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Czechoslovakia at the Crossroads

By GUS HALL

The crisis of Czechoslovakia has thrown into consideration a number of questions of great significance, affecting problems far beyond its borders. They are questions affecting developments far beyond the present moment. They cannot be solved by oversimplified answers. They are complicated due to the fact that they are encased in contradictions and contradictory developments. These are questions of facts—but these are also questions of policy, of theory.

Emotional reactions are not a sufficient enough base for sound judgments of complicated questions. In moments like this, questions cannot always be resolved on the basis of what are momentary popular reactions to them. As you know, a revolutionary party must have the courage, if necessary, to stand up against a main current and even stand in opposition to positions taken by the non-Communist Left forces.

A revolutionary party must work to avoid such divergences and divisions, but if such a path is not momentarily available, then it must take the best possible course of action that will help to create the conditions of unity on principle at a later date. Unity on a position of opportunism is unity built on sand. This is one of the important elements that distinguishes a revolutionary from a liberal, from a reformer.

We seek ties and close relations with masses, but there are moments when a revolutionary party must take a firm principled stand regardless of its momentary effects on its public image or its relations with others. During such initial moments even the slightest evasion of a principled truth is rank opportunism.

An opportunistic position gets the usual flattery of the enemy, the momentary applause of the misled or the confused, but it soon erodes the foundation of confidence; it is deadly for the long haul.

In a basic sense, the questions that have surfaced in the Czechoslovakian crisis are problems related to the specific stage in the revolutionary transition from the world of capitalism to the world of socialism. They are questions related to the present economic, political and ideological level in the building of socialism. They are related to the balance-relationship between the world of capitalism and the world of socialism. They are questions of relationships between building socialism in one country, but within the framework of a world socialist community that is in struggle against world imperialism. Any attempt to deal with the questions that have emerged as a result of the Czechoslovakian crisis by ignoring this reality surrounding it, is non-Marxist. They cannot be studied in isolation. There is no such thing as a principled concept that can be discussed in entirety in an abstraction. Abstractions and studies in isolation play an important part in any scientific probe but are only one aspect of such a process. To ignore the reality of the surroundings and the relationship with this reality would lead nowhere. If the socialist world did not have world imperialism to deal with, its internal processes would be different, the relationship of the part to the whole would be different in the world socialist family. What happens in Czechoslovakia effects this struggle.

At this stage of developments, it is necessary to deal with three sides of the crisis. First, the factors that led to the crisis; second, the problems that led to the military action by the five Warsaw countries and third, the reaction of the Communist world to the crisis.

When the military action of the Warsaw countries took place, our Secretariat met the same day. Needless to say, the situation had taken a sharp turn. After the discussion the Secretariat decided that it was impossible for the Party to keep silent. Therefore, as a first step the Secretariat decided that we should issue a statement in my name.

Even with the benefit of some hindsight, it seems to me that our statement was an honest, balanced and correct response to the situation. We did not panic; we did not permit ourselves to be swept up by the most massive effort to blitzkrieg all forces, including our Party, into a world wide anti-Soviet anti-socialist binge. It is most interesting that the people in general were not swept into any hysterical movement. It was nothing like during the Hungarian events of 1956.

A Special Responsibility

At a moment when the forces of imperialism are desperately combing and grasping for every possible scrap of material from "Communist sources" in order to use it in their attempt to panic the masses into supporting their reactionary aims, it places a special responsibility on Communists not to play their game. This consciousness is dictated by a class partisanship. During the 1956 Hungarian events the Socialists of Italy broke ranks and joined the reactionary crusade against the Soviet Union. Comrade Togliatti had some very interesting advice for them. I think it is as applicable today as it was then. He said: "I would like to say this to our socialist comrades as well as to my democratic friends—the *place of the workingman, the place of the man of the people who has a sense of revolutionary reality, is on the side of revolution and not on the side of reaction*" and to this he added: "And then when the battle is won (when the crisis is over) we will continue to debate about the mistakes and on how to correct them—but *above all—we must not lose the conception of the place of those who fight for socialism and for peace.*" I am sure this reads as well in Italian as it does in English. It seems to me it is as good advice to Communists as it was to Socialists.

The second thoughts of many about the Czechoslovakian crisis, including of some parties, have been corrections of their initial reactions. This is a form of criticism of their first thoughts. I think our second thoughts can only confirm the correctness of our first thoughts. I am happy to report to you that by and large our Party—the membership and the leadership—has reacted very well. Our Party membership did not break or panic. But as you know, some members of our National Committee have broken ranks and issued statements to the capitalist press breaking with the position of the Secretariat. We said we did not have enough information to know whether there were other alternatives. These comrades thought they had enough to condemn it. These individual actions by members of this National Committee created a special problem.

We should not confuse questions having to do with political differences and the right to express them in our Party through established channels, with acts—with actions that clearly have nothing in common with principles of democratic centralism. We do not want to confuse political differences with acts that have nothing to do with working-class concepts of organization. We cannot condone or pass over these acts because if we do, it will

destroy our Party. We have worked too hard and too long to rebuild this Party to permit a repetition of irresponsibility that almost destroyed this Party some years ago. In our Party structure there is no room for such behavior because one must answer where does this leave such principled questions as Party unity; Party discipline; democratic centralism and so on. No one can set himself above the Party.

A Creeping Paralysis

Now, about the Czechoslovakian crisis, let me read to you an assessment of a past event:

"... the undermining of the Party by its rigid, doctrinaire and fanatical leadership, and by destructive and reckless criticism, by factional division, had gone so far that the enemies of Socialism saw a perfect opportunity to overthrow the government altogether by annihilating the Marxist-Leninist Party."

