreign subsidiaries. Another 10 percent are joint ventures between a foreign partner and a state enterprise. The remaining 70 percent are between a foreign partner and private Czechoslovak enterprises or individual. Most of the foreign ventures are small. Sixty-eight percent have total capital of approximately \$18,000 or less. Only 3 percent have capital of approximately \$364,000 or more. Austria, with 348 ventures, led in investment, closely followed by Germany (330), Switzerland (93), United States (49), Italy (45), Great Britain (35), Netherlands (34), France (27) and Canada (23).

IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. BUSINESS

As a result of the dramatic political and economic changes that took place in Czechoslovakia in late 1989 and early 1990, the United States moved to normalize bilateral trade. In April 1990 the United States and Czechoslovakia signed a trade agreement which came into effect in late November 1990, restoring most-favored-nation (MFN) status to Czechoslovakia. The United States and Czechoslovakia are negotiating a bilateral investment treaty, which should be completed soon. A bilateral tax treaty is also being negotiated. Czechoslovakia was granted Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) treatment for its goods entering the United States in April 1991.

Although Czechoslovakia did not benefit from lower tariffs until late 1990, trade with the United States is rising significantly. U.S. customs figures show that in 1990 U.S. exports to Czechoslovakia rose by 25.9 percent, while imports rose by 6.6 percent. Bilateral trade remains very small in relation to the total trade of each country. However, total trade figures may give a misleading impression as some trade occurs through European subsidiaries of U.S. companies and does not appear in official statistics.

Apart from removing trade restrictions, the political changes in Czechoslovakia have also made it possible for other kinds of

11

financing is available to promote the export of U.S. goods and services to Czechoslovakia. The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), a U.S. Government agency which promotes growth in developing countries by encouraging U.S. private investment, now operates in Czechoslovakia. OPIC's key programs are its loan guaranties, direct loans, and political risk insurance. OPIC also will be conducting an investment mission to Czechoslovakia in October 1991. For Eastern European countries, OPIC also offers an Eastern European Growth Fund, designed to match OPIC funds with private venture capital to finance new business; the Small Business Loan Guaranty Program; and an environmental investment fund. The U.S. Trade and Development Program offers grants for feasibility studies and certain other services which promote U.S. exports.

The U.S. Agency for International Development is active in Czechoslovakia. Congress has appropriated \$370 million for assistance to Central and Eastern Europe. A Czechoslovak-U.S. Enterprise Fund, similar to those already in operation in Hungary and Poland, is being established. The World Bank and the European Community are also funding a number of projects.

Czechoslovakia adheres to the same multilateral intellectual property conventions as the United States. In 1990 new laws on patents and copyrights were passed by the Federal Assembly. The new acts strengthen protection of intellectual property.

Three agencies promote investment in the CSFR at the Federal, Czech and Slovak Republic government levels:

Federal Foreign Investment Agency
Federal Ministry of Economy
Director: Richard Sumann
Nabrezi Kpt. Jarose 1000
170 32 Prague 7
Tel. (42-2) 389-2823, 389-2810
Fax: (42-2) 375-659

Agency for Foreign Investment and Assistance Ministry
for Economic Policy and Development of the Czech
Republic
Director: Ing. Ladislav Chrudina, Csc. Deputy
Minister
Trida SNB 65
101 60 Prague 10
Tel: (42-2) 712-1111
Fax: (42-2) 712-2263

Ministry for Economic Strategy of the Slovak Republic
Contact: Doc. Ing. Milan Bucek, Deputy Minister
Kycerskeho 1
812 70 Bratislava
Tel: (42-7) 463-40
Fax: (42-7) 434-76; 445-71

At the beginning of 1990, there were approximately 15 U.S. companies with offices in Prague; now there are nearly 100 and more are on the way. Some promising areas for U.S. exports are pollution equipment and services, computers and software, telecommunications, finance services, tourism, aircraft, medical equipment, education and manpower training services, management and consulting services, and accounting services.

Success in the Czechoslovak market requires patience and persistence. American business representatives are often criticized for wanting quick results, and therefore should not limit contacts to Ministry officials or even senior enterprise managers. Active support of middle management and labor leaders may be crucial in the success of a deal. Businesses should not underestimate the importance of regional sensitivities; it is vital to make contacts in Slovakia as well as in the Czech Republic.

The U.S.-Czechoslovak Economic Council, a private sector group sponsored by the U.S. and Czechoslovak Chambers of Commerce, provides a forum for disseminating information and for discussing trade prospects with experienced businesses. The Council is administered by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 1615 H St., NW., Washington, DC 20062; telephone (202) 463-5482; telefax (202) 463-3114.

Firms seeking to do business in this market are encouraged to contact the Department of Commerce's Eastern Europe Business Information Center (EEBIC) for basic information on doing business in Czechoslovakia. EEBIC is located in Room H6037, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20230; telephone (202) 377-2645; telefax (202) 377-4473. Additional assistance can be obtained from Commerce's Czechoslovakia Desk, Room H3413, Washington, DC 20230; telephone (202) 377-4915; telefax (202) 377-4098. Visitors to Prague should also contact the Commercial Section, American Embassy Prague, Trziste 15, Prague 1; telephone (42-2) 536-641; telefax (42-2) 532-457; telex 121 196 amemc. The Embassy's mailing address is U.S. Embassy, Box 5630 (PRG), APO, NY 09213-5630. The Embassy and the Department of Commerce organize a number of trade promotion events each year, including a U.S. exhibit at the annual International Engineering Fair in Brno in September.

16 October 1991 -- 4:35 p.m.

MEMO FOR DAN

FROM:

JMB

SUBJECT: HAVEL ARRIVAL/TRANSFER OF CZECH DECLARATION OF IND.

per Walter Martin at Czeck Embassy and Randy Bumgardner at State
(Protocol):

event Wednesday, October, 23 at 2:15 p.m. in Rayburn Room of
Capitol.

Act of exchange of gifts followed by transfer of declaration --
looks like Dr. James Billington, Librarian of the Congress, will
present -- short remarks follow then adjourn to Speaker's Room to
meet Foley and Gephardt, Michael, Mitchell, and Dole.

BIG OH! -- Mrs. Havel (Olga) will be accompanying Pres. Havel on
this visit.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

17 October 1991

Dear Mr. Tichy:

I am preparing a background file for President Havel's upcoming visit to The White House. Mr. Martin Walter suggested these questions be forwarded to you by fax.

Could you please explain the extent of participation by the Czechoslovakian military in Operation Desert Storm; were there any Czechoslovakian casualties?

Thank you very much for your assistance. Could you please respond in writing, and fax it to me at 456-6218.

Sincerely,

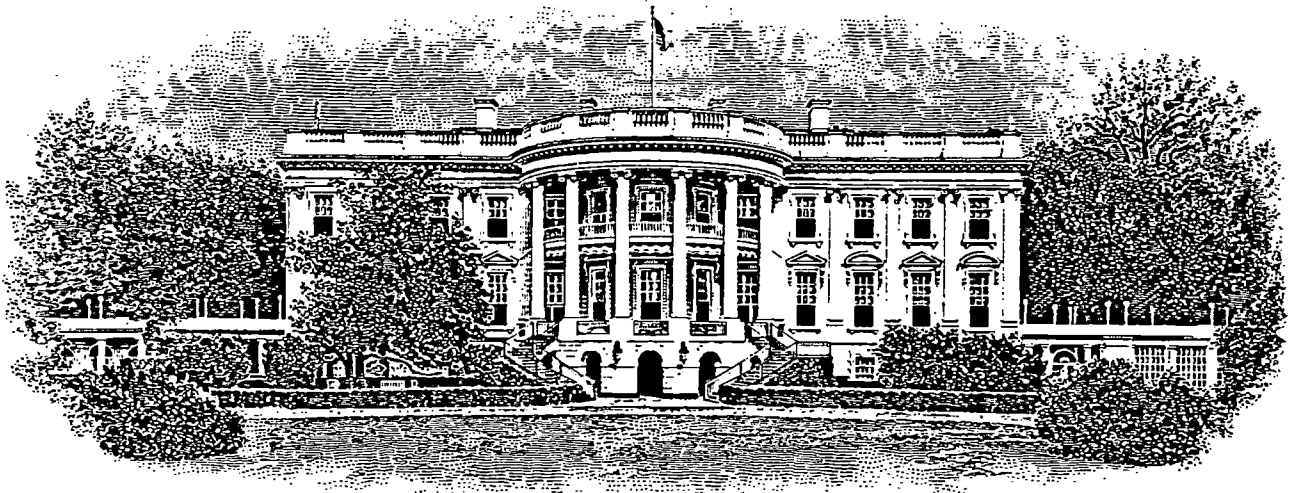
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jean M. Bunton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jean M. Bunton
Research Assistant
Office of Communications

Mr. Tichy
Embassy of Czechoslovakia
Washington, D.C.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON



FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

DATE October 17, 1991
TO Mr. Tichy
Embassy of Czechoslovakia
FAX NUMBER (202) 363-9265
OFFICE NUMBER _____
NUMBER OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER 2

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

FROM Jean M. Bunton
COMMENTS _____

OFFICE NUMBER (202) 456-7750

Mr. Galluska returns
on this Fri.

- Foley
 - Mitchell
 - Michael
 - Cephart
 - Foley
- for Congress
3:45 leave
1 hr.

at about 30 minutes
Havel + 5 people in discussion

Set of meeting of gifts
Dr. Janus Billington Librarian
to meet Foley and congressmen
short speech then speaker's rm.
2:45
at Cong. present

Miss. Havel
organizational presentation

[Rep. Tom Foley (?)
2:15 pm arrive Capital
Rampburn rm. (Havel)
in Capital

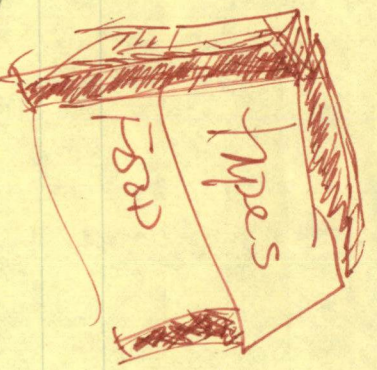
Havel - leave NPE club lunch

Weds. 23 Afternoon @ 2 pm.

10/16/91
4:15 p.m.

Randell
Bungarten
m. 647-1400
fax - 1560
State

Geeth Embassy
↑
Walter



~~John Swartice
begins at
6:28:2~~

Vera Block
Miroslav

HANEL DRAFT REMARKS FROM STATE DEPT.

COPIES OF AS DELIVERED

- pull removal for Feb. go Hanel
HBI. go Penns to check - 2 speakers

rec'd com. report in
Check due. of Ambassador
return to check 5(?)
Mr. go congress on Penns

check embassy
Mr. Galuska in
La. Mr. Martin
3036319

STATE 647-4000
CHECKS/STATE DESK → EASTERN EUROPE DESK
CURRENTLY BEING REVISIT

MIRA - 647-3298

* Contraction / Referendum left msg. @ 2:15 to please call back

Elizabeth Richards - desk officer for checks/sovain

10/16/74
not at desk; left msg.

in arrangement

in msg 4 long time Oct. 28 deadline - 55 not go's 2 make
page end of yr. - no way Fed. check's work
P.O. on Stalin stat - with persons

check-state & disc. manual ahead

Pending for

why - any passed low make req. legal

Oct. called 4 rep.

real
unofficial
not pretty



DATE: OCTOBER 18, 1991

CLIENT: NEXIS
LIBRARY: NEXIS
FILE: NYT

YOUR SEARCH REQUEST IS:

BRANIK AND DATE AFT 11-22-1989 AND DATE BEF 11-30-1989

NUMBER OF STORIES FOUND WITH YOUR REQUEST THROUGH:

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November 28, 1989, Tuesday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section A; Page 1, Column 4; Foreign Desk

LENGTH: 1071 words

HEADLINE: Clamor in the East;
Unshackled Czech Workers Declare Their Independence

BYLINE: By ESTHER B. FEIN, Special to The New York Times

DATELINE: PRAGUE, Nov. 27

BODY:

Soon after the strike began today, Zdenek Janicek, a brewery worker in grimy overalls, rose on a platform and began to speak.

'We hold these truths to be self-evident,' he said, 'that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.'

For the nearly 1,500 workers who gathered to listen to him, today was a day of declaring independence from the stifling Communist leadership that has ruled Czechoslovakia for 40 years. Like millions throughout the nation, workers here walked off their jobs at noon in a two-hour general strike demanding greater democracy and an end to the Communist Party's monopoly on power.

'Americans understood these rights more than 200 years ago,' Mr. Janicek said after reciting part of the Declaration of Independence to his co-workers. 'We are only now learning to believe that we are entitled to the same rights.'

In Branik, the sooty industrial neighborhood where he spoke, workers in construction, carpentry, brewing, mining and other fields had scheduled a rally on the grounds of the V.D.U.P. Construction Company during the strike. The rally was held so that people in this area on the outskirts of Prague could witness the labor stoppage and know that workers here support the opposition movement.

'It is not only intellectuals and dissidents and students who want change in this country,' said Jan Malima, a building insulator, standing under the subfreezing, sunless sky, amid bold red, white and blue Czechoslovak flags snapping in the wind. 'Workers have been suffering under the yoke of Communism, too. Only we never before stood up and used our power to try to force change on our Government. But the students turned our attention in a way that forced us to look around and say loudly, 'We are with you.' '

A few minutes before noon today, Mr. Malima was unrolling wall insulation and laying it in place in an apartment building he was repairing on the edge of the city for the O.P.B.H. Construction Company. Nearby, Vitezslav Fabian was installing a lock in the apartment door, and on another floor a team of bricklayers were shoring up a wall that had begun to sag.



(c) 1989 The New York Times, November 28, 1989

As 12 o'clock struck, Mr. Malima looked at his watch, gave out a holler to his co-workers, and at once all of them set their tools on the ground, grabbed their coats and, still dusty from their heavy work, left the building to begin the strike and join the rally at V.D.U.P..

Consolidation of Forces

The widespread two-hour general strike today was more than just a blow at the status quo. It was the culmination of a consolidation of forces among the country's defiant students and newly emboldened working class.

Czechoslovak society has been stratified by social class and by 40 years of Communism, so intellectuals and workers had rarely entered each other's world. But during the 10 days of protests that have shaken this country, social barriers have given way to a unified attempt to break the longtime Communist hold on life here.

Though the relationship between the students and the workers was tentative at first, with each apprehensive about the other's motives and prejudices, by today workers and students were embracing and applauding one another's efforts.

At the rally at V.D.U.P., workers stood on a makeshift platform together with students from Charles University's philosophy and law departments.

'We Just Suffered'

"For decades, my generation has been waiting and wondering when we would have a chance to be free human beings," said Antonin Sykora, a bricklayer. "We didn't want the politicians to stay in their places, but we didn't think any force could move them out, so we just suffered.

"And then the students came and gave us an example of which direction to follow and how to organize," he said. "They spoke clearly about their demands and they appealed for our support, and now I say to you, we will stand behind them to this strike and any others that may be necessary."

The audience of fellow workers cheered and called on the students to speak.

Jan Kasal, a philosophy student at Charles University, told the workers that although the Government had responded to some demands by the students and the opposition group Civic Forum, there was much that had still not been fulfilled.

"Some Government leaders may have been replaced, but many others still remain," Mr. Kasal said. "Some political prisoners have been released, but many others remain in prison. This strike is to say to the leadership that those measures are not enough for us."

The crowd responded enthusiastically. "We are with you!" the workers shouted in unison. "We are with you!"

Seminar on Totalitarianism

The two-hour strike was not simply a work stoppage in this neighborhood; in some ways it was like a seminar on the evils of totalitarianism, the path of civil disobedience and the merits of democracy.



(c) 1989 The New York Times, November 28, 1989

One worker from the V.D.U.P. company stood up on the platform and read from the 'Gulag Archipelago,' Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's devastating account of life in the Stalinist labor camp, a work that has only recently been permitted in the Soviet Union, but is still banned here.

An actor from the Realistic Theater, who came to show his support for the workers' action, recited some of the concepts espoused by Mohandas K. Gandhi, the leader of India's independence movement, and there was the soft reading from the Declaration of Independence that seemed to touch the workers deeply.

When the speeches were done, the workers raised their heads to the flag and together sang their national anthem, a haunting melody sadly called 'Where Is My Homeland?'

March Through the Streets

And the workers marched through the streets of their neighborhood, carrying large Czechoslovak flags and posters calling for free elections and freedom.