That is from Comrade Aptheker's very correct assessment of what led to the Hungarian crisis of 1956. It is true that the crisis of Czechoslovakia is not an exact replica of the 1956 events but it is also true that the events and the developments leading to it are painfully similar in many important ways. There was the weakness of the old leadership that led to serious difficulty; the mistakes made in the process of trying to correct them; the differences, discussions and factions in the Party leadership and the ability of the anti-Socialist forces to use both the weaknesses of the leadership and the grievances of the people. The result in both situations was a creeping paralysis of leadership and a creeping political counter-revolution. In Hungary the process reached the point of explosion. In Czechoslovakia it would have followed a similar path.

A crisis developed in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia because the advice of Gomulka was not heeded, that is, "we must not allow anyone to use the process of democratization to undermine Socialism."

The crisis in Czechoslovakia is a product of both the weaknesses of the old leadership and the mistakes of the new in the process of trying to correct the old mistakes. The need for democratic and economic reforms were not at issue in the crisis during the last weeks.

Many of the new mistakes resulted from not having a deep enough understanding of the nature of the old mistakes. For example, it is now obvious that in Czechoslovakia there are, and have been, serious ideological weaknesses in the Party; in the mass organizations and amongst the youth. This must be laid at the doorstep of the old leadership. Their bureaucratic, administrative approach to problems contributed to this end. The ideological life of the Party and in the mass organizations became dehydrated. Had the new leadership correctly assessed the seriousness of this weakness, it would not have made some of the new mistakes. The new leadership admitted in May of this year "that they were surprised; that they were caught off guard at the speed of the emergence of the anti-Socialist upsurge," but instead of taking steps to head off the counter-revolution, they kept talking about how the people of Czechoslovakia were loyal to Socialism. I am sure they were right, there was a loyalty to the ideal of Socialism, but loyalty to Socialism that is not organized to fight anti-Socialist elements creates no assurance for the defense of Socialism. Loyalty is only a feeling that must be organized and mobilized before it becomes political power.

More than any other Socialist country Czechoslovakia needed economic reforms. Their equalitarian wage system made a new system of material incentives almost impossible. The old leadership talked about reforms—but they tried gimmicks instead as the solution. The new leadership did not take the matter to the workers. They put forward ideas that opened the path to non-Socialist concepts.

Needed Democratic Reforms

More than any other Socialist country Czechoslovakia needed democratic reforms. There was a need to do away with the highly centralized state and Party systems. These were necessary changes in the Czechoslovakian situation. But the three problems; ideological weakness; the need for economic reforms and the need for democratic reforms, become in a sense a vicious circle. This was true in the period of the old leadership and it was true since last January. It was difficult to make reforms in a situation where the people were not ideologically and politically prepared. In such a situation anti-Socialist forces can demagogically use the many processes of reforms and corrections. Such reforms even under the best conditions do create temporary dislocations and hardships.

Why is it that these problems did not show up before 1963? After 1948 Czechoslovakia had a period of unprecedented economic growth. 1948 to 1965 their industry had a five fold increase. Wages of industrial workers increased 127%.

By 1955 they possibly had the highest standard of living in the Socialist world.

This growth rate was possible because of the old industrial base, including a reservoir of skilled man power. It was possible because of its economic relations with the Soviet Union. The truth is that to a large extent the Soviet Union has subsidized the industrial development of most—if not all—of the other socialist countries.

The fast economic growth was a positive development. But this great expansion also covered up some defects. The annual wage increases for all workers served as a material incentive. The ideological problems did not show up as long as the economic expansion continued.

Problems of the democratic structure did not come to the surface in that expansive period. There is a limit, however, to this type of industrial expansion. It is limited by the available labor force. It is limited because of the need of capital for renewal of machinery and for new technology. It is obvious Czechoslovakia for some time should have had smaller annual wage increases and put more into industrial machinery and technological development.

Starting with 1963, the growth rate started to decline. The climb of real wages slowed down, reflecting this decline. Wages did not decline but the rate of growth did slow down.

It was at this point that some of the defects began to show up.

The declining rate in wage increases did not serve as the material incentive. The cumulative effect of the long period of poor ideological work began to appear. The people did not respond to administrative measures, including those that were necessary. The economy needed a rise in labor productivity. For this it needed a system of material incentives.

The old leadership was not able to respond. The situation became increasingly critical.

The pressure for more basic changes in these critical areas grew in the Party—in the leadership.

It reached a critical point at the January meeting of the Communist Party.

Novotny and others were removed because of their refusal to work for changes.

Pent-up Grievances Emerged

During the expansive years, the bureaucratic ways of the leadership also did not come under sharp attack. Now all the pent up grievances came to the fore. The new leadership should have opened up the path for a planned, orderly transition of economic and democratic reforms. Instead it opened up the flood gates for a tide that created anarchy—a tide that swept in with it the forces of counter-revolution.

Since January the leadership faced the task of making corrections.

But the Party leadership became divided. The center forces of the leadership joined with the right wing elements in the struggle against the left. In this process the right-wing elements moved into leadership positions. Under this pressure the policies of the Party, in general, moved to the right. The Party had its guard up against the left danger, but its guard was down, it became paralyzed and helpless in the struggle against the right. Each new concession to the right elements only further opened the door to anti-socialist forces. When there is no effective struggle against a right trend, there can be no end to its development.

The doors to counter-revolution were open as long as no one gave leadership in the struggle against these forces.

The situation created confusion and demoralization in the ranks of workers and the Party. As this was happening, the leadership only used it to make further concessions to the Right. It became a vicious circle. With each concession the right elements became bolder and without leadership the revolutionary elements became confused and demoralized. This situation continued for seven months.