They walked past restaurants, pharmacies, pastry shops and hardware stores, all bolted shut in sympathy with the strike.

From their windows, neighborhood residents shouted their support for the workers.

'Retirees greet you with pride!' screamed one elderly man, waving to the marchers.

And a young mother, holding her baby, called out, 'We love you!'

The march came to a stop before a military institute in the neighborhood. They stood there, chanting 'Svabodu!' - freedom.

GRAPHIC: Graphs showing percentages of Czechoslovakia's nationalities, religion & employment; Czechoslovakia's vital statistics (sources: The Europe World Yearbook, 1989; The Statesman's Yearbook, 1989-1990 (NYT) (pg. A12)

SUBJECT: DEMONSTRATIONS AND RIOTS; STRIKES

NAME: FEIN, ESTHER B

GEOGRAPHIC: CZECHOSLOVAKIA; PRAGUE (CZECHOSLOVAKIA)

The Power of the Powerless

ocratic societies often seems like sheer folly. For example, is it possible to talk seriously about whether we want to change the system or merely reform it? In the circumstances under which we live, this is a pseudo-problem, since for the time being there is simply no way we can accomplish either goal. We are not even clear about where reform ends and change begins. We know from a number of harsh experiences that neither reform nor change is in itself a guarantee of anything. We know that ultimately it is all the same to us whether or not the system in which we live, in the light of a particular doctrine, appears changed or reformed. Our concern is whether we can live with dignity in such a system, whether it serves people rather than people serving it. We are struggling to achieve this with the means available to us, and the means it makes sense to employ. Western journalists, submerged in the political banalities in which they live, may label our approach as overly legalistic, as too risky, revisionist, counter-revolutionary, bourgeois, communist, or as too right-wing or left-wing. But this is the very last thing that interests us.

XII

ONE CONCEPT that is a constant source of confusion chiefly because it has been imported into our circumstances from circumstances that are entirely different is the concept of an opposition. What exactly is an opposition in the post-totalitarian system?

In democratic societies with a traditional parliamentary system of government, political opposition is understood as a political force on the level of actual power (most frequently a party or coalition of parties) which is not a part of the government. It offers an alternative political program, it has ambitions to govern, and it is recognized and respected by the government in power as a natural element in the political life of the country. It seeks to spread its influence by political means, and competes for power on the basis of agreed-upon legal regulations.

In addition to this form of opposition, there exists the phenomenon of the "extra-parliamentary opposition," which again consists of forces organized more or less on the level of actual power, but which operate outside the rules created by the system, and which employ different means than are usual within that framework.

In classical dictatorships, the term "opposition" is understood to mean the political forces which have also come out with an alternative political program. They operate either legally or on the outer limits of legality, but in any case they cannot compete for power within the limits of some agreed-upon regulations. Or the term "opposition" may be applied to forces preparing for a violent confrontation with the ruling power, or who feel themselves to be in this state of confrontation already, such as various guerrilla groups or liberation movements.

An opposition in the post-totalitarian system does not exist in any of these senses. In what way, then, can the term be used?

1. Occasionally the term "opposition" is applied, mainly by Western journalists, to persons or groups inside the power structure who find themselves in a state of hidden conflict with the highest authorities. The reasons for this conflict may be certain differences (not very sharp differences, naturally) of a conceptual nature, but more frequently it is quite simply a longing for power or a personal antipathy to others who represent that power.

2. Opposition here can also be understood as everything that does or can have an indirect political effect in the sense already mentioned, that is, everything the post-totalitarian system feels threatened by, which in fact means everything it is threatened by. In this sense, the opposition is every attempt to live within the truth, from the greengrocer's refusal to put the slogan in his window to a freely written poem; in other words, everything in which the genuine aims of life go beyond the limits placed on them by the aims of the system.

3. More frequently, understood (again, largely) people who make public critical opinions, who think and who, to themselves a political opposition more or less, although, of course, the to which that label is only on the extent to power as a directly political ambitions to participate each of them understood

Again, here is an example 77 emphasized that had no intention of program. It sees its mission has not presented such an alternative program in post-totalitarian state entered an opposition.

The Czechoslovak Charter 77 as an expression very beginning, and that the government—the term "opposition" that is, as everything that tion and which therefore has an absolute claim

If we accept this definition we must, along with the genuine opposition, be to the integrity of post the universality of living

It is a different matter to which individual sign

The Power of the Powerless

3. More frequently, however, the opposition is usually understood (again, largely by Western journalists) as groups of people who make public their nonconformist stances and critical opinions, who make no secret of their independent thinking and who, to a greater or lesser degree, consider themselves a political force. In this sense, the notion of an opposition more or less overlaps with the notion of dissent, although, of course, there are great differences in the degree to which that label is accepted or rejected. It depends not only on the extent to which these people understand their power as a directly political force, and on whether they have ambitions to participate in actual power, but also on how each of them understands the notion of an opposition.

Again, here is an example: in its original declaration, Charter 77 emphasized that it was not an opposition because it had no intention of presenting an alternative political program. It sees its mission as something quite different, for it has not presented such programs. In fact, if the presenting of an alternative program defines the nature of an opposition in post-totalitarian states, then the Charter cannot be considered an opposition.

The Czechoslovak government, however, has considered Charter 77 as an expressly oppositional association from the very beginning, and has treated it accordingly. This means that the government—and this is only natural—understands the term “opposition” more or less as I defined it in point 2, that is, as everything that manages to avoid total manipulation and which therefore denies the principle that the system has an absolute claim on the individual.

If we accept this definition of opposition, then of course we must, along with the government, consider the Charter a genuine opposition, because it represents a serious challenge to the integrity of post-totalitarian power, founded as it is on the universality of living with a lie.

It is a different matter, however, when we look at the extent to which individual signatories of Charter 77 think of them-

selves as an opposition. My impression is that most base their understanding of the term "opposition" on the traditional meaning of the word as it became established in democratic societies (or in classical dictatorships); therefore, they understand opposition, even in Czechoslovakia, as a politically defined force which, although it does not operate on the level of actual power, and even less within the framework of certain rules respected by the government, would still not reject the opportunity to participate in actual power because it has, in a sense, an alternative political program whose proponents are prepared to accept direct political responsibility for it. Given this notion of an opposition, some Chartists—the great majority—do not see themselves in this way. Others—a minority—do, even though they fully respect the fact that there is no room within Charter 77 for "oppositional" activity in this sense. At the same time, however, perhaps every Chartist is familiar enough with the specific nature of conditions in the post-totalitarian system to realize that it is not only the struggle for human rights that has its own peculiar political power, but incomparably more "innocent" activities as well, and therefore they can be understood as an aspect of opposition. No Chartist can really object to being considered an opposition in this sense.

There is another circumstance, however, that considerably complicates matters. For many decades, the power ruling society in the Soviet bloc has used the label "opposition" as the blackest of indictments, as synonymous with the word "enemy." To brand someone "a member of the opposition" is tantamount to saying he is trying to overthrow the government and put an end to socialism (naturally in the pay of the imperialists). There have been times when this label led straight to the gallows, and of course this does not encourage people to apply the same label to themselves. Moreover, it is only a word, and what is actually done is more important than how it is labeled.

The final reason why many reject such a term is because there is something negative about the notion of an "opposi-

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The Power of the Powerless

tion." People who so define themselves do so in relation to a prior "position." In other words, they relate themselves specifically to the power that rules society and through it, define themselves, deriving their own position from the position of the regime. For people who have simply decided to live within the truth, to say aloud what they think, to express their solidarity with their fellow citizens, to create as they want and simply to live in harmony with their better self, it is naturally disagreeable to feel required to define their own original and positive position negatively, in terms of something else, and to think of themselves primarily as people who are against something, not simply as people who *are* what they are.

Obviously, the only way to avoid misunderstanding is to say clearly—before one starts using them—in what sense the terms "opposition" and "member of the opposition" are being used and how they are in fact to be understood in our circumstances.

XIII

IF THE term "opposition" has been imported from democratic societies into the post-totalitarian system without general agreement on what the word means in conditions that are so different, then the term "dissident" was, on the contrary, chosen by Western journalists and is now generally accepted as the label for a phenomenon peculiar to the post-totalitarian system and almost never occurring—at least not in that form—in democratic societies.

Who are these "dissidents"?

It seems that the term is applied primarily to citizens of the Soviet bloc who have decided to live within the truth and who, in addition, meet the following criteria:

1. They express their nonconformist positions and critical opinions publicly and systematically, within the very strict limits available to them, and because of this, they are known in the West.

2. Despite being unable to publish at home and despite every possible form of persecution by their governments, they have, by virtue of their attitudes, managed to win a certain esteem, both from the public and from their government, and thus they actually enjoy a very limited and very strange degree of indirect, actual power in their own milieu as well. This either protects them from the worst forms of persecution, or at least it ensures that if they are persecuted, it will mean certain political complications for their governments.

3. The horizon of their critical attention and their commitment reaches beyond the narrow context of their immediate surroundings or special interests to embrace more general causes and, thus, their work becomes political in nature, although the degree to which they think of themselves as a directly political force may vary a great deal.

4. They are people who lean toward intellectual pursuits, that is, they are "writing" people, people for whom the written word is the primary—and often the only—political medium they command, and that can gain them attention, particularly from abroad. Other ways in which they seek to live within the truth are either lost to the foreign observer in the elusive local milieu or—if they reach beyond this local framework—they appear to be only somewhat less visible complements to what they have written.

5. Regardless of their actual vocations, these people are talked about in the West more frequently in terms of their activities as committed citizens, or in terms of the critical, political aspects of their work, than in terms of the real work they do in their own fields. From personal experience, I know that there is an invisible line you cross—without even wanting to or becoming aware of it—beyond which they cease to treat you as a writer who happens to be a concerned citizen and begin talking of you as a "dissident" who almost incidentally (in his spare time, perhaps?) happens to write plays as well.

Unquestionably, there are people who meet all of these criteria. What is debatable is whether we should be using a spe-

cial term for a group defined in this way, and specifically, what we can do about it. Some of us even use the label ourselves, rather ironically, and

Perhaps it is now appropriate to ask the question: why "dissidents" rather than "dissenters" referred to in this way. In fact, the word "dissident" derived from an etymological root, as told in our press, means "one who slides." But dissidents do not slide for the simple reason that they are rejecting anything. On their own human identity, then it is merely what we are talking about that aspect of living with

But that is not the meaning of the word "dissident" frequently implies the more normal vocation of grumbling about the status quo. Simply a physicist, a sociologist, a philosopher, or a writer who are doing what they can, and who find themselves in conflict has not come about their part, but simply their behavior, or work (or their attitudes) in instances more or less beyond their control. In other words, consciously or unconsciously, they dissent, rather as one decides to dissent.

In fact, of course, the word "dissidents" until long ago was "Dissent" springs from a desire for titles or fame. In fact, "dissidents," and even if you dissent a day to it, it would still be an existential attitude. More

The Power of the Powerless

cial term for a group defined in such an essentially accidental way, and specifically, whether they should be called "dissidents." It does happen, however, and there is clearly nothing we can do about it. Sometimes, to facilitate communication, we even use the label ourselves, although it is done with distaste, rather ironically, and almost always in quotation marks.

Perhaps it is now appropriate to outline some of the reasons why "dissidents" themselves are not very happy to be referred to in this way. In the first place, the word is problematic from an etymological point of view. A "dissident," we are told in our press, means something like "renegade" or "backslider." But dissidents do not consider themselves renegades for the simple reason that they are not primarily denying or rejecting anything. On the contrary, they have tried to affirm their own human identity, and if they reject anything at all, then it is merely what was false and alienating in their lives, that aspect of living within a lie.

But that is not the most important thing. The term "dissident" frequently implies a special profession, as if, along with the more normal vocations, there were another special one—grumbling about the state of things. In fact, a "dissident" is simply a physicist, a sociologist, a worker, a poet, individuals who are doing what they feel they must and, consequently, who find themselves in open conflict with the regime. This conflict has not come about through any conscious intention on their part, but simply through the inner logic of their thinking, behavior, or work (often confronted with external circumstances more or less beyond their control). They have not, in other words, consciously decided to be professional malcontents, rather as one decides to be a tailor or a blacksmith.

In fact, of course, they do not usually discover they are "dissidents" until long after they have actually become one. "Dissent" springs from motivations far different from the desire for titles or fame. In short, they do not decide to become "dissidents," and even if they were to devote twenty-four hours a day to it, it would still not be a profession, but primarily an existential attitude. Moreover, it is an attitude that is in no

way the exclusive property of those who have earned themselves the title of "dissident" just because they happen to fulfill those accidental external conditions already mentioned. There are thousands of nameless people who try to live within the truth and millions who want to but cannot, perhaps only because to do so in the circumstances in which they live, they would need ten times the courage of those who have already taken the first step. If several dozen are randomly chosen from among all these people and put into a special category, this can utterly distort the general picture. It does so in two different ways. Either it suggests that "dissidents" are a group of prominent people, a protected species who are permitted to do things others are not and whom the government may even be cultivating as living proof of its generosity; or it lends support to the illusion that since there is no more than a handful of malcontents to whom not very much is really being done, all the rest are therefore content, for were they not so, they would be "dissidents" too.

But that is not all. This categorization also unintentionally supports the impression that the primary concern of these "dissidents" is some vested interest that they share as a group, as though their entire argument with the government were no more than a rather abstruse conflict between two opposed groups, a conflict that leaves society out of it altogether. But such an impression profoundly contradicts the real importance of the "dissident" attitude, which stands or falls on its interest in others, in what ails society as a whole, in other words, on an interest in all those who do not speak up. If "dissidents" have any kind of authority at all, and if they have not been exterminated long ago like exotic insects that have appeared where they have no business being, then this is not because the government holds this exclusive group and their exclusive ideas in such awe, but because it is perfectly aware of the potential political power of living within the truth rooted in the hidden sphere, and well aware too of the kind of world "dissent" grows out of and the world it addresses: the everyday human world, the world of daily tension be-

tween the aims of life and be any better evidence after Charter 77 appeared compel the entire nation wrong? Those millions things, that just the opposition and the police do not label "dissidents"—which may government fears them as the clique—because they are because they are ordinary from the rest only cannot say or are afraid Solzhenitsyn's political exclusive political power the experience of those simply amplified and people of good will.

To institutionalize a prominent "dissidents" means moral aspect of their movement grows out of the notion that human After all, did no well-known defend unknown work reason that they became not the well-known "dissidents" had been brought together scientists, and did they not them, and did they not precisely because of that? If some citizens stand up they are labeled with from those "other citizens"

This explanation, I believe of the quotation mark "dissident" throughout this

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tween the aims of life and the aims of the system. (Can there be any better evidence of this than the government's action after Charter 77 appeared, when it launched a campaign to compel the entire nation to declare that Charter 77 was wrong? Those millions of signatures proved, among other things, that just the opposite was true.) The political organs and the police do not lavish such enormous attention on "dissidents"—which may give the impression that the government fears them as they might fear an alternative power clique—because they actually are such a power clique, but because they are ordinary people with ordinary cares, differing from the rest only in that they say aloud what the rest cannot say or are afraid to say. I have already mentioned Solzhenitsyn's political influence: it does not reside in some exclusive political power he possesses as an individual, but in the experience of those millions of Gulag victims which he simply amplified and communicated to millions of other people of good will.

To institutionalize a select category of well-known or prominent "dissidents" means in fact to deny the most intrinsic moral aspect of their activity. As we have seen, the "dissident" movement grows out of the principle of equality, founded on the notion that human rights and freedoms are indivisible. After all, did no well-known "dissidents" unite in KOR to defend unknown workers? And was it not precisely for this reason that they became "well-known dissidents"? And did not the well-known "dissidents" unite in Charter 77 after they had been brought together in defense of those unknown musicians, and did they not unite in the Charter precisely with them, and did they not become "well-known dissidents" precisely because of that? It is truly a cruel paradox that the more some citizens stand up in defense of other citizens, the more they are labeled with a word that in effect separates them from those "other citizens."

This explanation, I hope, will make clear the significance of the quotation marks I have put around the word "dissident" throughout this essay.