During these months the Parties of the other Socialist countries had many discussions with the Czechoslovakian leaders. They urged them to end the drift to the right. At each stage the Czechoslovakian leaders agreed and promised to do something, but they never did.

If one is to judge from the public speeches of some of the Czechoslovak leaders since the Moscow agreement, these individuals do not seem to have changed their line.

It seems to me that such leaders are still appealing to the right wing. They are blaming the Soviets for the steps they have to take now. This is not the way to mobilize the healthy, pro-socialist forces. It seems these forces are again doing what they did before. They are not telling the people "there is a danger from the right; from the anti-socialist forces. We must defend our socialism—we have to put an end to counter-revolution. Therefore, we want your support and active help in doing just that."

They should explain that it is necessary to take action to curb reaction. They must announce that the reason for these actions is not because the Soviet troops are present but because the anti-socialist forces are present.

It seems such individuals are continuing the old mistakes in this new setting. They are not giving leadership to the pro-socialist forces. And to the anti-socialist forces they are saying: "We are forced to take some formal steps against you—because the Russians are here."

Such a position cannot set into motion an ideological struggle for the defense of socialism. Maybe it is too soon to expect such a turn in the leadership but let us read Smrkovsky's speech on returning from Moscow:

"... We knew the world sympathized with us but that the big powers would accept a compromise rather than anything else. In these conditions we found ourselves in a dilemma with no way out."

Is this not saying—we expected big powers to act against the five socialist powers? The imperialist powers preferred to compromise, therefore, we had to compromise. Is that the attitude of a socialist man?

That is again an appeal to the right—to backwardness and to materialism. More, it is itself classless nationalism.

Is it not an appeal to the backward?

Instead of condemning world imperialism for its contriving attempts to interfere; for its support for counter-revolution; for

its military maneuvers, Smrkovsky says we had to agree because the imperialist powers were not ready for a military confrontation. He is saying, too bad for us because imperialism did not take military action.

Was this not the meaning of the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister's actions at the United Nations?

President Svoboda in the name of the leadership sent him a message saying "We do not need the United Nations. We are going to settle this between the Socialist countries." The Foreign Minister received the message but arranged it so that he could say he received it after he made the speech at the U.N. when in fact he received and knew the contents of the message long before he spoke.

It is clear many have yet to draw the necessary lessons—the lessons from the viewpoint of the class struggle, from the viewpoint of the struggle against world imperialism.

There are some differences in the events of 1956 in Hungary and today. The main danger in Hungary was the inaction of the Nagy leadership. It failed to act against a creeping counter-revolutionary movement and finally decreed the neutrality of Hungary. Each measure of retreat strengthened counter-revolution and in the end the Nagy Government became totally inoperative. It lost control of events which were finally taken over by the open counter-revolutionary forces. The weaknesses developed to their inevitable end when there was no struggle against them.

How Imperialism Worked

Today, because of the power of the socialist countries and their knowledge that the socialist states will not allow counter-revolution in Czechoslovakia as well as in other countries, the forces of imperialism have been working more cunningly. At this stage they have been supporting "progressive" movements while they conducted terror and discredited the so-called "conservatives," those who worked to maintain Marxist-Leninist concepts. After these forces succeed in terrorizing and eliminating Marxist-Leninists and creating non-Party leadership bodies in trade unions and in other people's organizations—as they have been doing in Czechoslovakia—then the problem of fighting counter-revolution becomes much more serious and difficult.

As in Hungary, the anti-Socialist forces in Czechoslovakia have had successes in using and bringing out all the disgruntled elements. This includes many who have legitimate grievances as well as unreconstructed dangerous elements. Postponement of necessary economic reforms created problems of temporary unemployment. This was used for lining up workers. The extreme measures of expropriation and socialization—including one-man barber shops and also shoe-repair shops—created a large disgruntled petty bourgeois sector. This was seen in the fact that after January, tens of thousands of people in Czechoslovakia made applications for a return of their private property. Some asked for shops which included the right of exploitation. The *Wisconsin Progressive* magazine had a very interesting report from its writer in Prague, which stated:

“If the young are impatient with the tempo of the New Communism, those elements on the Right which would like to go back, *not to Masaryk, but to Hapsburg*, are hopeful that extremism will push the door far enough open to send the Communists through it and out, *and restore the dream of private ownership and private profit*. These are the middle-aged and even young people of this sort, born entrepreneurs, who for twenty years have knelt facing West to say their evening prayers. But the bulk of the rightist pressure is among the unreconstructed elderly, certainly including a large minority at least, of churchgoers and clergy.” (Issue of June 1968, Italics added.)

A big Chicago business executive who left Prague before the tanks came, said: It's a crime. The Czechs were ready to really move. They wanted to open their country to Western trade—Western methods. Several ministers told me how good it felt to be free. I did not feel I was dealing with Communists.” He left his business in the hands of his European agent, a West German national.

Also, one has to remember that the Eastern European area has a pre-war history of backwardness and extreme nationalism. It cannot be overcome in 20 years, especially with poor ideological work by the Communist Party. For years U.S. imperialism—the C.I.A.—has financed large institutes specializing in the use of nationalism in socialist countries. They are mainly staffed by ex-Left wingers and liberals. And as we know, some parties in the Socialist world make their appeal to the nationalism of the people rather than