XIV

AT THE time when the Czech lands and Slovakia were an integral part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and when there existed neither the historical nor the political, psychological, nor social conditions that would have enabled the Czechs and Slovaks to seek their identity outside the framework of this empire, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk established a Czechoslovak national program based on the notion of "small-scale work" (*drobná práce*). By that he meant honest and responsible work in widely different areas of life but within the existing social order, work that would stimulate national creativity and national self-confidence. Naturally he placed particular emphasis on intelligent and enlightened upbringing and education, and on the moral and humanitarian aspects of life. Masaryk believed that the only possible starting point for a more dignified national destiny was humanity itself. Humanity's first task was to create the conditions for a more human life; and in Masaryk's view, the task of transforming the stature of the nation began with the transformation of human beings.

This notion of "working for the good of the nation" took root in Czechoslovak society and in many ways it was successful and is still alive today. Along with those who exploit the notion as a sophisticated excuse for collaborating with the regime, there are still many, even today, who genuinely uphold the ideal and, in some areas at least, can point to indisputable achievements. It is hard to say how much worse things would be if there were not many hard-working people who simply refuse to give up and try constantly to do the best they can, paying an unavoidable minimum to living within a lie so that they might give their utmost to the authentic needs of society. These people assume, correctly, that every piece of good work is an indirect criticism of bad politics, and that there are situations where it is worthwhile going this route, even though it means surrendering one's natural right to make direct criticisms.

Today, however, there are very clear limitations to this at-

titude, even compared to the more frequently, those who of "small-scale work" come up and find themselves facing from that position, dilutes consistency on which it is based (the approach taken on the way begun and in the regime (the approach ta

If the notion of small-scale imperative to survive in the future *at any cost* (in which cases to be excluded from appear to have given up "work" it is even less significant. This behavior, that is, no neat, universal point at which small-scale of the nation and becomes more than clear, however, this is becoming more and more with increasing frequency, is beyond which avoiding conflict essence.

In 1974, when I was employed superior was a certain Š, a making beer. He was proud our brewery to brew good beer at work, continually thinking frequently made the rest of us assumed that we loved beer amidst of the slovenly indifference courages, a more constructive imagine.

The brewery itself was made their work less and were less locally more influential. They and not only did they fail, to

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itude, even compared to the situation in the 1960s. More and more frequently, those who attempt to practice the principle of "small-scale work" come up against the post-totalitarian system and find themselves facing a dilemma: either one retreats from that position, dilutes the honesty, responsibility, and consistency on which it is based, and simply adapts to circumstances (the approach taken by the majority), or one continues on the way begun and inevitably comes into conflict with the regime (the approach taken by a minority).

If the notion of small-scale work was never intended as an imperative to survive in the existing social and political structure *at any cost* (in which case individuals who allowed themselves to be excluded from that structure would necessarily appear to have given up "working for the nation"), then today it is even less significant. There is no general model of behavior, that is, no neat, universally valid way of determining the point at which small-scale work ceases to be for the good of the nation and becomes detrimental to the nation. It is more than clear, however, that the danger of such a reversal is becoming more and more acute and that small-scale work, with increasing frequency, is coming up against that limit beyond which avoiding conflict means compromising its very essence.

In 1974, when I was employed in a brewery, my immediate superior was a certain S, a person well versed in the art of making beer. He was proud of his profession and he wanted our brewery to brew good beer. He spent almost all his time at work, continually thinking up improvements, and he frequently made the rest of us feel uncomfortable because he assumed that we loved brewing as much as he did. In the midst of the slovenly indifference to work that socialism encourages, a more constructive worker would be difficult to imagine.

The brewery itself was managed by people who understood their work less and were less fond of it, but who were politically more influential. They were bringing the brewery to ruin and not only did they fail to react to any of S's suggestions,

but they actually became increasingly hostile toward him and tried in every way to thwart his efforts to do a good job. Eventually the situation became so bad that Š felt compelled to write a lengthy letter to the manager's superior, in which he attempted to analyze the brewery's difficulties. He explained why it was the worst in the district and pointed to those responsible.

His voice might have been heard. The manager, who was politically powerful but otherwise ignorant of beer, a man who loathed workers and was given to intrigue, might have been replaced and conditions in the brewery might have been improved on the basis of Š's suggestions. Had this happened, it would have been a perfect example of small-scale work in action. Unfortunately, the precise opposite occurred: the manager of the brewery, who was a member of the Communist Party's district committee, had friends in higher places and he saw to it that the situation was resolved in his favor. Š's analysis was described as a "defamatory document" and Š himself was labeled a "political saboteur." He was thrown out of the brewery and shifted to another one where he was given a job requiring no skill. Here the notion of small-scale work had come up against the wall of the post-totalitarian system. By speaking the truth, Š had stepped out of line, broken the rules, cast himself out, and he ended up as a subcitizen, stigmatized as an enemy. He could now say anything he wanted, but he could never, as a matter of principle, expect to be heard. He had become the "dissident" of the Eastern Bohemian Brewery.

I think this is a model case which, from another point of view, illustrates what I have already said in the preceding section: you do not become a "dissident" just because you decide one day to take up this most unusual career. You are thrown into it by your personal sense of responsibility, combined with a complex set of external circumstances. You are cast out of the existing structures and placed in a position of conflict with them. It begins as an attempt to do your work well, and ends with being branded an enemy of society. This is

why our situation is no Empire, when the Czech absolutism, had only or was imprisoned in Brix about it, we must ad every street corner.

To rebuke "dissident work" is simply absurd saryk's notion, it is frequently" in order t case. I am far from b sponsible people are tl the existing social and master Š might have w have kept their position in other words, for no absurd as to hold them. In any case, it contra seen as an attempt to human behavior not a good or not, but accor an attempt has brough

OUR GREENGROCER's at confined to not doing flags in his window w there in the first plac ported by the house v that he considers false his superiors. In othe "merely" refusing to c him by the system (w step to take). This may The greengrocer may thing that goes beyond

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why our situation is not comparable to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when the Czech nation, in the worst period of Bach's absolutism, had only one real "dissident," Karel Havlíček, who was imprisoned in Brixen. Today, if we are not to be snobbish about it, we must admit that "dissidents" can be found on every street corner.

To rebuke "dissidents" for having abandoned "small-scale work" is simply absurd. "Dissent" is not an alternative to Masaryk's notion, it is frequently its one possible outcome. I say "frequently" in order to emphasize that this is not always the case. I am far from believing that the only decent and responsible people are those who find themselves at odds with the existing social and political structures. After all, the brewmaster Š might have won his battle. To condemn those who have kept their positions simply because they have kept them, in other words, for not being "dissidents," would be just as absurd as to hold them up as an example to the "dissidents." In any case, it contradicts the whole "dissident" attitude—seen as an attempt to live within the truth—if one judges human behavior not according to what it is and whether it is good or not, but according to the personal circumstances such an attempt has brought one to.

XV

OUR GREENGROCER'S attempt to live within the truth may be confined to not doing certain things. He decides not to put flags in his window when his only motive for putting them there in the first place would have been to avoid being reported by the house warden; he does not vote in elections that he considers false; he does not hide his opinions from his superiors. In other words, he may go no further than "merely" refusing to comply with certain demands made on him by the system (which of course is not an insignificant step to take). This may, however, grow into something more. The greengrocer may begin to do something concrete, something that goes beyond an immediately personal self-defensive

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reaction against manipulation, something that will manifest his newfound sense of higher responsibility. He may, for example, organize his fellow greengrocers to act together in defense of their interests. He may write letters to various institutions, drawing their attention to instances of disorder and injustice around him. He may seek out unofficial literature, copy it, and lend it to his friends.

If what I have called living within the truth is a basic existential (and of course potentially political) starting point for all those "independent citizens' initiatives" and "dissident" or "opposition" movements this does not mean that every attempt to live within the truth automatically belongs in this category. On the contrary, in its most original and broadest sense, living within the truth covers a vast territory whose outer limits are vague and difficult to map, a territory full of modest expressions of human volition, the vast majority of which will remain anonymous and whose political impact will probably never be felt or described any more concretely than simply as a part of a social climate or mood. Most of these expressions remain elementary revolts against manipulation: you simply straighten your backbone and live in greater dignity as an individual.

Here and there—thanks to the nature, the assumptions, and the professions of some people, but also thanks to a number of accidental circumstances such as the specific nature of the local milieu, friends, and so on—a more coherent and visible initiative may emerge from this wide and anonymous hinterland, an initiative that transcends "merely" individual revolt and is transformed into more conscious, structured, and purposeful work. The point where living within the truth ceases to be a mere negation of living with a lie and becomes articulate in a particular way is the point at which something is born that might be called the "independent spiritual, social, and political life of society." This independent life is not separated from the rest of life ("dependent life") by some sharply defined line. Both types frequently co-exist in the same people. Nevertheless, its most important focus is marked by a

relatively high degree of the vast ocean of truth by the waves but a life of living within the life.

What is this independent life and its expressions and everything from self-expression through free creation to the most varied forms of independent social life in which living within the truth materializes in a visible form.

Thus what will later be called "dissident movements" is the proverbial one that comes out of that area, in other words, just as out of living within the truth as the distinct, articulated "dissident" gradually emerges. Yet there is a marked form of living within the truth, externally called "dissident" movements, a dependent life of society of its own and, though through a glance, the most powerful expression of it, they mature or even the social sense but eventually. After all, "dissident" has a birth by having been born, ever, it is not possible to separate it from its background out of which it follows from what

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relatively high degree of inner emancipation. It sails upon the vast ocean of the manipulated life like little boats, tossed by the waves but always bobbing back as visible messengers of living within the truth, articulating the suppressed aims of life.

What is this independent life of society? The spectrum of its expressions and activities is naturally very wide. It includes everything from self-education and thinking about the world, through free creative activity and its communication to others, to the most varied free, civic attitudes, including instances of independent social self-organization. In short, it is an area in which living within the truth becomes articulate and materializes in a visible way.

Thus what will later be referred to as "citizens' initiatives," "dissident movements," or even "oppositions," emerge, like the proverbial one tenth of the iceberg visible above the water, from that area, from the independent life of society. In other words, just as the independent life of society develops out of living within the truth in the widest sense of the word, as the distinct, articulated expression of that life, so "dissent" gradually emerges from the independent life of society. Yet there is a marked difference: if the independent life of society, externally at least, can be understood as a higher form of living within the truth, it is far less certain that "dissident" movements are necessarily a higher form of the independent life of society. They are simply one manifestation of it and, though they may be the most visible and, at first glance, the most political (and most clearly articulated) expression of it, they are far from necessarily being the most mature or even the most important, not only in the general social sense but even in terms of direct political influence. After all, "dissent" has been artificially removed from its place of birth by having been given a special name. In fact, however, it is not possible to think of it separated from the whole background out of which it develops, of which it is an integral part, and from which it draws all its vital strength. In any case, it follows from what has already been said about the pecu-

liarities of the post-totalitarian system that what appears to be the most political of forces in a given moment, and what thinks of itself in such terms, need not necessarily in fact be such a force. The extent to which it is a real political force is due exclusively to its pre-political context.

What follows from this description? Nothing more and nothing less than this: it is impossible to talk about what in fact "dissidents" do and the effect of their work without first talking about the work of all those who, in one way or another, take part in the independent life of society and who are not necessarily "dissidents" at all. They may be writers who write as they wish without regard for censorship or official demands and who issue their work—when official publishers refuse to print it—as *samizdat*. They may be philosophers, historians, sociologists, and all those who practice independent scholarship and, if it is impossible through official or semi-official channels, who also circulate their work in *samizdat* or who organize private discussions, lectures, and seminars. They may be teachers who privately teach young people things that are kept from them in the state schools; clergymen who either in office or, if they are deprived of their charges, outside it, try to carry on a free religious life; painters, musicians, and singers who practice their work regardless of how it is looked upon by official institutions; everyone who shares this independent culture and helps to spread it; people who, using the means available to them, try to express and defend the actual social interests of workers, to put real meaning back into trade unions or to form independent ones; people who are not afraid to call the attention of officials to cases of injustice and who strive to see that the laws are observed; and the different groups of young people who try to extricate themselves from manipulation and live in their own way, in the spirit of their own hierarchy of values. The list could go on.

Very few would think of calling all these people "dissidents." And yet are not the well-known "dissidents" simply people like them? Are not all these activities in fact what "dis-

sidents" do as well? Do they publish it in *samizdat*? Do they not write poems? Do they not struggle for liberties? Do they not struggle and attempt to ascertain the interests of various sectors?

After having tried to do this, and some aspects of the culture, and some aspects of the work have clearly shifted in direction, an investigation of what their initiatives are made possible.

The first conclusion and most important one is that it mines all the others, and supports the independent expression of living work and truth consistently, performing this service. This is the truth is an element made by people to open them, if it is the only means of political import, an intrinsic existential source difficult to imagine on any other basis than the attempt to make it

THE POST-TOTALITARIAN humans and humans isolated. It is therefore movements are explicit defend human beings the aims of the system

Today the Polish group Social Self-Defense."

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"dissidents" do as well? Do they not produce scholarly work and publish it in *samizdat*? Do they not write plays and novels and poems? Do they not lecture to students in private "universities"? Do they not struggle against various forms of injustice and attempt to ascertain and express the genuine social interests of various sectors of the population?

After having tried to indicate the sources, the inner structure, and some aspects of the "dissident" attitude as such, I have clearly shifted my viewpoint from outside, as it were, to an investigation of what these "dissidents" actually do, how their initiatives are manifested, and where they lead.

The first conclusion to be drawn, then, is that the original and most important sphere of activity, one that predetermines all the others, is simply an attempt to create and support the independent life of society as an articulated expression of living within the truth. In other words, serving truth consistently, purposefully, and articulately, and organizing this service. This is only natural, after all: if living within the truth is an elementary starting point for every attempt made by people to oppose the alienating pressure of the system, if it is the only meaningful basis of any independent act of political import, and if, ultimately, it is also the most intrinsic existential source of the "dissident" attitude, then it is difficult to imagine that even manifest "dissent" could have any other basis than the service of truth, the truthful life, and the attempt to make room for the genuine aims of life.

XVI

THE POST-TOTALITARIAN system is mounting a total assault on humans and humans stand against it alone, abandoned and isolated. It is therefore entirely natural that all the "dissident" movements are explicitly defensive movements: they exist to defend human beings and the genuine aims of life against the aims of the system.

Today the Polish group KOR is called the "Committee for Social Self-Defense." The word "defense" appears in the

names of other similar groups in Poland, but even the Soviet Helsinki monitoring group and our own Charter 77 are clearly defensive in nature.

In terms of traditional politics, this program of defense is understandable, even though it may appear minimal, provisional, and ultimately negative. It offers no new conception, model, or ideology, and therefore it is not politics in the proper sense of the word, since politics always assumes a positive program and can scarcely limit itself to defending someone against something.

Such a view, I think, reveals the limitations of the traditionally political way of looking at things. The post-totalitarian system, after all, is not the manifestation of a particular political line followed by a particular government. It is something radically different: it is a complex, profound, and long-term violation of society, or rather the self-violation of society. To oppose it merely by establishing a different political line and then striving for a change in government would not only be unrealistic, it would be utterly inadequate, for it would never come near to touching the root of the matter. For some time now, the problem has no longer resided in a political line or program: it is a problem of life itself.

Thus, defending the aims of life, defending humanity, is not only a more realistic approach, since it can begin right now and is potentially more popular because it concerns people's everyday lives; at the same time (and perhaps precisely because of this) it is also an incomparably more consistent approach because it aims at the very essence of things.

There are times when we must sink to the bottom of our misery to understand truth, just as we must descend to the bottom of a well to see the stars in broad daylight. It seems to me that today, this "provisional," "minimal," and "negative" program—the "simple" defense of people—is in a particular sense (and not merely in the circumstances in which we live) an optimal and most positive program because it forces politics to return to its only proper starting point, proper that is, if all the old mistakes are to be avoided: indi-

vidual people. In the den done to human beings is fundamental revolution some things will probabl urgent need for that reve world, precisely because selves, it would seem tha transformation: the cent longer abstract visions o (and of course the oppo the reverse of the same have so far merely been practices.

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vidual people. In the democratic societies, where the violence done to human beings is not nearly so obvious and cruel, this fundamental revolution in politics has yet to happen, and some things will probably have to get worse there before the urgent need for that revolution is reflected in politics. In our world, precisely because of the misery in which we find ourselves, it would seem that politics has already undergone that transformation: the central concern of political thought is no longer abstract visions of a self-redeeming, "positive" model (and of course the opportunistic political practices that are the reverse of the same coin), but rather the people who have so far merely been enslaved by those models and their practices.

Every society, of course, requires some degree of organization. Yet if that organization is to serve people, and not the other way around, then people will have to be liberated and space created so that they may organize themselves in meaningful ways. The depravity of the opposite approach, in which people are first organized in one way or another (by someone who always knows best "what the people need") so they may then allegedly be liberated, is something we have known on our own skins only too well.

To sum up: most people who are too bound to the traditional political way of thinking see the weaknesses of the "dissident" movements in their purely defensive character. In contrast, I see that as their greatest strength. I believe that this is precisely where these movements supersede the kind of politics from whose point of view their program can seem so inadequate.

XVII

IN THE "dissident" movements of the Soviet bloc, the defense of human beings usually takes the form of a defense of human and civil rights as they are entrenched in various official documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights, the

Concluding Act of the Helsinki Agreement, and the constitutions of individual states. These movements set out to defend anyone who is being prosecuted for acting in the spirit of those rights, and they in turn act in the same spirit in their work, by insisting over and over again that the regime recognize and respect human and civil rights, and by drawing attention to the areas of life where this is not the case.

Their work, therefore, is based on the principle of legality: they operate publicly and openly, insisting not only that their activity is in line with the law, but that achieving respect for the law is one of their main aims. This principle of legality, which provides both the point of departure and the framework for their activities, is common to all "dissident" groups in the Soviet bloc, even though individual groups have never worked out any formal agreement on that point. This circumstance raises an important question: Why, in conditions where a widespread and arbitrary abuse of power is the rule, is there such a general and spontaneous acceptance of the principle of legality?

On the primary level, this stress on legality is a natural expression of specific conditions that exist in the post-totalitarian system, and the consequence of an elementary understanding of that specificity. If there are in essence only two ways to struggle for a free society—that is, through legal means and through (armed or unarmed) revolt—then it should be obvious at once how inappropriate the latter alternative is in the post-totalitarian system. Revolt is appropriate when conditions are clearly and openly in motion, during a war, for example, or in situations where social or political conflicts are coming to a head. It is appropriate in a classical dictatorship that is either just setting itself up or is in a state of collapse. In other words, it is appropriate where social forces of comparable strength (for example, a government of occupation versus a nation fighting for its freedom) are confronting each other on the level of actual power, or where there is a clear distinction between the usurpers of power and the subjugated population, or when society finds itself in a

state of open crisis. Countries—except in extreme cases—Hungary in 1956—are, in general, static and stable, and are only latently (though they are sharply polarized on the surface, as we have seen, the fault lines run through each person. I could ever hope to set the rest of society, be merged in a consumer post-totalitarian system as agents of its automation, something like revolt unacceptable as an attack upon itself. If it were to revolt, it would very probably overthrow the system, since, in a post-totalitarian system, it would guarantee a certain quasidemocracy of direct and indirect participation in history and it is clear that if a revolt came to a head, it would almost technically be impossible to liquidate before intentions into action. Even if it would remain the solitary individual and they would be the apparatus of national (and international) society in whose name the very society in whose name the revolt in the first place. (The regime and its propaganda aims to the "dissident" movements as illegal and conspiratorial.)

All of this, however, is not the "dissident" movements support lies deeper, in the intransigent attitude. This attitude is

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state of open crisis. Conditions in the post-totalitarian system—except in extremely explosive situations like the one in Hungary in 1956—are, of course, precisely the opposite. They are static and stable, and social crises, for the most part, exist only latently (though they run much deeper). Society is not sharply polarized on the level of actual political power, but, as we have seen, the fundamental lines of conflict run right through each person. In this situation, no attempt at revolt could ever hope to set up even a minimum of resonance in the rest of society, because that society is soporific, submerged in a consumer rat race and wholly involved in the post-totalitarian system (that is, participating in it and acting as agents of its automatism), and it would simply find anything like revolt unacceptable. It would interpret the revolt as an attack upon itself and, rather than supporting the revolt, it would very probably react by intensifying its bias toward the system, since, in its view, the system can at least guarantee a certain quasi-legality. Add to this the fact that the post-totalitarian system has at its disposal a complex mechanism of direct and indirect surveillance that has no equal in history and it is clear that not only would any attempt to revolt come to a dead end politically, but it would also be almost technically impossible to carry off. Most probably it would be liquidated before it had a chance to translate its intentions into action. Even if revolt were possible, however, it would remain the solitary gesture of a few isolated individuals and they would be opposed not only by a gigantic apparatus of national (and supranational) power, but also by the very society in whose name they were mounting their revolt in the first place. (This, by the way, is another reason why the regime and its propaganda have been ascribing terroristic aims to the “dissident” movements and accusing them of illegal and conspiratorial methods.)

All of this, however, is not the main reason why the “dissident” movements support the principle of legality. That reason lies deeper, in the innermost structure of the “dissident” attitude. This attitude is and must be fundamentally hostile

toward the notion of violent change—simply because it places its faith in violence. (Generally, the “dissident” attitude can only accept violence as a necessary evil in extreme situations, when direct violence can only be met by violence and where remaining passive would in effect mean supporting violence: let us recall, for example, that the blindness of European pacifism was one of the factors that prepared the ground for the Second World War.) As I have already mentioned, “dissidents” tend to be skeptical about political thought based on the faith that profound social changes can only be achieved by bringing about (regardless of the method) changes in the system or in the government, and the belief that such changes—because they are considered “fundamental”—justify the sacrifice of “less fundamental” things, in other words, human lives. Respect for a theoretical concept here outweighs respect for human life. Yet this is precisely what threatens to enslave humanity all over again.

“Dissident” movements, as I have tried to indicate, share exactly the opposite view. They understand systemic change as something superficial, something secondary, something that in itself can guarantee nothing. Thus an attitude that turns away from abstract political visions of the future toward concrete human beings and ways of defending them effectively in the here and now is quite naturally accompanied by an intensified antipathy to all forms of violence carried out in the name of a better future, and by a profound belief that a future secured by violence might actually be worse than what exists now; in other words, the future would be fatally stigmatized by the very means used to secure it. At the same time, this attitude is not to be mistaken for political conservatism or political moderation. The “dissident” movements do not shy away from the idea of violent political overthrow because the idea seems too radical, but on the contrary, because it does not seem radical enough. For them, the problem lies far too deep to be settled through mere systemic changes, either governmental or technological. Some people, faithful to the classical Marxist doctrines of the nineteenth century,

understand our system over an exploited class; exploiters never surrender the only solution in a : Naturally, they regard rights as something nistic, and ultimately r assumption that you exploiters on the basis they are unable to fir out this revolution, w skeptical, passive, and they end up precisely is one example of how applying, in post-total els from another world

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understand our system as the hegemony of an exploiting class over an exploited class and, operating from the postulate that exploiters never surrender their power voluntarily, they see the only solution in a revolution to sweep away the exploiters. Naturally, they regard such things as the struggle for human rights as something hopelessly legalistic, illusory, opportunistic, and ultimately misleading because it makes the doubtful assumption that you can negotiate in good faith with your exploiters on the basis of a false legality. The problem is that they are unable to find anyone determined enough to carry out this revolution, with the result that they become bitter, skeptical, passive, and ultimately apathetic—in other words, they end up precisely where the system wants them to be. This is one example of how far one can be misled by mechanically applying, in post-totalitarian circumstances, ideological models from another world and another time.

Of course, one need not be an advocate of violent revolution to ask whether an appeal to legality makes any sense at all when the laws—and particularly the general laws concerning human rights—are no more than a facade, an aspect of the world of appearances, a mere game behind which lies total manipulation. "They can ratify anything because they will still go ahead and do whatever they want anyway"—this is an opinion we often encounter. Is it not true that constantly to take them at their word, to appeal to laws every child knows are binding only as long as the government wishes, is in the end just a kind of hypocrisy, a Švejkian obstructionism and, finally, just another way of playing the game, another form of self-delusion? In other words, is the legalistic approach at all compatible with the principle of living within the truth?

This question can only be answered by first looking at the wider implications of how the legal code functions in the post-totalitarian system.

In a classical dictatorship, to a far greater extent than in the post-totalitarian system, the will of the ruler is carried out directly, in an unregulated fashion. A dictatorship has no rea-

son to hide its foundations, nor to conceal the real workings of power, and therefore it need not encumber itself to any great extent with a legal code. The post-totalitarian system, on the other hand, is utterly obsessed with the need to bind everything in a single order: life in such a state is thoroughly permeated by a dense network of regulations, proclamations, directives, norms, orders, and rules. (It is not called a bureaucratic system without good reason.) A large proportion of those norms function as direct instruments of the complex manipulation of life that is intrinsic to the post-totalitarian system. Individuals are reduced to little more than tiny cogs in an enormous mechanism and their significance is limited to their function in this mechanism. Their job, housing accommodation, movements, social and cultural expressions, everything, in short, must be cosseted together as firmly as possible, predetermined, regulated, and controlled. Every aberration from the prescribed course of life is treated as error, license, and anarchy. From the cook in the restaurant who, without hard-to-get permission from the bureaucratic apparatus, cannot cook something special for his customers, to the singer who cannot perform his new song at a concert without bureaucratic approval, everyone, in all aspects of their life, is caught in this regulatory tangle of red tape, the inevitable product of the post-totalitarian system. With ever-increasing consistency, it binds all the expressions and aims of life to the spirit of its own aims: the vested interests of its own smooth, automatic operation.

In a narrower sense the legal code serves the post-totalitarian system in this direct way as well, that is, it too forms a part of the world of regulations and prohibitions. At the same time, however, it performs the same service in another indirect way, one that brings it remarkably closer—depending on which level of the law is involved—to ideology and in some cases makes it a direct component of that ideology.

1. Like ideology, the legal code functions as an excuse. It wraps the base exercise of power in the noble apparel of the

letter of the law; it creates done, society protected, and regulated. All this is done totalitarian legal practice: If an outside observer who Czechoslovakia were to stately incapable of understanding about. The hidden political of public prosecutors, the ability to defend their clients, the arbitrary actions of the authority over the judiciary of several deliberately violate course the state's utter disregard that code (the rights of citizens from our outside observation away would be the impression worse than the legal code much different either, especially such as the entrenchment political party's eternal ruling superpower.

But that is not all: if one study the formal side of the and practices, how they are that for the most part the dure are observed: charges riot following arrest, and Indictments are properly and so on. In other words all observed the law. In re pointlessly ruined a young reason than because he r ten by a banned writer, falsified their testimony on down to the defendant in the background. The

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letter of the law; it creates the pleasing illusion that justice is done, society protected, and the exercise of power objectively regulated. All this is done to conceal the real essence of post-totalitarian legal practice: the total manipulation of society. If an outside observer who knew nothing at all about life in Czechoslovakia were to study only its laws, he would be utterly incapable of understanding what we were complaining about. The hidden political manipulation of the courts and of public prosecutors, the limitations placed on lawyers' ability to defend their clients, the closed nature, *de facto*, of trials, the arbitrary actions of the security forces, their position of authority over the judiciary, the absurdly broad application of several deliberately vague sections of that code, and of course the state's utter disregard for the positive sections of that code (the rights of citizens): all of this would remain hidden from our outside observer. The only thing he would take away would be the impression that our legal code is not much worse than the legal code of other civilized countries, and not much different either, except perhaps for certain curiosities, such as the entrenchment in the constitution of a single political party's eternal rule and the state's love for a neighboring superpower.

But that is not all: if our observer had the opportunity to study the formal side of the policing and judicial procedures and practices, how they look "on paper," he would discover that for the most part the common rules of criminal procedure are observed: charges are laid within the prescribed period following arrest, and it is the same with detention orders. Indictments are properly delivered, the accused has a lawyer, and so on. In other words, everyone has an excuse: they have all observed the law. In reality, however, they have cruelly and pointlessly ruined a young person's life, perhaps for no other reason than because he made *samizdat* copies of a novel written by a banned writer, or because the police deliberately falsified their testimony (as everyone knows, from the judge on down to the defendant). Yet all of this somehow remains in the background. The falsified testimony is not necessarily

obvious from the trial documents and the section of the Criminal Code dealing with incitement does not formally exclude the application of that charge to the copying of a banned novel. In other words, the legal code—at least in several areas—is no more than a facade, an aspect of the world of appearances. Then why is it there at all? For exactly the same reason as ideology is there: it provides a bridge of excuses between the system and individuals, making it easier for them to enter the power structure and serve the arbitrary demands of power. The excuse lets individuals fool themselves into thinking they are merely upholding the law and protecting society from criminals. (Without this excuse, how much more difficult it would be to recruit new generations of judges, prosecutors, and interrogators!) As an aspect of the world of appearances, however, the legal code deceives not only the conscience of prosecutors, it deceives the public, it deceives foreign observers, and it even deceives history itself.

2. Like ideology, the legal code is an essential instrument of ritual communication outside the power structure. It is the legal code that gives the exercise of power a form, a framework, a set of rules. It is the legal code that enables all components of the system to communicate, to put themselves in a good light, to establish their own legitimacy. It provides their whole game with its rules and engineers with their technology. Can the exercise of post-totalitarian power be imagined at all without this universal ritual making it all possible, serving as a common language to bind the relevant sectors of the power structure together? The more important the position occupied by the repressive apparatus in the power structure, the more important that it function according to some kind of formal code. How, otherwise, could people be so easily and inconspicuously locked up for copying banned books if there were no judges, prosecutors, interrogators, defense lawyers, court stenographers, and thick files, and if all this were not held together by some firm order? And above all, without that innocent-looking Section 100 on incitement? This could all be done, of course, without a legal code and its

accessories, but only in some a Ugandan bandit, not in a huge portion of civilized human beings. Ritual, stable, and respected would not only be unthinkable, it would be ritually cohesive force, the exist.

The entire role of ritual, eloquently, of course, not the legal code, which sets out the grounds for prosecution, what he may do and what truly nothing but "words, of the code is of immense here that the system established for its own citizens, before the national public, and before to disregard this because upon the fundamental power essential to its very existence power structure is enslaved logical prestige.) To do tries to present itself as a which the system rests within the world of appearance

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accessories, but only in some ephemeral dictatorship run by a Ugandan bandit, not in a system that embraces such a huge portion of civilized humankind and represents an integral, stable, and respected part of the modern world. That would not only be unthinkable, it would quite simply be technically impossible. Without the legal code functioning as a ritually cohesive force, the post-totalitarian system could not exist.

The entire role of ritual, facades, and excuses appears most eloquently, of course, not in the proscriptive section of the legal code, which sets out what a citizen may not do and what the grounds for prosecution are, but in the section declaring what he may do and what his or her rights are. Here there is truly nothing but "words, words, words." Yet even that part of the code is of immense importance to the system, for it is here that the system establishes its legitimacy as a whole, before its own citizens, before schoolchildren, before the international public, and before history. The system cannot afford to disregard this because it cannot permit itself to cast doubt upon the fundamental postulates of its ideology, which are so essential to its very existence. (We have already seen how the power structure is enslaved by its own ideology and its ideological prestige.) To do this would be to deny everything it tries to present itself as and, thus, one of the main pillars on which the system rests would be undermined: the integrity of the world of appearances.

If the exercise of power circulates through the whole power structure as blood flows through veins, then the legal code can be understood as something that reinforces the walls of those veins. Without it, the blood of power could not circulate in an organized way and the body of society would hemorrhage at random. Order would collapse.

A persistent and never-ending appeal to the laws—not just to the laws concerning human rights, but to all laws—does not mean at all that those who do so have succumbed to the illusion that in our system the law is anything other than what

it is. They are well aware of the role it plays. But precisely because they know how desperately the system depends on it—on the “noble” version of the law, that is—they also know how enormously significant such appeals are. Because the system cannot do without the law, because it is hopelessly tied down by the necessity of pretending the laws are observed, it is compelled to react in some way to such appeals. Demanding that the laws be upheld is thus an act of living within the truth that threatens the whole mendacious structure at its point of maximum mendacity. Over and over again, such appeals make the purely ritualistic nature of the law clear to society and to those who inhabit its power structures. They draw attention to its real material substance and thus, indirectly, compel all those who take refuge behind the law to affirm and make credible this agency of excuses, this means of communication, this reinforcement of the social arteries outside of which their will could not be made to circulate through society. They are compelled to do so for the sake of their own consciences, for the impression they make on outsiders, to maintain themselves in power (as part of the system's own mechanism of self-preservation and its principles of cohesion), or simply out of fear that they will be reproached for being clumsy in handling the ritual. They have no other choice: because they cannot discard the rules of their own game, they can only attend more carefully to those rules. Not to react to challenges means to undermine their own excuse and lose control of their mutual communications system. To assume that the laws are a mere facade, that they have no validity, and that therefore it is pointless to appeal to them would mean to go on reinforcing those aspects of the law that create the facade and the ritual. It would mean confirming the law as an aspect of the world of appearances and enabling those who exploit it to rest easy with the cheapest (and therefore the most mendacious) form of their excuse.