on the basis of class and Socialism. In this way they are trying to skip an ideological stage. They do not build a reservoir of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist ideology. Is this not so in Yugoslavia and Rumania? With this nationalist appeal they are leaving the ideological door wide open. This weakness will come to haunt these Parties. How else could we explain the disgraceful fact that an organized committee representing Prague students took an official apology to the U.S. Embassy because some North Vietnamese students demonstrated in front of their building? They collected money and bought an American flag to replace the one the Vietnamese had burned and they presented it to the U.S. Embassy and applauded while a U.S. Marine hoisted the flag to the pole. Most likely the CIA paid for the flag, but what is important is that they were able to get Prague students to present it. Some of these same Prague students physically attacked the North Vietnamese students who were picketing in Prague against U.S. imperialist aggression. This unbelievable tale is further emphasized by the fact that last January the Communist Party under the Novotny leadership organized a youth demonstration against U.S. imperialist aggression in Vietnam. It was later found out that some students and youth organization leaders had organized a boycott of the demonstration. Because of this, about 100 students showed up at the demonstration. This is political ideological backwardness; it is classlessness. This is only an example of the process of deterioration and the illusions about U.S. imperialism. Such elements are not devoted to socialism. One is compelled to ask: Is this a solid base on which to rest the defense of socialism? Is this not fertile soil for counter-revolution—for confusion? What further adds to the danger is that the new leadership took no counter measures against these unbelievable actions by Prague students. They played it down as if it had no meaning. What were some of the other forms of counter-revolution? The right wing Social Democratic Party organized its ranks into a national center and into a number of clubs. It announced a date for its national convention; it received money, money from abroad. It published a newspaper; issued statements, leaflets; it was openly anti-Soviet and openly harangued against the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia. The Club 231 movement became gathering places for counter-revolutionaries. This movement was based on ex-prisoners and also included relatives and friends of ex-prisoners. One must keep in mind that members of these clubs did not only include persons who had been unjustly placed in prison but they included ex-fascists and others who had been released from prison.

They held meetings—they had T.V. interviews with U.S. and West German T.V. networks.

How the C.I.A. Operated

In Czechoslovakia since January, as if from nowhere, a number of organizations came to life. In this connection it is interesting that the ex-CIA head of the division supervising the softening-up of Socialist and newly independent countries, in outlining the organizational forms which he supervised, stressed that wherever possible, counter-revolutionary operations should proceed through established organizations; organizations that have mass support; organizations that have a legitimate reason to exist. In Czechoslovakia old organizations that had been in moth-balls for years were revived. This is the case of the Czechoslovakian Anti-Fascist Federation. Obviously there was a time when it must have played a progressive role. Many of the leaders have been members of it. Now it was reorganized. Their bulletin states that it is now *an action organization*, that it is now a *political organization*, and that its task is the "*persistent elimination of all elements of deformation as well as those who have caused it.*" This was a plan for terror against Communists. It became the base for organizing the veterans into an anti-socialist formation. Interesting that in their material there is not one word about defending or building socialism. They were calling for a nation-wide rally in October.

There took place the reorganization of the Slovak Democratic Party. It also openly called for elections in Czechoslovakia "to be supervised by the U.S. Britain and France." They called for the return of collectivized farms to former owners by October 1st. They called for banning the Communist Party and the Communist Party press.

The old Sokol—sports organization—and the boy and girl scouts were organized for the struggle. These forces could have been nipped in the bud, but again as in Hungary, the Communist Party was paralyzed by factional fighting. The top leadership of the Czechoslovakian military cadre was demoralized by factions and factional struggles. The security forces were confused and demoralized. The border guards did not know what the policies were. Communist Party members received no leadership and they received no protection in spite of the increasing attacks. In this

growing confusion, anti-socialist elements took over the leadership of local government bodies; they took over leadership of organizations and most important, for months had control of the press, radio and the T.V.—and for some time not a voice of resistance, of opposition to this direction of developments was heard in Czechoslovakia. The open anti-socialist forces became bolder. It seems to me the thing was getting out of control.

The week before the military action by the Warsaw Pact countries, there were ten to twelve thousand West Germans in Czechoslovakia. The West German Government admits there were 8,000; there were three to four thousand Americans in Czechoslovakia, besides the large numbers of Italians, French and British. Of course, most of these were students on vacation; of course there were businessmen amongst them, but one would have to be totally blind not to see that there was a worldwide mobilization of the ideological and political cadre of imperialism in Czechoslovakia. Many CIA operators in the U.S.A. and especially those with a liberal or socialist coloration had left for Prague during those weeks. The lead story in the *People's World* picked up from a San Jose paper, says that the State Chairman of the Young Americans for Freedom in California declared that he had just returned from Czechoslovakia "organizing students against communism." In fact, I believe, there was a larger anti-socialist force in Czechoslovakia than there was a few weeks before the open counter-revolution in Hungary in 1956. The situation was heading for a confrontation.

The Bratislava agreement could have been helpful. But the leadership did not fight for it. Instead of fighting for the agreement, the Czechoslovakian leaders went on T.V. and lifted their fingers in a V-for-victory sign. This created more confusion. The leadership lost the support of honest people because of this. Thus they were even less able to fight the anti-socialist forces. The reason the whole Czechoslovak Presidium met with the CPSU Politburo at Cierna was that members had lost confidence in the officials.

For example, some of the officials had received the invitation to the Warsaw meeting by letter personally and by phone. They never told the other members of the Presidium and later in the name of the Presidium told the world in the answer to the letter of the five Parties that they received the invitation too late. This loss of confidence in each other only added to the confusion—to the paralysis of the leadership.

The "2000 Word" Article— A Program of Counter-Revolution

Particularly alarming in this respect was the publication on June 27 of a "2000 Word" statement issued by 70 intellectuals which was carried in *Literarni Listy* (Prague) and six other Czechoslovak newspapers. It was also carried on radio and television. This article, addressed to workers, peasants, office-workers, scientists, artists and all citizens, was a *platform of counter-revolution*. Under cover of liberalization it tried to wipe out the gains made since 1948. It sought to discredit the Communist Party and its guiding role, and to undermine the fraternal relations of Czechoslovakia with its socialist allies.