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attention (as individuals with a name, no longer protected by the anonymity of the apparatus)—suddenly and anxiously begin to take particular care that no cracks appear in the ritual. This does not alter the fact that a despotic power is hiding behind that ritual, but the very existence of the officials' anxiety necessarily regulates, limits, and slows down the operation of that despotism.

This, of course, is not enough. But an essential part of the "dissident" attitude is that it comes out of the reality of the human here and now. It places more importance on often repeated and consistent concrete action—even though it may be inadequate and though it may ease only insignificantly the suffering of a single insignificant citizen—than it does in some abstract fundamental solution in an uncertain future. In any case, is not this in fact just another form of "small-scale work" in the Masarykian sense, with which the "dissident" attitude seemed at first to be in such sharp contradiction?

This section would be incomplete without stressing certain internal limitations to the policy of taking them at their own word. The point is this: even in the most ideal of cases, the law is only one of several imperfect and more or less external ways of defending what is better in life against what is worse. By itself, the law can never create anything better. Its purpose is to render a service and its meaning does not lie in the law itself. Establishing respect for the law does not automatically ensure a better life for that, after all, is a job for people and not for laws and institutions. It is possible to imagine a society with good laws that are fully respected but in which it is impossible to live. Conversely, one can imagine life being quite bearable even where the laws are imperfect and imperfectly applied. The most important thing is always the quality of that life and whether or not the laws enhance life or repress it, not merely whether they are upheld or not. (Often strict observance of the law could have a disastrous impact on human dignity.) The key to a humane, dignified, rich, and happy life does not lie either in the constitution or in the Criminal Code. These merely establish what may or may not

be done and, thus, they can make life easier or more difficult. They limit or permit, they punish, tolerate, or defend, but they can never give life substance or meaning. The struggle for what is called "legality" must constantly keep this legality in perspective against the background of life as it really is. Without keeping one's eyes open to the real dimensions of life's beauty and misery, and without a moral relationship to life, this struggle will sooner or later come to grief on the rocks of some self-justifying system of scholastics. Without really wanting to, one would thus become more and more like the observer who comes to conclusions about our system only on the basis of trial documents and is satisfied if all the appropriate regulations have been observed.

XVIII

IF THE basic job of the "dissident" movements is to serve truth, that is, to serve the real aims of life, and if that necessarily develops into a defense of individuals and their right to a free and truthful life (that is, a defense of human rights and a struggle to see the laws respected), then another stage of this approach, perhaps the most mature stage so far, is what Václav Benda called the development of "parallel structures."

When those who have decided to live within the truth have been denied any direct influence on the existing social structures, not to mention the opportunity to participate in them, and when these people begin to create what I have called the independent life of society, this independent life begins, of itself, to become structured in a certain way. Sometimes there are only very embryonic indications of this process of structuring; at other times, the structures are already quite well developed. Their genesis and evolution are inseparable from the phenomenon of "dissent," even though they reach far beyond the arbitrarily defined area of activity usually indicated by that term.

What are these structures? Ivan Jirous was the first in Czechoslovakia to formulate and apply in practice the con-

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cept of a "second culture." Although at first he was thinking chiefly of nonconformist rock music and only certain literary, artistic, or performance events close to the sensibilities of those nonconformist musical groups, the term second culture very rapidly came to be used for the whole area of independent and repressed culture, that is, not only for art and its various currents but also for the humanities, the social sciences, and philosophical thought. This second culture, quite naturally, has created elementary organizational forms: *samizdat* editions of books and magazines, private performances and concerts, seminars, exhibitions, and so on. (In Poland all of this is vastly more developed: there are independent publishing houses and many more periodicals, even political periodicals; they have means of proliferation other than carbon copies, and so on. In the Soviet Union, *samizdat* has a longer tradition and clearly its forms are quite different.) Culture, therefore, is a sphere in which the parallel structures can be observed in their most highly developed form. Benda, of course, gives thought to potential or embryonic forms of such structures in other spheres as well: from a parallel information network to parallel forms of education (private universities), parallel trade unions, parallel foreign contacts, to a kind of hypothesis on a parallel economy. On the basis of these parallel structures, he then develops the notion of a "parallel *polis*" or state or, rather, he sees the rudiments of such a *polis* in these structures.

At a certain stage in its development, the independent life of society and the "dissident" movements cannot avoid a certain amount of organization and institutionalization. This is a natural development, and unless this independent life of society is somehow radically suppressed and eliminated, the tendency will grow. Along with it, a parallel political life will also necessarily evolve, and to a certain extent it exists already in Czechoslovakia. Various groupings of a more or less political nature will continue to define themselves politically, to act and confront each other.

These parallel structures, it may be said, represent the most

articulated expressions so far of living within the truth. One of the most important tasks the "dissident" movements have set themselves is to support and develop them. Once again, it confirms the fact that all attempts by society to resist the pressure of the system have their essential beginnings in the "pre-political" area. For what else are parallel structures than an area where a different life can be lived, a life that is in harmony with its own aims and which in turn structures itself in harmony with those aims? What else are those initial attempts at social self-organization than the efforts of a certain part of society to live—as a society—within the truth, to rid itself of the self-sustaining aspects of totalitarianism and, thus, to extricate itself radically from its involvement in the post-totalitarian system? What else is it but a nonviolent attempt by people to negate the system within themselves and to establish their lives on a new basis, that of their own proper identity? And does this tendency not confirm once more the principle of returning the focus to actual individuals? After all, the parallel structures do not grow *a priori* out of a theoretical vision of systemic changes (there are no political sects involved), but from the aims of life and the authentic needs of real people. In fact, all eventual changes in the system, changes we may observe here in their rudimentary forms, have come about as it were *de facto*, from "below," because life compelled them to, not because they came before life, somehow directing it or forcing some change on it.

Historical experience teaches us that any genuinely meaningful point of departure in an individual's life usually has an element of universality about it. In other words, it is not something partial, accessible only to a restricted community, and not transferable to any other. On the contrary, it must be potentially accessible to everyone; it must foreshadow a general solution and, thus, it is not just the expression of an introverted, self-contained responsibility that individuals have to and for themselves alone, but responsibility to and for the world. Thus it would be quite wrong to understand the parallel structures and the parallel *polis* as a retreat into a ghetto

and as an act of isolation of those who had decided indifferent to the rest. I consider it an essentially growth with the general situation start, alienate the notion proper point of departure forming it ultimately into a vision of living within a cease to be a genuine part groups and would recall exclusive group with exclusive dialogue with the most highly developed structures, even that most not only exist—at least in part the individual is at the structure by a thousand it may only be the fact stores, uses their money can imagine life in its parallel *polis*, but would not way, as a program, be a phrenic life within a lie way or another? Would point of departure that applicable to others, can either? Patočka used to about responsibility is That means that respond and grasp it here, now, the Lord has set us down of it by moving somewhat ashram or to a parallel discover that retreat to individual or group solution and only because, it lacks

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and as an act of isolation, addressing itself only to the welfare of those who had decided on such a course, and who are indifferent to the rest. It would be wrong, in short, to consider it an essentially group solution that has nothing to do with the general situation. Such a concept would, from the start, alienate the notion of living within the truth from its proper point of departure, which is concern for others, transforming it ultimately into just another more sophisticated version of living within a lie. In doing so, of course, it would cease to be a genuine point of departure for individuals and groups and would recall the false notion of "dissidents" as an exclusive group with exclusive interests, carrying on their own exclusive dialogue with the powers that be. In any case, even the most highly developed forms of life in the parallel structures, even that most mature form of the parallel *polis* can only exist—at least in post-totalitarian circumstances—when the individual is at the same time lodged in the "first," official structure by a thousand different relationships, even though it may only be the fact that one buys what one needs in their stores, uses their money, and obeys their laws. Certainly one can imagine life in its baser aspects flourishing in the parallel *polis*, but would not such a life, lived deliberately that way, as a program, be merely another version of the schizophrenic life within a lie which everyone else must live in one way or another? Would it not just be further evidence that a point of departure that is not a model solution, that is not applicable to others, cannot be meaningful for an individual either? Patočka used to say that the most interesting thing about responsibility is that we carry it with us everywhere. That means that responsibility is ours, that we must accept it and grasp it here, now, in this place in time and space where the Lord has set us down, and that we cannot lie our way out of it by moving somewhere else, whether it be to an Indian ashram or to a parallel *polis*. If Western young people so often discover that retreat to an Indian monastery fails them as an individual or group solution, then this is obviously because, and only because, it lacks that element of universality, since

not everyone can retire to an ashram. Christianity is an example of an opposite way out: it is a point of departure for me here and now—but only because anyone, anywhere, at any time, may avail themselves of it.

In other words, the parallel *polis* points beyond itself and makes sense only as an act of deepening one's responsibility to and for the whole, as a way of discovering the most appropriate *locus* for this responsibility, not as an escape from it.

XIX

I HAVE already talked about the political potential of living within the truth and of the limitations on predicting whether, how, and when a given expression of that life within the truth can lead to actual changes. I have also mentioned how irrelevant trying to calculate the risks in this regard are, for an essential feature of independent initiatives is that they are always, initially at least, an all-or-nothing gamble.

Nevertheless, this outline of some of the work done by "dissident" movements would be incomplete without considering, if only very generally, some of the different ways this work might actually affect society; in other words, about the ways that responsibility to and for the whole might (without necessarily meaning that it must) be realized in practice.

In the first place, it has to be emphasized that the whole sphere comprising the independent life of society, and even more so the "dissident" movement as such, is naturally far from being the only potential factor that might influence the history of countries living under the post-totalitarian system. The latent social crisis in such societies can at any time, independently of these movements, provoke a wide variety of political changes. It may unsettle the power structure and induce or accelerate various hidden confrontations, resulting in personnel, conceptual, or at least "climactic" changes. It may significantly influence the general atmosphere of life, evoke unexpected and unforeseen social unrest and explosions of discontent. Power shifts at the center of the bloc can

influence conditions ways. Economic factence, as do broader timportant area, whicand political upsets, the policies adopted l countries, the chang and the positions ta end up in the highes although as I have a the importance of lea system. There are ma influence, and the ev movement is thinkab and in the context t pact is only one of t important one) that fers from the other f focus is reflecting up point of view of a d iate application of

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influence conditions in the different countries in various ways. Economic factors naturally have an important influence, as do broader trends of global civilization. An extremely important area, which could be a source of radical changes and political upsets, is represented by international politics, the policies adopted by the other superpower and all the other countries, the changing structure of international interests and the positions taken by our bloc. Even the people who end up in the highest positions are not without significance, although as I have already said, one ought not overestimate the importance of leading personalities in the post-totalitarian system. There are many such influences and combinations of influence, and the eventual political impact of the "dissident" movement is thinkable only against this general background and in the context that this background provides. That impact is only one of the many factors (and far from the most important one) that affect political developments, and it differs from the other factors perhaps only in that its essential focus is reflecting upon that political development from the point of view of a defense of people and seeking an immediate application of that reflection.

The primary purpose of the outward direction of these movements is always, as we have seen, to have an impact on society, not to affect the power structure, at least not directly and immediately. Independent initiatives address the hidden sphere; they demonstrate that living within the truth is a human and social alternative and they struggle to expand the space available for that life; they help—even though it is, of course, indirect help—to raise the confidence of citizens; they shatter the world of appearances and unmask the real nature of power. They do not assume a messianic role; they are not a social avant-garde or elite that alone knows best, and whose task it is to "raise the consciousness" of the "unconscious" masses (that arrogant self-projection is, once again, intrinsic to an essentially different way of thinking, the kind that feels it has a patent on some ideal project and therefore that it has the right to impose it on society). Nor do they want to

lead anyone. They leave it up to each individual to decide what he will or will not take from their experience and work. (If official Czechoslovak propaganda described the Chartists as "self-appointed," it was not in order to emphasize any real avant-garde ambitions on their part, but rather a natural expression of how the regime thinks, its tendency to judge others according to itself, since behind any expression of criticism it automatically sees the desire to cast the mighty from their seats and rule in their places "in the name of the people," the same pretext the regime itself has used for years.)

These movements, therefore, always affect the power structure as such indirectly, as a part of society as a whole, for they are primarily addressing the hidden spheres of society, since it is not a matter of confronting the regime on the level of actual power.

I have already indicated one of the ways this can work: an awareness of the laws and the responsibility for seeing that they are upheld is indirectly strengthened. That, of course, is only a specific instance of a far broader influence, the indirect pressure felt from living within the truth: the pressure created by free thought, alternative values and alternative behavior, and by independent social self-realization. The power structure, whether it wants to or not, must always react to this pressure to a certain extent. Its response, however, is always limited to two dimensions: repression and adaptation. Sometimes one dominates, sometimes the other. For example, the Polish "flying university" came under increased persecution and the "flying teachers" were detained by the police. At the same time, however, professors in existing official universities tried to enrich their own curricula with several subjects hitherto considered taboo and this was a result of indirect pressure exerted by the "flying university." The motives for this adaptation may vary from the ideal (the hidden sphere has received the message and conscience and the will to truth are awakened) to the purely utilitarian: the regime's instinct for survival compels it to notice the changing ideas and the changing mental and social climate and to react flex-

ibly to them. Which of in a given moment is

Adaptation is the response, and it can, and forms and phases. Some people from the "part to appropriate them, to make them a little obvious and untenable communists began to tural values and phenomena though not without "appropriated" values and originality, and and conformity, their a further phase, this on the part of the official of their ultimate goals ally halfway measure realistically coordinating totalitarian automatism muddy what was originally living within the truth screen over the situation for people to keep the alter the fact that it is because it opens out difficult to distinguish ble" compromises.

Another—and high internal differentiation. These structures. These structuralized forms of demand it. (One exact and institutional basis group periodicals, art and workplaces, and s

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ibly to them. Which of these motives happens to predominate in a given moment is not essential in terms of the final effect.

Adaptation is the positive dimension of the regime's response, and it can, and usually does, have a wide spectrum of forms and phases. Some circles may try to integrate values of people from the "parallel world" into the official structures, to appropriate them, to become a little like them while trying to make them a little like themselves, and thus to adjust an obvious and untenable imbalance. In the 1960s, progressive communists began to "discover" certain unacknowledged cultural values and phenomena. This was a positive step, although not without its dangers, since the "integrated" or "appropriated" values lost something of their independence and originality, and having been given a cloak of officiality and conformity, their credibility was somewhat weakened. In a further phase, this adaptation can lead to various attempts on the part of the official structures to reform, both in terms of their ultimate goals and structurally. Such reforms are usually halfway measures; they are attempts to combine and realistically coordinate serving life and serving the post-totalitarian automatism. But they cannot be otherwise. They muddy what was originally a clear demarcation line between living within the truth and living with a lie. They cast a smoke-screen over the situation, mystify society, and make it difficult for people to keep their bearings. This, of course, does not alter the fact that it is always essentially good when it happens because it opens out new spaces. But it does make it more difficult to distinguish between "admissible" and "inadmissible" compromises.

Another—and higher—phase of adaptation is a process of internal differentiation that takes place in the official structures. These structures open themselves to more or less institutionalized forms of plurality because the real aims of life demand it. (One example: without changing the centralized and institutional basis of cultural life, new publishing houses, group periodicals, artists' groups, parallel research institutes and workplaces, and so on, may appear under pressure from

below. Or another example: the single, monolithic youth organization run by the state as a typical post-totalitarian "transmission belt" disintegrates under the pressure of real needs into a number of more or less independent organizations such as the Union of University Students, the Union of Secondary School Students, the Organization of Working Youth, and so on.) There is a direct relationship between this kind of differentiation, which allows initiatives from below to be felt, and the appearance and constitution of new structures which are already parallel, or rather independent, but which at the same time are respected, or at least tolerated in varying degrees, by official institutions. These new institutions are more than just liberalized official structures adapted to the authentic needs of life; they are a direct expression of those needs, demanding a position in the context of what is already here. In other words, they are genuine expressions of the tendency of society to organize itself. (In Czechoslovakia in 1968 the best-known organizations of this type were KAN, the Club of Committed Non-Communists, and K231, an organization of former political prisoners.)

The ultimate phase of this process is the situation in which the official structures—as agencies of the post-totalitarian system, existing only to serve its automatism and constructed in the spirit of that role—simply begin withering away and dying off, to be replaced by new structures that have evolved from below and are put together in a fundamentally different way.