The "2000 Word" article proposed that the people make their own decisions employing such methods as demonstrations, strikes and boycotts in order to get rid of Party cadres and personalities devoted to the socialist cause.

They demanded "the establishment of our own civil committees and commissions"—in short, to take over power.

They pledged to act with arms in hand for the leadership which they would select. This was an appeal for an armed counter-revolution. This appeal contained much demagogic phrasing such as the need for Communists in the government, but Communists of a particular kind. Does this article not point up the danger from counter-revolution? It became the rallying point for all anti-socialist forces.

Let me read you some sentences from the appeal:

Describing the past of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia which had fought fascism and erected Socialism, it wrote "*The Communist Party betrayed the great trust the people put in it after the war. It preferred the glories of office until it had those and nothing more. The leadership of the Party changed it from a political and ideological group into a power-hungry organization, attracting egoists, cowards and crooks.*" Is this a criticism; or is this not the language of counter-revolution?

The statement then goes on attacking the ideas of Socialism and the revolution of 1948. This is done in devious language but its meaning is clear for those who want to see. It stated:

"The process of revival is not producing anything new. Many of its ideas are older than the errors of Socialism in our

country. These errors (and this refers to the basic ideas of Socialism—G. H.) should have been exposed long ago but they were suppressed . . . Their victory was decided by the weakness of the old leadership, aggravated by the accumulation of *mistakes of 20 years of misrule* (G. H. emphasis). All the defects in the ideology of this system were nourished until they matured."

In other words, *in the opinion of these intellectuals, the mistakes made sprang from the very nature of the system of Socialism and came from misrule originating in 1948*, when the workers took power. They called for wiping out the 20 years of Socialism. Is this, or is this not counter-revolution?

The statement continues:

"The days immediately ahead of us will determine our future course for many years to come . . . Each of us will have to take the responsibility for drawing his own conclusions."

But the document had already drawn the conclusion: They must wipe out the 20 years of Socialism!

The statement then declares "We should support the progressive wing of the Communists . . ." "The progressives are fighting for democracy—the conservatives are fighting to keep their cushy jobs."

"Workers will help themselves if they elect trade union representatives who are capable and honest, natural leaders without regard to party membership . . ."

"Let us demand the resignation of those who have abused their power . . ."

"We must find ways to induce them to leave. Such steps include public criticism, resolutions, demonstrations, collecting funds for their retirement, strikes and boycotts . . ." Is this a program of correcting weaknesses, or is this a program for confusion and disruption?

"Let us demand public *meetings of national committees*, and on questions which the officials refuse to consider, let us set up *special citizens committees and commissions* to deal with the problems . . ." Is this criticism or is this not anarchy?

"Let us change the district and local press . . . or *let us start newspapers.*"

"Let us establish committees for the defense of free speech . . ."

"Let us have marshals to maintain order at our meetings . . . Let us unmask informers." "Informers" for whom? What were they worried about?

Now, let us understand this platform. This is being urged at a time when the process of democratization has been under way. This was not a call for reforms. The Party was leading such a movement.

Was this not a platform of counter-revolution? If it wasn't, then what was it? A program for development of Socialism, perhaps? This was not just words. It became the real action program. With demagoguery—with terror, they were forcing honest people out of leadership positions in government and in trade unions. The "2000 Words" became the legal and political structure for counter-revolution.

The foreign press understood its significance. For example, Count Razumofsky in the Frankfurter Zeitung characterized it "as the first beginning of a way to change the path away from Moscow." He called, moreover, for a campaign to abolish the armed people's militia.

How Did the Leadership Deal With the "2000 Word" Article of Counter-Revolution?

At first they did nothing. Only after pressure from the other Socialist countries did the leadership denounce the statement as showing the heightening activities of the anti-Socialist forces. But subsequently, in reply to the Five Party letter, it again played down the threat, stating that things were under control. It even published a statement by the authors of this counter-revolutionary appeal that they did not have in mind the undermining of the fundamentals of Socialism in Czechoslovakia. The authors thanked Dubcek for such understanding treatment but they continued their dirty business.

As late as July, Comrade Smrkovsky stated:

"The authors and signatories of the '2000 Words' which aroused such a commotion in the country, are representatives of conscientious and committed citizens" and that he individually sees behind it only honorable intentions.

Is this a way to deal with a document that had created such counter-revolutionary commotion?

The Czechoslovakian comrades acknowledged in their reply to the Five Party letter, and I quote: "There are now in progress in Czechoslovakia campaigns and underground instigations against individuals, executives and public figures, the members of the new leadership included . . ."

but again they did nothing. In fact, a veteran general who attacked the "2000 Words" in the Assembly became the victim of an attack. He had no defenders. He was publicly vilified.

After Bratislava, the activists of the counter-revolutionary forces did not cease. In desperation they became more aggressive. The public meetings critical of the leadership grew; demonstrations against the leadership grew; the campaign in the factories against those sympathetic to the Bratislava agreement grew; the signers of a letter to the Soviet Union in behalf of the Five Party letter were called "traitors" and persecuted. Petitions were being circulated for the abolition of the People's Militia.

The Presidium of the Central Committee criticized these actions, but beyond that, they did nothing. The press leadership was not changed. The radio and television was not taken in hand. No real rebuff was being given to the counter-revolutionary forces.

What was so obviously developing in Czechoslovakia was a creeping paralysis of leadership and creeping counter-revolution.

The leadership had shown itself too weak, too indecisive in a situation demanding resolute action to protect the gains of the past and to develop the program of democracy and socialism of the present.

This is the nub of the matter.

Some Facts About Arms

The facts about the anti-Socialist elements preparing for the armed phase have mainly come from Czechoslovakian Communists. When this was taken up with the leaders they promised immediate action. They would turn the matter over to the Minister of Interior, Gen. Pavel. He would report "Not true."