Certainly many other ways may be imagined in which the aims of life can bring about political transformations in the general organization of things and weaken on all levels the hold that techniques of manipulation have on society. Here I have mentioned only the way in which the general organization of things was in fact changed as we experienced it ourselves in Czechoslovakia around 1968. It must be added that all these concrete instances were part of a specific historical process which ought not be thought of as the only alternative, nor as necessarily repeatable (particularly not in our coun-

try), a fact which, of course, is of great importance of the general mood found in it to this day.

While on the subject of developments at that time, it is appropriate to point to the general mood, then, which did not occur under the structures that are taking shape now. These structures are sharply defined antitheses to the structures that simply did not exist at that time. The "students" in the present sense of the word took place were simply the most varied sort, some of which were spontaneous attempts at independent creation, and political term, spontaneous, and in the interpenetration of the existing structures, using the institutionalization of this life to break through the official structures. In the context of social awakening, a kind of "hidden spheres gradually in the official propaganda counterrevolution" in Czechoslovakia (the aims of life proceed.) The fact that it did not have to come exclusively from the bottom of society, considered as a fact of course it did come from the bottom (fully appreciated). It could be said that the fact that people in the official structures identified with the official structures as it really was and as it was through latent social crisis with the true nature and content here mainly of the many who grew to become, over

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try), a fact which, of course, takes nothing away from the importance of the general lessons which are still sought and found in it to this day.

While on the subject of 1968 in Czechoslovakia, it may be appropriate to point to some of the characteristic aspects of developments at that time. All the transformations, first in the general mood, then conceptually, and finally structurally, did not occur under pressure from the kind of parallel structures that are taking shape today. Such structures—which are sharply defined antitheses of the official structures—quite simply did not exist at the time, nor were there any “dissidents” in the present sense of the word. The changes that took place were simply a consequence of pressures of the most varied sort, some thoroughgoing, some partial. There were spontaneous attempts at freer forms of thinking, independent creation, and political articulation. There were long-term, spontaneous, and inconspicuous efforts to bring about the interpenetration of the independent life of society with the existing structures, usually beginning with the quiet institutionalization of this life on and around the periphery of the official structures. In other words, it was a gradual process of social awakening, a kind of creeping process in which the hidden spheres gradually opened out. (There is some truth in the official propaganda which talks about a “creeping counterrevolution” in Czechoslovakia, referring to how the aims of life proceed.) The motive force behind this awakening did not have to come exclusively from the independent life of society, considered as a definable social milieu (although of course it did come from there, a fact that has yet to be fully appreciated). It could also simply have come from the fact that people in the official structures who more or less identified with the official ideology came up against reality as it really was and as it gradually became clear to them through latent social crises and their own bitter experiences with the true nature and operations of power. (I am thinking here mainly of the many antidogmatic reform communists who grew to become, over the years, a force inside the official

structures.) Neither the proper conditions nor the *raison d'être* existed for those limited, "self-structuring" independent initiatives familiar from the present era of "dissident" movements that stand so sharply outside the official structures and are unrecognized by them *en bloc*. At that time, the post-totalitarian system in Czechoslovakia had not yet petrified into the static, sterile, and stable forms that exist today, forms that compel people to fall back on their own organizing capabilities. For many historical and social reasons, the regime in 1968 was more open. The power structure, exhausted by Stalinist despotism and helplessly groping about for painless reform, was inevitably rotting from within, quite incapable of offering any intelligent opposition to changes in the mood, to the way its younger members regarded things and to the thousands of authentic expressions of life on the "pre-political" level that sprang up in that vast political terrain between the official and the unofficial.

From the more general point of view, yet another typical circumstance appears to be important: the social ferment that came to a head in 1968 never—in terms of actual structural changes—went any further than the reform, the differentiation, or the replacement of structures that were really only of secondary importance. It did not affect the very essence of the power structure in the post-totalitarian system, which is to say its political model, the fundamental principles of social organization, not even the economic model in which all economic power is subordinated to political power. Nor were any essential structural changes made in the direct instruments of power (the army, the police, the judiciary, etc.). On that level, the issue was never more than a change in the mood, the personnel, the political line and, above all changes in how that power was exercised. Everything else remained at the stage of discussion and planning. The two officially accepted programs that went furthest in this regard were the April 1968 Action Program of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the proposal for economic reforms. The Action Program—it could not have been otherwise—was full of

contradictions and halfway pects of power untouched. they went a long way to ac economic sphere (they acc interests and initiatives, dy the economic command sy lar of economic power, th than genuine social owner So there is a gap here whic totalitarian system has ev possible exception of thos uprising.

What other development future? Replying to that q realm of pure speculation. that the latent social crisis i is no reason to believe it w in a variety of political anc 1953, Hungary, the U.S.S.R vakia and Poland in 1968, of them very different in their evolution, and their the enormous complex of disturbances, and at the in cidental accumulation of e in the hidden sphere to bre problem of the "final straw sible it is to guess what the trends as, on the one hand gration of the "bloc" and t and on the other hand the grating under pressure fro ness in the non-Russian are cannot expect to remain fo gle for national liberation), of trying to make long-rang In any case, I do not bel

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contradictions and halfway measures that left the physical aspects of power untouched. And the economic proposals, while they went a long way to accommodate the aims of life in the economic sphere (they accepted such notions as a plurality of interests and initiatives, dynamic incentives, restrictions upon the economic command system), left untouched the basic pillar of economic power, that is, the principle of state, rather than genuine social ownership of the means of production. So there is a gap here which no social movement in the post-totalitarian system has ever been able to bridge, with the possible exception of those few days during the Hungarian uprising.

What other developmental alternative might emerge in the future? Replying to that question would mean entering the realm of pure speculation. For the time being, it can be said that the latent social crisis in the system has always (and there is no reason to believe it will not continue to do so) resulted in a variety of political and social disturbances. (Germany in 1953, Hungary, the U.S.S.R. and Poland in 1956, Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1968, and Poland in 1970 and 1976), all of them very different in their backgrounds, the course of their evolution, and their final consequences. If we look at the enormous complex of different factors that led to such disturbances, and at the impossibility of predicting what accidental accumulation of events will cause that fermentation in the hidden sphere to break through to the light of day (the problem of the "final straw"); and if we consider how impossible it is to guess what the future holds, given such opposing trends as, on the one hand, the increasingly profound integration of the "bloc" and the expansion of power within it, and on the other hand the prospects of the U.S.S.R. disintegrating under pressure from awakening national consciousness in the non-Russian areas (in this regard the Soviet Union cannot expect to remain forever free of the worldwide struggle for national liberation), then we must see the hopelessness of trying to make long-range predictions.

In any case, I do not believe that this type of speculation

has any immediate significance for the "dissident" movements since these movements, after all, do not develop from speculative thinking, and so to establish themselves on that basis would mean alienating themselves from the very source of their identity.

As far as prospects for the "dissident" movements as such go, there seems to be very little likelihood that future developments will lead to a lasting co-existence of two isolated, mutually noninteracting and mutually indifferent bodies—the main *polis* and the parallel *polis*. As long as it remains what it is, the practice of living within the truth cannot fail to be a threat to the system. It is quite impossible to imagine it continuing to co-exist with the practice of living within a lie without dramatic tension. The relationship of the post-totalitarian system—as long as it remains what it is—and the independent life of society—as long as it remains the *locus* of a renewed responsibility for the whole and to the whole—will always be one of either latent or open conflict.

In this situation there are only two possibilities: either the post-totalitarian system will go on developing (that is, will be able to go on developing), thus inevitably coming closer to some dreadful Orwellian vision of a world of absolute manipulation, while all the more articulate expressions of living within the truth are definitely snuffed out; or the independent life of society (the parallel *polis*), including the "dissident" movements, will slowly but surely become a social phenomenon of growing importance, taking a real part in the life of society with increasing clarity and influencing the general situation. Of course this will always be only one of many factors influencing the situation and it will operate rather in the background, in concert with the other factors and in a way appropriate to the background.

Whether it ought to focus on reforming the official structures or on encouraging differentiation, or on replacing them with new structures, whether the intent is to ameliorate the system or, on the contrary, to tear it down: these and similar questions, insofar as they are not pseudo-problems, can be

posed by the "dissident" movements, not as a result of a particular situation, but as a result of a concrete task. In other words, if the movements were, ad hoc, out of a concrete situation, they would be, ad hoc, out of a concrete needs of life. To reply to the question of how to formulate a political program for the future would mean, I believe, to return to the methods of traditional politics, and not to the work of "dissent" which has the most genuine prospects. The work of "dissent" emphasizes several times over that it does not have their point of view, but that it does not have their point of view. It does not have their point of view, but it does have its own point of view here and now. The political program for the future will come, at least—limited, halfhearted, and debilitating tactics. It cannot be this and not be demoralizing. It is the main thing—the ending struggle of humanity, and in quiet dignity—never be halfhearted, incoherent tactics, speculating on maintaining fantasies about the future. It is the best guarantee of actual interaction with the

THE SPECIFIC nature of post-totalitarianism is the absence of a normal political process. The only reaching political change is the positive aspect: it compels the system to change in terms of its deeper coherence. The context of global, long-term change, which we are a part. The fundamental confrontation be

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posed by the "dissident" movement only within the context of a particular situation, when the movement is faced with a concrete task. In other words, it must pose questions, as it were, ad hoc, out of a concrete consideration of the authentic needs of life. To reply to such questions abstractly and to formulate a political program in terms of some hypothetical future would mean, I believe, a return to the spirit and methods of traditional politics, and this would limit and alienate the work of "dissent" where it is most intrinsically itself and has the most genuine prospects for the future. I have already emphasized several times that these "dissident" movements do not have their point of departure in the invention of systemic changes but in a real, everyday struggle for a better life here and now. The political and structural systems that life discovers for itself will clearly always be—for some time to come, at least—limited, halfway, unsatisfying, and polluted by debilitating tactics. It cannot be otherwise, and we must expect this and not be demoralized by it. It is of great importance that the main thing—the everyday, thankless, and never-ending struggle of human beings to live more freely, truthfully, and in quiet dignity—never impose any limits on itself, never be halfhearted, inconsistent, never trap itself in political tactics, speculating on the outcome of its actions or entertaining fantasies about the future. The purity of this struggle is the best guarantee of optimum results when it comes to actual interaction with the post-totalitarian structures.

XX

THE SPECIFIC nature of post-totalitarian conditions—with their absence of a normal political life and the fact that any far-reaching political change is utterly unforeseeable—has one positive aspect: it compels us to examine our situation in terms of its deeper coherences and to consider our future in the context of global, long-range prospects of the world of which we are a part. The fact that the most intrinsic and fundamental confrontation between human beings and the sys-

tem takes place at a level incomparably more profound than that of traditional politics would seem, at the same time, to determine as well the direction such considerations will take.

Our attention, therefore, inevitably turns to the most essential matter: the crisis of contemporary technological society as a whole, the crisis that Heidegger describes as the ineptitude of humanity face to face with the planetary power of technology. Technology—that child of modern science, which in turn is a child of modern metaphysics—is out of humanity's control, has ceased to serve us, has enslaved us and compelled us to participate in the preparation of our own destruction. And humanity can find no way out: we have no idea and no faith, and even less do we have a political conception to help us bring things back under human control. We look on helplessly as that coldly functioning machine we have created inevitably engulfs us, tearing us away from our natural affiliations (for instance, from our habitat in the widest sense of that word, including our habitat in the biosphere) just as it removes us from the experience of Being and casts us into the world of "existences." This situation has already been described from many different angles and many individuals and social groups have sought, often painfully, to find ways out of it (for instance, through oriental thought or by forming communes). The only social, or rather political, attempt to do something about it that contains the necessary element of universality (responsibility to and for the whole) is the desperate and, given the turmoil the world is in, fading voice of the ecological movement, and even there the attempt is limited to a particular notion of how to use technology to oppose the dictatorship of technology.

"Only a God can save us now," Heidegger says, and he emphasizes the necessity of "a different way of thinking," that is, of a departure from what philosophy has been for centuries, and a radical change in the way in which humanity understands itself, the world, and its position in it. He knows no way out and all he can recommend is "preparing expectations."

Various thinkers and known way out might broad "existential revolution" share the opinion that technological sleight of proposal for change, or ical, merely social, n political. These are all existential revolution intrinsic locus can only est sense of the word. become a generally et litical—reconstitution

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This planetary challenge in the world is, of course world, the only difference it takes. Heidegger reflects. There is no real evidence democracy of the traditional solutions that are any that the more room the pared to our world) f

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Various thinkers and movements feel that this as yet unknown way out might be most generally characterized as a broad "existential revolution." I share this view, and I also share the opinion that a solution cannot be sought in some technological sleight of hand, that is, in some external proposal for change, or in a revolution that is merely philosophical, merely social, merely technological, or even merely political. These are all areas where the consequences of an existential revolution can and must be felt; but their most intrinsic *locus* can only be human existence in the profoundest sense of the word. It is only from that basis that it can become a generally ethical—and, of course, ultimately a political—reconstitution of society.

What we call the consumer and industrial (or post-industrial) society, and Ortega y Gasset once understood as "the revolt of the masses," as well as the intellectual, moral, political, and social misery in the world today: all of this is perhaps merely an aspect of the deep crisis in which humanity, dragged helplessly along by the automatism of global technological civilization, finds itself.

The post-totalitarian system is only one aspect—a particularly drastic aspect and thus all the more revealing of its real origins—of this general inability of modern humanity to be the master of its own situation. The automatism of the post-totalitarian system is merely an extreme version of the global automatism of technological civilization. The human failure that it mirrors is only one variant of the general failure of modern humanity.

This planetary challenge to the position of human beings in the world is, of course, also taking place in the Western world, the only difference being the social and political forms it takes. Heidegger refers expressly to a crisis of democracy. There is no real evidence that Western democracy, that is, democracy of the traditional parliamentary type, can offer solutions that are any more profound. It may even be said that the more room there is in the Western democracies (compared to our world) for the genuine aims of life, the better

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the crisis is hidden from people and the more deeply do they become immersed in it.

It would appear that the traditional parliamentary democracies can offer no fundamental opposition to the automatism of technological civilization and the industrial-consumer society, for they, too, are being dragged helplessly along by it. People are manipulated in ways that are infinitely more subtle and refined than the brutal methods used in the post-totalitarian societies. But this static complex of rigid, conceptually sloppy, and politically pragmatic mass political parties run by professional apparatuses and releasing the citizen from all forms of concrete and personal responsibility; and those complex focuses of capital accumulation engaged in secret manipulations and expansion; the omnipresent dictatorship of consumption, production, advertising, commerce, consumer culture, and all that flood of information: all of it, so often analyzed and described, can only with great difficulty be imagined as the source of humanity's rediscovery of itself. In his June 1978 Harvard lecture, Solzhenitsyn describes the illusory nature of freedoms not based on personal responsibility and the chronic inability of the traditional democracies, as a result, to oppose violence and totalitarianism. In a democracy, human beings may enjoy many personal freedoms and securities that are unknown to us, but in the end they do them no good, for they too are ultimately victims of the same automatism, and are incapable of defending their concerns about their own identity or preventing their superficialization or transcending concerns about their own personal survival to become proud and responsible members of the *polis*, making a genuine contribution to the creation of its destiny.

Because all our prospects for a significant change for the better are very long range indeed, we are obliged to take note of this deep crisis of traditional democracy. Certainly, if conditions were to be created for democracy in some countries in the Soviet bloc (although this is becoming increasingly improbable), it might be an appropriate transitional solution that would help to restore the devastated sense of civic aware-

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ness, to renew democratic discussion, to allow for the crystallization of an elementary political plurality, an essential expression of the aims of life. But to cling to the notion of traditional parliamentary democracy as one's political ideal and to succumb to the illusion that only this tried and true form is capable of guaranteeing human beings enduring dignity and an independent role in society would, in my opinion, be at the very least shortsighted.

I see a renewed focus of politics on real people as something far more profound than merely returning to the everyday mechanisms of Western (or, if you like, bourgeois) democracy. In 1968, I felt that our problem could be solved by forming an opposition party that would compete publicly for power with the Communist Party. I have long since come to realize, however, that it is just not that simple and that no opposition party in and of itself, just as no new electoral laws in and of themselves, could make society proof against some new form of violence. No "dry" organizational measures in themselves can provide that guarantee, and we would be hard-pressed to find in them that God who alone can save us.