Now the facts are coming out. Arms have been found in the

basements of 11 Ministries—illegal and in most cases not known by the Ministries. Heavy machine-guns, hand-grenades, anti-tank guns. They have been found in Bratislava, Ostrava, Brno, Karlovy Vary and Prague. Tens of thousands of automatic weapons have already been discovered. They are of West German and U.S. make. The basement of the Press Club was stacked with weapons. Powerful mobile radio broadcasting stations—made in West Germany—never bought by the Czech Government have turned up. Someone called away border guards so the radio stations could be brought in.

There were secret printing shops—all set up. They set up full scale gallows in town squares—for practice, they hung Communist leaders in effigy. The center of the radio broadcasting operation of counter-revolutionary institutions in Czechoslovakia was in the West German Army building in Munich.

Delegates to the coming Congress were being appointed, not elected in many areas. The so-called underground Congress was not called by the Central Committee nor by the leadership. No Slovak representatives were present. The representatives of the armed services were not present. It was a rump congress.

Amongst the counter-revolutionary cadre that marched to Prague was Leo Cherne, a professional anti-Socialist organizer of the International Rescue Committee, widely believed to be a CIA agency—connected with Radio Free Europe. He drove into Prague from Vienna.

Sacha Volman heads up the Agrarian Institute in the Dominican Republic and was with the International Rescue Committee in 1956. He is a Rumanian emigre. He was the first from the United States to arrive in Budapest during the 1956 events. He drove from Vienna to Budapest at that time; was Director of the Institute of International Labor Research of which Norman Thomas was President. This was a CIA funded agency. Volman organized trips to the Dominican Republic in 1966 to give approval to their elections. Volman was on the scene in Czechoslovakia.

It now appears that some of the anti-socialist activities were directed and initiated from within the leadership itself. All old Communists were systematically eliminated from the security forces.

The forces across the border were set. A special force—in the hundreds—especially-trained Czechoslovak refugees trained in demolition and sniping and special group leaders had already crossed

the borders from West Germany.

They started to arrest Communist leaders.

Should we be surprised that U.S. and West German imperialists are so active—that they so carefully learned the lessons of 1956?

We should know better.

Hitler's Chief of General Staff in charge of intelligence for Eastern Europe was Gen. Gehlen who was picked up by the CIA after World War II. He heads the CIA's East European operations for West Germany and the U.S.A. as he had done for Hitler. His school for counter-revolution in West Germany graduates thousands of operators each year specially trained for operation in Eastern Europe.

Imperialism has never recognized the World War II settlement of the Sudeten area; the Polish area; Eastern Europe, etc. The "building of bridges" by U.S. imperialism was in fact the building of underground ideological tunnels. It was a part of the softening up process.

It is clear the situation was headed for an explosion.

We said in our statement: We do not have all the facts to determine whether all the alternatives were tried.

More Facts Now

Now we have more facts:

1. For seven months there were conferences, meetings, discussions between the Parties of the socialist countries and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. There was Bratislava and Ciernia. There were private meetings. The five Socialist countries asked Czechoslovakia to control its borders with West Germany and to take up the fight against the anti-socialist forces.

I think both the time and the alternatives ran out.

Once the open struggle would have started, the sacrifices would have been much greater.

As it was, Soviet soldiers were killed, but the report is that not one 5-power military forces shot even one bullet at any person in Czechoslovakia.

How to explain the fact that the leadership failed to act against the anti-Socialist forces in spite of its own admission that a

danger was growing, and in spite of its continued promises to do so. These are very important questions. There may be many reasons for this failure, including the growing influence of the right-wing in the leadership and the overall tendency to play down the right-danger and even to collaborate with it. This led to the outbreak of a factional struggle in the leadership. This has happened in many Parties, including in Hungary.

We should not be surprised because that happened in our Party during the struggle against the Right influence which resulted in the loss of our daily paper and almost in the liquidation of our Party. But the main ideological and political reasons, it seems to me, have been the argument of the leadership that action against the anti-Socialist and Right-wing forces would weaken the fight for democratization. They insisted that the Right could be weakened only by measures to correct the past. In a general sense that is true, in struggling to carry out a democratization program the prestige of the Party grows. In that sense it was a correct line. The weakness in that position, however, has been that it was one-sided and it failed to see the class-struggle. The Right-wing social forces were not working to democratize the country, but in the name of democracy and liberalism they were working to eliminate the Marxist forces in the country and to organize the anti-Socialist forces. Therefore, the fight to promote democracy and socialism demanded simultaneous struggle against the anti-Socialist forces. Those who failed to see that did not see the remnants of the class struggle in the country. The capitalist elements were not yet eliminated. They have been present in the trade organizations; in schools; in mass communications and in the Government. Hence the fact that they forgot the class struggle and most important the fact that they forgot the lessons of Hungary, explains the creeping paralysis of leadership.

The merger of the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party of Czechoslovakia took place after the working class under the leadership of the Communists had won power. For many Social Democrats, therefore, this was a marriage of convenience. They did not come to Marxist conclusions about the nature of the class struggle based on their experiences under capitalism. Many with such backgrounds have emerged into leading positions. Some have not completely shed their Social Democratic training.

Saving Socialism Is Supreme

There were people in our Party in 1956 who opposed the action of the Soviet Union in using armed force to save the Hungarian Revolution, but some now say that presuming it was necessary in 1956, that does not mean it is justified today. They say that in 1956 in Hungary, the counter-revolution revealed itself openly and *everybody* could see that it was necessary. Even this argument does not hold water because there were many people, including Communists, in 1956 who were so affected by the uproar of the capitalist press that they forgot the supreme demand of saving Socialism; who were so befuddled by the propaganda that they resolutely opposed the action of the Soviet Union and stood by their position even many months later. Some leading comrades very honestly admitted their error and said a very important and interesting thing: That the basis of their error was that they forgot strategy and historic concepts in the name of tactics. I think this statement is of the utmost importance in the struggle against opportunistic leanings today. It has been said that the danger does not exist now as it did in 1956 because then we had the cold war, we had the Dulles policy of containing Communism, etc.

I think such an assessment of the present moment is wrong. It is true at this moment that neither U.S. nor West German imperialism is ready to strike militarily.

But, does the danger end here? And even this can change in a matter of days.

The announcement of the end of the "containment" policy did not end U.S. imperialism's aggressive policies.

When, momentarily, imperialism does not feel it is ready for a military confrontation in some area, it does not end the danger of imperialism. In fact, that is exactly when it places a greater emphasis on the softening-up process. In such areas it multiplies its efforts in subversion; in infiltration.

Let us not have illusions. U.S. and West German imperialism have trained personnel on the spot ready to move—openly or secretly—whenever the softening-up process reached the point where there is enough confusion to move. There are such forces ready and in action for every socialist country in the world. It is clear Czechoslovakia was high on the list of West German and U.S. imperialism.

Some comrades keep saying—how come after 20 years of Socialism such a danger can emerge?

One of the reasons is that these hostile elements live that long.

When we establish a Socialist power in the U.S.A., I am sure we will have tens of millions of totally disgruntled individuals and their families. No matter what Socialism will do, they will remain disgruntled. You are not going to change the dispossessed rich, the Birchers, the Kluxers and the rest of the bigots. Like Dostoyevsky's mouse, they will brood and fester. They will influence some of the youth. After 20 years of Socialism most of them will still be around, brooding and festering.

Why after 20 years? Because, after 20 years there is still a world imperialism bent on infiltration, subversion and softening-up.

Why after 20 years? Because in 20 years you do not make a new society; you cannot yet have abundance and you cannot yet make the new socialist man.

Why after 20 years? Because the new society has not yet been perfected. In the process of building the new society there is an element of trial and error; there is the human weakness.

Why after 20 years? Because it takes time to undo the deep damage to human character left by capitalism. It takes time to straighten out the mess left by hundreds of years of exploitive systems.

The question is placed incorrectly. The real question is—how has it been possible to do all Socialism has done in a brief 20 years?

It is in this context that one must weigh the mistakes and weaknesses of the leadership.

If the leadership had not committed errors, they would have done better. We make no apologies for the errors, but we examine them in a different context than do the enemies of Socialism.

And I suppose someone could ask us—how come after 50 years of the Communist Party U.S.A. some of our comrades still make mistakes on basic questions?

Wrong or Right?

After this latest Moscow agreement some comrades have argued that, either the military action of the Warsaw Pact countries was

right and the present agreement is wrong, or the present agreement is a correction of a mistaken action in the first place. They say both actions cannot be right. This is the same argument the Mao group in the leadership of the Communist Party of China used after the Cuban missile crisis. They said the placing of the missiles in Cuba and withdrawing them after the agreement could not both be right. Such a statement of the question either in the Cuban missile crisis or the Czechoslovakian crisis is childish, demagogic, or simply lacks any seriousness. Of course, if one starts from the false premise that the action of the Warsaw Pact countries was an act of "aggression" with the aim of dominating Czechoslovakia, then such questions would have some semblance of meaning. That is not my starting point or the point of reference.

The Mao element in the Cuban crisis simply ignored the most fundamental fact, that it was the presence of the missiles in Cuba that stopped a new planned invasion by United States imperialism. This was the reason for the urgency of the missile build-up. And then they ignored the fact that it was the negotiations around their removal that was a big factor in getting an agreement against another invasion of Cuba. History has proven that both were right.

If there was present the danger of counter-revolution in Czechoslovakia, as I believe there was, then the action was not only justified but correct. Once this danger is removed, the moment when the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia again has the reins firmly in hand, then it is correct to remove not only the troops but all restrictions. Such is the nature of the question of what is right and what is wrong, when viewed from the class viewpoint—from the viewpoint of the defense of Socialism.

About Self-Determination and Independence of Communist Parties

It is said that the five Socialist powers have violated national sovereignty. There is "truth" in it if one views the matter from a formal standpoint. But does anyone really believe that the five powers were really violating national sovereignty? Does anyone seriously consider that the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, the German Democratic Republic or Bulgaria threaten the independence of Czechoslovakia? Is it not rather that these countries are acting in conformity with the provisions of the Warsaw Pact, are preventing Czechoslovakia from following a course which not

only threatens their sovereignty and at the same time protects the independence of the other socialist countries and protects peace and socialism? If socialism would go, how much independence would Czechoslovakia really have? The intervention is a temporary one. It will leave Czechoslovakia's sovereignty intact and able to defend itself.

The question arises in this connection about the right of the Five Parties, of the socialist governments to cross the borders of another state in defense of socialism.

Communists have always stood for the self-determination of nations. But they never viewed this right *unconditionally* and *in all circumstances*. Communists have always placed this on a class basis. Because the basic solutions to the full right of nations will be solved by Socialism. Does it serve the interests of the working class and Socialism or hurt it? At times and for certain countries Marx opposed self-determination where it might hurt democracy and Socialism. We have a revolutionary view of self-determination. Lenin wrote:

"Where there appears a momentary contradiction between the two, there is a unity of interests in the basic solution. The unity is within the historic world revolutionary process.