XXI

AND NOW I may properly be asked the question: What then is to be done?

My skepticism toward alternative political models and the ability of systemic reforms or changes to redeem us does not, of course, mean that I am skeptical of political thought altogether. Nor does my emphasis on the importance of focusing concern on real human beings disqualify me from considering the possible structural consequences flowing from it. On the contrary, if A was said, then B should be said as well. Nevertheless, I will offer only a few very general remarks.

Above all, any existential revolution should provide hope of a moral reconstitution of society, which means a radical renewal of the relationship of human beings to what I have called the "human order," which no political order can re-

place. A new experience of being, a renewed rootedness in the universe, a newly grasped sense of higher responsibility, a newfound inner relationship to other people and to the human community—these factors clearly indicate the direction in which we must go.

And the political consequences? Most probably they could be reflected in the constitution of structures that will derive from this new spirit, from human factors rather than from a particular formalization of political relationships and guarantees. In other words, the issue is the rehabilitation of values like trust, openness, responsibility, solidarity, love. I believe in structures that are not aimed at the technical aspect of the execution of power, but at the significance of that execution in structures held together more by a commonly shared feeling of the importance of certain communities than by commonly shared expansionist ambitions directed outward. There can and must be structures that are open, dynamic, and small; beyond a certain point, human ties like personal trust and personal responsibility cannot work. There must be structures that in principle place no limits on the genesis of different structures. Any accumulation of power whatsoever (one of the characteristics of automatism) should be profoundly alien to it. They would be structures not in the sense of organizations or institutions, but like a community. Their authority certainly cannot be based on long-empty traditions, like the tradition of mass political parties, but rather on how, in concrete terms, they enter into a given situation. Rather than a strategic agglomeration of formalized organizations, it is better to have organizations springing up ad hoc, infused with enthusiasm for a particular purpose and disappearing when that purpose has been achieved. The leaders' authority ought to derive from their personalities and be personally tested in their particular surroundings, and not from their position in any *nomenklatura*. They should enjoy great personal confidence and even great lawmaking powers based on that confidence. This would appear to be the only way out of the classic impotence of traditional democratic organizations,

which frequently seem formal confidence, and more on responsibility. It is only of every member of the community against creeping totalitarian structures should naturally of authentic social self-organization energy from a living dialectic which they arise, and where structures should also disappear. organization should be voluntary regulation. The constitution should be the not just a mere abstract notion.

Both political and economic the varied and versatile appearing and disappearing economic life of society goes management, which is precisely what all the theorists of socialism is, the genuine (i.e., informed) economic decision making, responsibility for their colleagues and discipline ought to be and self-discipline.

As is perhaps clear from systemic consequences of this type go significantly beyond parliamentary democracy. If "totalitarian" for the purpose should refer to the notion for the moment—as the system.

Undoubtedly this notice think it would be a foolish cause slowly but surely translated, separated from its

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which frequently seem founded more on mistrust than mutual confidence, and more on collective irresponsibility than on responsibility. It is only with the full existential backing of every member of the community that a permanent bulwark against creeping totalitarianism can be established. These structures should naturally arise from below as a consequence of authentic social self-organization; they should derive vital energy from a living dialogue with the genuine needs from which they arise, and when these needs are gone, the structures should also disappear. The principles of their internal organization should be very diverse, with a minimum of external regulation. The decisive criterion of this self-constitution should be the structure's actual significance, and not just a mere abstract norm.

Both political and economic life ought to be founded on the varied and versatile cooperation of such dynamically appearing and disappearing organizations. As far as the economic life of society goes, I believe in the principle of self-management, which is probably the only way of achieving what all the theorists of socialism have dreamed about, that is, the genuine (i.e., informal) participation of workers in economic decision making, leading to a feeling of genuine responsibility for their collective work. The principles of control and discipline ought to be abandoned in favor of self-control and self-discipline.

As is perhaps clear from even so general an outline, the systemic consequences of an existential revolution of this type go significantly beyond the framework of classical parliamentary democracy. Having introduced the term "post-totalitarian" for the purposes of this discussion, perhaps I should refer to the notion I have just outlined—purely for the moment—as the prospects for a "post-democratic" system.

Undoubtedly this notion could be developed further, but I think it would be a foolish undertaking, to say the least, because slowly but surely the whole idea would become alienated, separated from itself. After all, the essence of such a

"post-democracy" is also that it can only develop *via facti*, as a process deriving directly from life, from a new atmosphere and a new spirit (political thought, of course, would play a role here, though not as a director, merely as a guide). It would be presumptuous, however, to try to foresee the structural expressions of this new spirit without that spirit actually being present and without knowing its concrete physiognomy.

XXII

I WOULD probably have omitted the entire preceding section as a more suitable subject for private meditation were it not for a certain recurring sensation. It may seem rather presumptuous, and therefore I will present it as a question: Does not this vision of "post-democratic" structures in some ways remind one of the "dissident" groups or some of the independent citizens' initiatives as we already know them from our own surroundings? Do not these small communities, bound together by thousands of shared tribulations, give rise to some of those special humanly meaningful political relationships and ties that we have been talking about? Are not these communities (and they *are* communities more than organizations)—motivated mainly by a common belief in the profound significance of what they are doing since they have no chance of direct, external success—joined together by precisely the kind of atmosphere in which the formalized and ritualized ties common in the official structures are supplanted by a living sense of solidarity and fraternity? Do not these "post-democratic" relationships of immediate personal trust and the informal rights of individuals based on them come out of the background of all those commonly shared difficulties? Do not these groups emerge, live, and disappear under pressure from concrete and authentic needs, unburdened by the ballast of hollow traditions? Is not their attempt to create an articulate form of living within the truth and to renew the feeling of higher responsibility in an apathetic so-

ciety really a sign of some institution?

In other words, are not dynamic, and open communities" a kind of rudimentary of those more meaningful structures that might become the

I know from thousands mere circumstance of having ately created a deeper a evoked sudden and power among people who were a of thing happens only rarely who have worked together official structure. It is as if ceptance of a common ta enough to transform people though it gave their public than is seldom found elsewhere

Perhaps all this is only the Perhaps the moment the helped create will begin to who threaten us, however and again, one is shocked taminating, in various de tionships inside the threa

Yet even if that were the question I have posed.

We do not know the way and it would be an experience to see the little we do as to present ourselves, our vital problems as the only

Even so, I think that given post-totalitarian conditions the inner constitution of man beings and their id

The Power of the Powerless

ciety really a sign of some kind of rudimentary moral reconstitution?

In other words, are not these informed, nonbureaucratic, dynamic, and open communities that comprise the "parallel polis" a kind of rudimentary prefiguration, a symbolic model of those more meaningful "post-democratic" political structures that might become the foundation of a better society?

I know from thousands of personal experiences how the mere circumstance of having signed Charter 77 has immediately created a deeper and more open relationship and evoked sudden and powerful feelings of genuine community among people who were all but strangers before. This kind of thing happens only rarely, if at all, even among people who have worked together for long periods in some apathetic official structure. It is as though the mere awareness and acceptance of a common task and a shared experience were enough to transform people and the climate of their lives, as though it gave their public work a more human dimension than is seldom found elsewhere.

Perhaps all this is only the consequence of a common threat. Perhaps the moment the threat ends or eases, the mood it helped create will begin to dissipate as well. (The aim of those who threaten us, however, is precisely the opposite. Again and again, one is shocked by the energy they devote to contaminating, in various despicable ways, all the human relationships inside the threatened community.)

Yet even if that were so, it would change nothing in the question I have posed.

We do not know the way out of the marasmus of the world, and it would be an expression of unforgivable pride were we to see the little we do as a fundamental solution, or were we to present ourselves, our community, and our solutions to vital problems as the only thing worth doing.

Even so, I think that given all these preceding thoughts on post-totalitarian conditions, and given the circumstances and the inner constitution of the developing efforts to defend human beings and their identity in such conditions, the ques-

OPEN LETTERS

tions I have posed are appropriate. If nothing else, they are an invitation to reflect concretely on our own experience and to give some thought to whether certain elements of that experience do not—without our really being aware of it—point somewhere further, beyond their apparent limits, and whether right here, in our everyday lives, certain challenges are not already encoded, quietly waiting for the moment when they will be read and grasped.

For the real question is whether the brighter future is really always so distant. What if, on the contrary, it has been here for a long time already, and only our own blindness and weakness has prevented us from seeing it around us and within us, and kept us from developing it?

October 1978

Repor My Hou

“Reports on My House” dated January 6, 1979, events described in the later that year, in May. version of the reports (September 1979), under the name: Technical Notes (translation, slightly abridged).

SINCE August 5, 1978, I have been under surveillance by the police. The surveillance at different times indicate that the surveillance

PHASE ONE: From August 5, 1978, a car occupied by a pair of us (on two shifts every eight hours) had been parked at the end of the driveway to my house, where I now spend most of my time. A barricade of gravel, and from the driveway, a sign “No Entry.” At the end of August, the sign suddenly disappeared.

The police engaged in the surveillance. They stopped cars that were mentioned above, there were

Artistic Life under a Playwright President

BY ARNOST LUSTIG

Fresh back from Prague, our writer reports on an exciting year in the artistic community.



DENIS CAMERON/REX FEATURES LONDON

Following the revolution of November 17, 1989, Prague was suffused with enthusiasm. Today the mood is different; with no one knowing what the economic future may bring, insecurity prevails. The specter of unemployment and inflation looms over a land where there is immense pressure for change and the rules for everything are in flux. A certain pessimism is gaining in a beautiful country where only a year ago everybody was smiling about almost everything. Freedom, once a chimera, now a reality, is revealing a complex face.

At its outset, the Czechoslovak revolution differed in quality from the other uprisings in the rest of Eastern Europe. Called the Velvet Revolution, it contained an element of forgiveness, of national reconciliation. One English journalist marveled, "Look, a revolution where not even one window pane was broken." The Communist Party was not stripped of its riches. The communists were not tried and

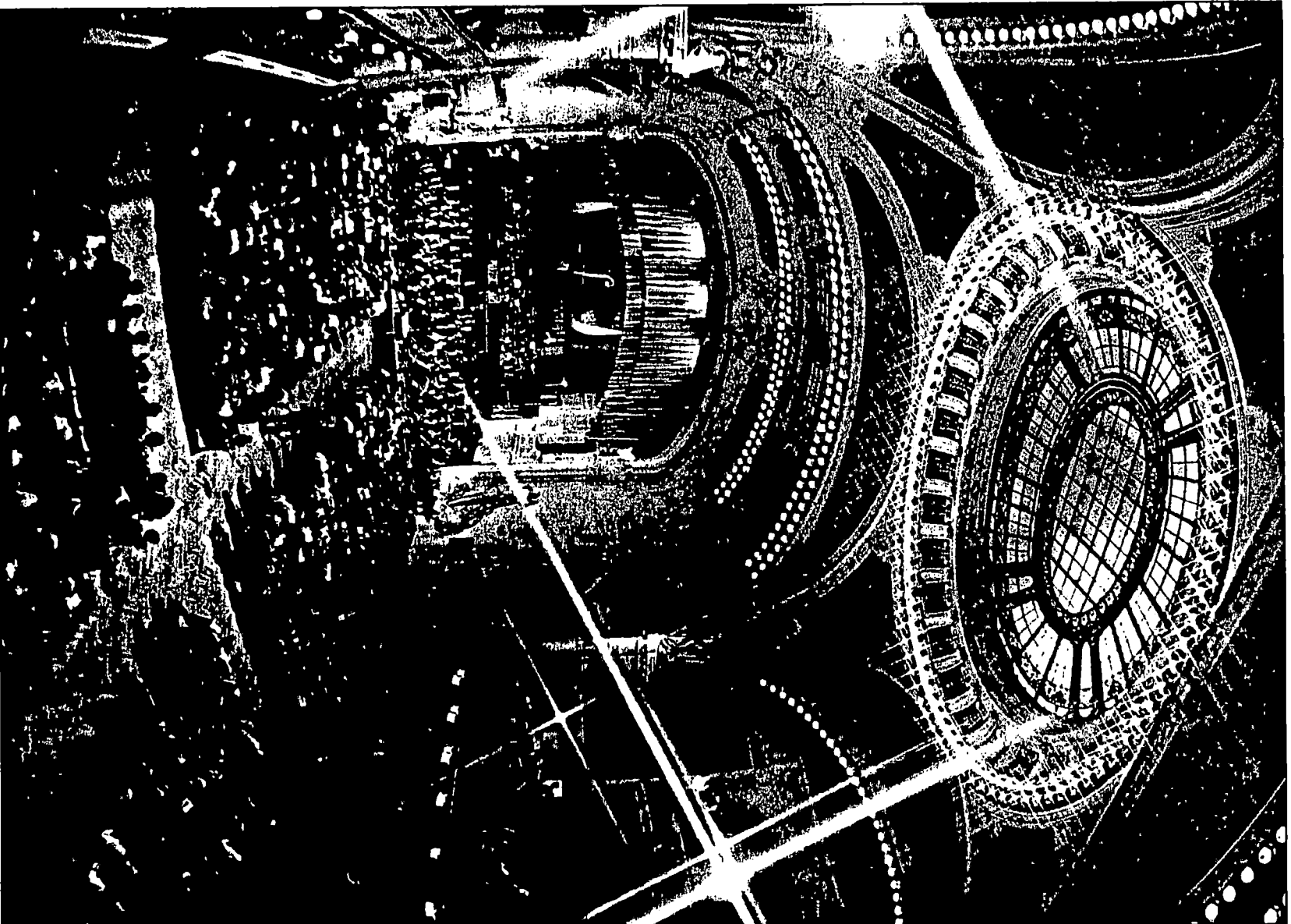
punished. One year later, however, the government moved to confiscate without compensation the party's properties (evaluated at \$250 million). Crowds in the streets were calling for banning of the party and prosecution of its leaders.

In November 1989, and in the following months, everything had looked rosy. The theaters were filled, as were the streets, with a euphoric population. The country, which had been devastated under communist rule, still seemed rich. Czechoslovakia had been one of the ten most industrialized nations in the world, even after two world wars. It still seemed more prosperous than at least a hundred other countries.

Artists were, and still are,

† *New York Times*, p. 14, October 14, 1990.

■ **Left:** Czechoslovak president and playwright Václav Havel. **Opposite:** Smetana Hall during this year's Prague Spring Festival.



ZDENEK CHRAPEK/COURTESY OF THE PRAGUE SPRING INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

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PLAYWRIGHT PRESIDENT



■ Writers Pavel Kohout (left) and Alexander Kliment.

powers (Germany, Austria, and Russia) who for hundreds of years strove to conquer and absorb them. Czech language and culture were slowly dying out over the span of many years until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Writers and other artists were the ones who resurrected and liberated the soul of the Czech people. Literature, painting, and music helped define and revive an almost extinct culture. Many names of the past such as Karel Havlicek Borovský, Josef Mánes, Mikoláš Aleš, Bedřich Smetana, Antonín Dvořák and others are enshrined in the memory of the people; they have always expected such commitment from their artists. In any hour of danger, artists stood with their nation. With its soul almost absorbed by its enemies, arts and artists became the people's last hope.

Target of Persecution

The very nature of Czech arts and artists is such that they have often been among the most persecuted elements in the country. But, with few exceptions, they never waived, never failed their country. They represented the best.

The Charter '77 movement was an instrument of change during the Brezhnev era and

the best gauge of the contemporary state of mind of the nation. Dissidents, particularly dissident artists, have for decades been the ones to shatter the seemingly impregnable monolithic structure of communism, perhaps the most decadent and corrupt system in the world. In late 1989 Communism fell like a house of cards in Europe. But in the space created by its downfall lies a great unknown: the future.

In Czechoslovakia the arts express the country's most eloquent and understandable lan-

guage at present. Writers, actors, painters, poets, playwrights, and the rest are the living barometer of the mood, hopes, and fears of the Czechoslovak people.

Why artists and the arts? In the first place, it was writers and playwrights who became the conscience of the land and its people, just as they once had in the past. This was not just by accident. At the very center of Europe, the territories of what now form Czechoslovakia were encircled by three formidable

■ Eda Kriseová, a writer and adviser to President Václav Havel.



during the continued Soviet occupation—its aim, to protest the failure to implement the human rights standards outlined in the Helsinki Accords signed by the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. With 273 members in a population of 15 million, the movement was led by Václav Havel, now president of the country. Many of its members were writers, musicians, actors, and playwrights; there were also priests, university professors, and workers—all the leading force for revolt.

Immediately after the 1989 revolution, the Melantrich publishing house, which used to take two years to publish a book, brought out in one week a book-length interview with Václav Havel. The book, *Disturbing the Peace: A Conversation with Karel Hvizdala*, published in the United States by Knopf, sold out in a single day. People waited all night in front of the bookstores to buy a copy. The hunger and thirst for the truth, for true art, for something stripped bare of lies, was enormous. Émigré writers such as Josef Skvorecký, Jiří Gruša, Milan Kundera, and others, and domestic writers such as Eda Kriseová (the George Sand of Czechoslovakia), Eva Kantůrková, Jiřiska Smetanová, Hana Bělohradská, and Lenka Prochazzková (all women) and Ladislav Mňačko, Lud-

vik Vaculík, Zdenek Urbánek, Bohumil Hrabal, Ota Pavel, and others had their works immediately published—and by the hundreds of thousands. There never seemed to be enough of the now free, but formerly forbidden, fruit.

After a few months, however, during the late spring and summer, the frenetic tempo in publishing settled down. The reasons for this are found in the economy: some ties with Big Brother in the east were broken, and there was a decrease in the flow of oil and paper. Publishing is in deep trouble. Publication of new as well as previously published books is being delayed. Warehouses are full of old, unmarketable books from the previous era that no one wants to buy. Discussions now center on the future of publishing in Czechoslovakia.

People now are reading more magazines and newspa-

pers than books. Even though paper of lower quality for newspapers is more readily available, it must be said that the journals such as *Respect*, *Reflex*, *Noviny*, *Literární Noviny*, *Lidové Noviny* (the Literary News), and *Svobodný Zítřek*—(the Free Tomorrow), are so full of highly charged news, articles, and commentaries that their emotional impact matches that of the most suspenseful thriller. There are more newspapers and magazines in Czechoslovakia today than an observer can count and even more are starting up every day. Some are dying, but there are still more than any one person can read.

The publishing houses, developing their capitalistic instincts and using whatever paper they can find, are struggling. They are currently publishing the work of virtually unknown international writers forbidden to them for decades, along with

PLAYWRIGHT PRESIDENT

classics long vanished from the bookshelves—including some Shakespeare plays. Under communism, all a writer had to say to have a book banned was echo Shakespeare that “even after the longest night comes morning.” Today, Albert Camus is fascinating the reading public of Czechoslovakia—mainly the younger generation, with his 1957 statement on receiving the Nobel prize:

Probably every generation sees itself as charged with remaking the world. Mine, however, knows that it will not remake the world. But its task is perhaps even greater, for it consists in keeping the world from destroying itself. As the heir of a corrupt history that blends blighted revolutions, misguided techniques, dead gods, and worn out ideologies, in which second-rate powers can destroy everything today, but are unable to win anyone over, in which intelligence has stooped to becoming the servant of hatred and oppression, that generation, starting from nothing but its own negations, has had to re-establish both within and without itself a little of what constitutes the dignity of life and death.

Writers and poets like Rudyard Kipling are also being rediscovered. Domestic classics, buried under the communist regime, are also making a comeback. Poets Srut, Kabeš, Jiřina Stroblová, and the greatest living one among them, Karel Sik-

tanc, are publishing the best of their work. Some trash is coming out, along with the classics, despite a paper shortage. Life is becoming normal again in Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately, the only good thing the communists did for the writers who supported the regime, and for some books, was to provide state subsidies, but these are gradually being abolished. Writers, publishing houses, and readers are all on their own. Is this good or bad? We shall have to wait to see.

Literary Backgrounds

Many writers became political protagonists and in turn public servants. Václav Havel is president of the country. Eda Kriseová, a splendid writer, is an adviser to the president. Zdenek Urbánek, an excellent writer of multidimensional stories (and a translator of Shakespeare, Tennessee Williams, Theodore Dreiser, and others) is ambassador-at-large as well as an adviser to Havel. Milan Uhde, the best playwright in Brno, Moravia, and a courageous dissident, is now minister of culture. Jaroslav Kořán, translator of Kurt Vonnegut, and a celebrated dissident, is now the mayor of Prague. The list is long.

There are not only prominent playwrights and writers but also painters. There were hundreds of painters forbidden to exhibit during the last forty years. And so it is no wonder

■ Josef Jíra (1929–), *Vzpomínka* (Circus), 1976.

that almost every day one sees the opening of a new exhibition of paintings—abstract or realistic; there are works in every conceivable mode and fashion. One of these artists is Josef Jíra, whose work was recently shown in the Mánes Gallery, the most prestigious art gallery in Prague. His life was like that of a character in a Kafka novel, rich in absurdity. First, he was banned for painting abstract art. Then some of the *nomenklatura* bought his paintings in secret, and he was only partially authorized to exhibit on occasion—a sort of limbo many painters found themselves in. Now he has freely exhibited his paintings, which are currently intriguing Prague.

Theaters, playwrights, and actors also played a leading role in the national revival in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially the Prague theaters, centering on the opera and drama projects of the National Theatre, which was built from the contributions of the people. But small theaters have also been important. They mushroomed in the time of relative liberalization of communism in the sixties, only to be suppressed by the six armies of the Warsaw Pact in August 1968. They are thriving once again. The most famous among them is the Semafor Theater, whose



COURTESY OF THE CZECHOSLOVAKIAN EMBASSY

guiding spirit is Jiří Suchý, one of the most talented people in the country, a composer, actor, playwright, and now the foremost private owner of a theater in Prague. Suchý, with the help of the late composer, Jiří Šlitr (who may have been killed by the communists) and composer Ferdinand Havlík, has helped carry on the famous Prague tradition of the theater of Jiří Voskovec, Jan Werich, and Jaroslav Ježek: political jokes, philosophy, and the well-known Czech

humor that helped the nation survive the unbelievable.

Suchý and his talented new partner, Jitka Molavcová, and their ensemble, including Věra Křesadlová (the wife of filmmaker Miloš Forman) and seasoned actors such as Svatopluk Beneš, are able to express what the Czech people feel. They are part of the nation's heart and soul. In these theaters you can sense the shape of the future, the way art and artists see it right now. Like the birth of freedom after more

than forty years, it will be difficult but the new born nation will be beautiful.

The condition of arts and artists in Czechoslovakia may not be as glorious as one might have hoped in November 1989. It can only get better. What matters most after all is to be free. ■

*Arnošt Lustig, a Czechoslovak novelist whose books include *Darkness Casts No Shadow* and *Diamonds of the Night*, currently teaches literature and film at American University in Washington, D.C.*

Dissident To President

VACLAV HAVEL, master of absurdist theater, philosopher of rebellion and veteran of Czechoslovakia's best prisons, becomes its head of state

BY WILLIAM A. HENRY III

A few months after the 1968 Soviet invasion ended the Prague Spring of intellectual freedom in his homeland, Czech playwright Václav Havel joined many of his countrymen lining up at the U.S. embassy in quest of a visa. Like most of those in the queue, he had something to flee from: the hard-line new government wanted him out and had banned his works from production or publication. Unlike most of the others, Havel had someplace to go: three of his plays had won acclaim in the West, and he had been offered both a job at New York City's prestigious Public Theater and a foundation grant to underwrite him in the U.S. for a year. But when a friend in the queue asked Havel if he really intended to leave, he said, "No, I don't think so. I think things will get very interesting here."

Interesting the past two decades have been. Also turbulent, irritating, at times humiliating and occasionally frightening. As one of a handful of prominent Prague intellectuals who chose neither to flee nor to fall silent but to fight back, Havel was jailed three times for a total of almost five years on the flimsiest of charges. One four-month stretch was served in a cell 12 ft. by 7 ft., which he shared with a burglar. A second imprisonment ended when he nearly died of pneumonia that was neglected, perhaps deliberately, by prison doctors. His last internment, four months of a scheduled eight, was in 1989 for participating in a flower-laying ceremony in memory of a student who set himself afire to protest the 1968 invasion.

When nominally free, Havel endured nonstop surveillance; friends who came to visit were sometimes turned away and harassed for the attempt. His homes and car were repeatedly and imaginatively vandalized, doubtless by ever-present security forces; repair workers whom he hired were threatened with police reprisals. The country cottage where he celebrated his 40th birthday was officially ordered vacated, one day later, as unfit for human habitation. Havel was never physically tortured, although on at least one occasion a policeman threatened, "Today you're going to get so beat up that you'll have your trousers full."

Through it all, Havel kept writing, kept publishing, kept

denouncing the communist system as a concatenation of lies, no less corrupting for being universally recognized as lies. He spurned every chance to redeem his fortunes by recantation or silence. When the system made him suffer, his suffering became the subject of his art. Forced for a time to work stacking empty beer barrels, he turned even that into two brief satires. Although the obvious villains in his writings were communist leaders, whom he sometimes denounced by name, his ultimate targets were fellow citizens, whose crime lay in getting along by going along. His moral courage was accompanied, as is often the case with self-selected martyrs, by flashes of stiff-necked arrogance. He seemed to mirror himself in the descriptive name of his most autobiographical character, Nettle, pricking the complacency of what he saw as a materialistic nation.

Zealous idealists rarely get a chance to lead, and when they do, they rarely show much aptitude for the give-and-take of politics, the careful timing, the restraint. Yet in an irony more exquisite than any he ever envisioned for the stage, Vaclav Havel became not only the conscience but also the commonsense leader of the mass movement that led to Czechoslovakia's orderly ouster of its communist leaders. Having inspired fellow citizens by his rhetoric and unrelenting example, he heard them demand that he take over as head of state. That was not for him, he said. He was a writer. In fact, his work so depended on being an outsider that he joked about asking the new government to put him back in jail two days a week. But the more he denied interest in the presidency, the more insistently his fellow citizens marched and sloganeered on his behalf.

Last Thursday the Parliament amended the presidential oath of office to eliminate the customary pledge of loyalty to socialism, a vow that the nonsocialist Havel likely would have refused to take. In the same session, Parliament honored Havel's determination to have "close by my side" another revered ghost from 1968. Alexander Dubcek, the former leader who launched the Prague Spring, was restored to a post of power, after two decades of internal exile, by being elected the legislature's new presiding officer. The stately transition was completed on Friday, when Prime Minister Marian Calfa, whose Communist Party colleagues so long denounced Havel as a slanderer of the state, praised him as "a man who is faithful to his beliefs despite persecution." After Havel was unanimously elected, he emerged to tell supporters, "I will not disappoint you, but will lead this country to free elections. This must happen in a decent and peaceful way so the clean face of our revolution is not sullied. It is a task for us all."

Havel insists he will serve only until elections for a new Parliament are held, probably in June. Like the political figure he is increasingly compared to, Poland's Lech Walesa, he seems to prefer being kingmaker to being king. But in the brave new world of Eastern Europe, all axioms have been reduced to theorems and all vows rendered interim. Many Czechs think Havel will seek a more permanent role in politics, a pursuit he seems to love—at least for this heady period of symbolizing freedom and basking in praise, before the hard task of transition sets in. He acknowledges that he does not know much about the intricacies of international economics or the Warsaw Pact, and some skeptics see him as susceptible to manipulation by other leaders of the Civic Forum revolutionary movement. But in times of philosophical upheaval, Plato may have

Profile

been right: the philosopher makes the best king. Havel has written acutely about the psychological and metaphysical impact of the communist years and about how the change to a free, capitalist society requires the restoration of a sense of individual responsibility. Without that lesson's being learned, details of governance will not matter.

As an artist, Havel has always been a political prophet, prone to jeremiads. In *Largo Desolato*, the hero faces unspecified tortures, which he can avert if he changes his name and declares himself not to be the author of his works. Although he ultimately says no, he wavers for a moment, and that is enough to satisfy the state. In *Temptation*, Havel retells the Faust myth in terms of the ego-driven distortions of truth committed by his compatriots. In the essay *The Power of the Powerless*, he lambastes an archetypal grocer who places a poster saying WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE in his shopwindow to prove himself orthodox and ensure his comfort. Dissecting the web of hypocrisies and self-deceptions that formed the social fabric of communist life, Havel argues for "living within the truth." He writes, "You do not become a 'dissident' just because you decide one day to take up this most unusual career. You are thrown into it by your personal sense of responsibility, combined with a complex set of external circumstances. You are cast out of the existing structures and placed in a position of conflict with them. It begins as an attempt to do your work well, and ends with being branded an enemy of society."

If Havel, 53, actually were an enemy of the society in which he grew up, it would be understandable. Long before he was singled out for his outspoken politics and insurrectionist art, he was subjected to discrimination because he was born to wealth. His father was a real estate developer. An even richer uncle owned hotels and the Barrandov movie studios, which remain the center of Czechoslovak filmmaking. One of his English-language translators, Czech émigré Vera Blackwell, has said, "If Czechoslovakia had remained primarily a capitalist society, Vaclav Havel would be just about the richest man in the country." Instead, by the time Havel was a teenager, the communists had dispossessed the family. More painful still, Stalinist rules barred youths of upper-class descent from full-time education beyond early adolescence. Undaunted, Havel took a menial job in a chemical laboratory and went to night school in an attempt to qualify for university study, but his application was rejected time and again. Intrigued by the theater, he signed on as a stagehand.

Finally, talent won out over bureaucracy. Within a few years he worked his way up to literary manager of the Theater on the Balustrade, Prague's principal showcase for the avant-garde. That made him a prominent part of the Prague Spring, which was not just a fleeting season but several years of increasing freedom, ferment and hope. Havel's first script, *The Garden Party*, a surreal satire of communist pedanticism, was produced at home in 1963 and in at least seven other nations—in 18 separate theaters in West Germany. British critic Kenneth Tynan lauded the play as "absurdism with deep roots in contemporary anxieties." The perspective in that and subsequent plays often reminded critics of Samuel Beckett, the Irish-born play-

wright of diminution and despair whose death was announced last week. Havel considered himself a disciple of Beckett's, although his work rarely shared the older writer's paralyzing hopelessness, and Beckett returned the compliment: his 1984 one-act *Catastrophe*, portraying the inquisition of a dissident, was an explicit tribute.

Havel's English-language reputation was secured with his second play, *The Memorandum*, in which a society's leaders imposed an artificial language, incomprehensible to everyone but nonetheless required for all transactions. It debuted in Prague in 1965 and reached the U.S. in May 1968 in an award-winning production by Joseph Papp's prestigious Public Theater in New York City. Havel attended the premiere. Three months later, Soviet tanks rolled through the streets of Prague. The political and artistic blossoming withered and died. The bureaucrats Havel had mocked were firmly back in charge.

He was soon out of a job at Balustrade. Although he continued to write for publication or production in the West, his public role in Prague shifted to politics. He became a principal organizer of Charter 77, a human rights organization designed to compel Czechoslovakia to honor

the commitments in existing treaties and its own constitution. As Havel argued, "If an outside observer who knew nothing at all about life in Czechoslovakia were to study only its laws, he or she would be utterly incapable of understanding what we were complaining about." Havel was first jailed in 1977. By August 1978, he was "free" under house arrest behind a barricade that said, ENTRANCE FORBIDDEN. When Havel asked police what offense he was charged with, he reported in *Technical Notes on My House-Arrest*, he "was only told that they had no instructions to pass such information on to me."

Even at low ebb, Havel was protected in some measure by his prominence

abroad. Authorities made no effort to uproot him from the handsome granite apartment block built by his father and also tenanted by his brother, where Havel has room after room lined with books and videotapes, the elegance tempered by big beer-hall ashtrays, overflowing with butts, on seemingly every table. The car that the police most often vandalized was a white Mercedes. Although his manner is earthy and direct and his short, dumpy frame and mustache bring to mind a small, playful walrus, Havel still has a touch of the patrician. He is accustomed to center stage and rarely brooks disagreement, even from friends. His marriage has endured a quarter-century and produced one of the century's most touching prison volumes, *Letters to Olga*, but friends say Havel can be as overbearing to her as to anyone else—which is very overbearing indeed. If Havel is the embodiment of moral rectitude to his nation, that is even more strongly the way he sees himself. His true passion is not for possessions or power but for giving life a purpose. That is why the people of Czechoslovakia were able to do last week what the government never could: persuade him to move out of the flat built by his father, with its sweeping views of the Vltava River and the Hradcany castle complex, across the river into the castle itself. It is Prague's presidential palace. And it is now, in an era of electric change, the dissident's home.

—With reporting by William Mader/London

"I will not disappoint you, but will lead this country to free elections in a decent and peaceful way so our revolution is not sullied."