"The several demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not an absolute, but only a *small* part (Lenin's emphasis) of the general democratic (now: general-socialist) *world* movement. In individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected" (Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 22, page 341)

Lenin also wrote this:

"Petty-bourgeois nationalism proclaims as internationalism the mere recognition of the equality of nations and nothing more. Quite apart from the fact that this recognition is purely verbal, petty-bourgeois nationalism preserves national self-interest intact. Whereas proletarian internationalism demands, first that the interests of the proletarian struggle in any one country should be subordinated to the interests of the struggle on a world-wide scale. . . ."

Lenin added:

"The struggle against opportunist and petty-bourgeois pacifist

distortions of the concept and policy of internationalism is a primary and cardinal task. (Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 31 pages 144-151).

An example:

You know that no one has the right to enter another man's house without his permission. Suppose, however, that a fire has broken out at night in your neighbor's house, endangering his house and yours and others. You knock on the door to awaken him. No answer, you knock louder. No answer! You break in and help put the fire out. You will agree that it is all right because that is a recognized necessity. What appeared to be a contradiction was resolved in the solution. As long as this act does not become a precedent for the rule.

Well, necessity demanded the Five Powers to enter temporarily even though the current leadership didn't see that a fire was beginning in their house and they were dead asleep. Would we not have applauded if the Socialist countries would have "violated" the national sovereignty of the Congo, Ghana, Indonesia? We have a revolutionary view of all concepts.

Causes of Differences in Socialist Countries And in the World Movement

Why the differences in the attitudes of different Communist Parties and in those of the socialist countries? It seems to me that they are due to at least four main causes which are applicable to one or another country in part or in whole.

First there are the machinations and pressures of imperialism. Direct threat, infiltration and corruption are combined with shifts and changes in tactics on the part of the imperialists which give rise to illusions and particularly affect the surviving capitalist elements in the various countries. Experience has shown that at times of internal difficulties or at times of sharpening of international tensions, these forces become active and strive for changes in the direction of restoring the capitalist system. They exercise an influence especially on nationalist, opportunist and revisionist elements within the Parties. It is particularly in the sphere of ideology which is deepest and longest in the minds of people that the imperialists work on in order to blunt the class consciousness of the Parties and the working class.

Second, the differences are due to the varied economic and social levels of the various countries and in experiences particularly with imperialism, in the history and traditions of the people, etc. The world Communist movement has correctly been stressing the need for taking into account these national differences but it has also at the same time stressed the need for internationalism. It seems to me, that there have been exaggerations of the national peculiarities at the expense of internationalism. Every nation quite properly seeks to develop its own material and spiritual forces, its statehood, economy and culture; but this can be done only through the preservation and development of socialism and its correct relationship to internationalism.

And socialism can be developed only by applying the general laws of social development laid down by Marx and Lenin, by maintaining essential features of the dictatorship of the proletariat, by insisting on the leading role of the Communist Party and the Communist ideology in general. That is what was agreed to at Bratislava.

The third factor creating differences is the factor of nationalism which has seeped into the movement. Lenin recognized that for a long period of time there would be national differences which would have to be taken into account by the world Communist movement. But he insisted that while such national differences exist and affect particular policies they must be related to the single international task of promoting the world revolution. Lenin wrote:

"The more strongly the working class movement develops, the more frantic are the attempts of the bourgeoisie and the feudalists to suppress and break it up. Both these methods—suppression by force and disintegration by bourgeois influence—are constantly used all over the world in all countries . . ."

"In this regard, the bourgeoisie . . . resorts to the method of dividing the workers by advocating different bourgeois ideas and doctrines designed to weaken the struggle of the working class. *One of such ideas is refined nationalism, which advocates the division and splitting up of the proletariat on the most plausible and specious grounds . . .*" (Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 20 page 289)

Finally, a factor in the development of differences is due to the upswing of the workers movement, to the vast growth of the move-

ment. Lenin wrote on this in his article on "Differences in the European labor movement" as follows:

"One of the most profound causes that periodically give rise to differences over tactics is the *very growth* of the labor movement. If this movement is not measured by the criterion of some fantastic ideal, but is regarded as the practical movement of ordinary people, it will be clear that the enlistment of larger and larger numbers of new 'recruits' the attraction of new sections of working people must inevitably be accompanied by waverings in the sphere of theory and tactics, by repetitions of old mistakes, by temporary reversions to antiquated methods and so forth. The labor movement of every country periodically spends varying amounts of energy, attention and time to the 'training' of recruits."

Questions of Democracy

I want now to deal with the question of democracy in general and democracy within the Party.

As I discussed earlier, in Czechoslovakia there were violations of democratic procedure within the Party and, also, there were violations of legality in regard to persons, organizations, institutions, etc. These were due to bureaucratic methods of work, a tendency of the Party to replace the state organization, to an unwillingness of the leadership to correct these abuses of power and to apply new forms in the economic and political life of the country.

But in the correction of these policies the new leadership of the Party went to the other extreme and forgot the limitations of democracy under conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. What are these limitations? That democracy, the rights of free speech, press, etc., does not mean the right to undermine the leading role of the Party, nor to undermine socialism. Democracy cannot be developed in that way.

On the contrary, it can only lead to undermining the rule of the proletariat; therefore also undermining democracy for the majority of people. It can only lead to the restoration of capitalist democracy, which is democracy for the monopolists, the capitalists. Does one have to prove this? Do we have democracy for the people, for the working class, for the Negro people, for other minorities,

for the Communists, for peace fighters in the USA? Look at Chicago, where the army was mobilized to prevent the peace forces from influencing events at the convention. Lenin wrote:

"Until classes are abolished, all talk about freedom and equality in general is self-deception or else deception of the workers . . . Until classes are abolished, all arguments about freedom and equality should be accompanied by the question: Freedom for which classes and for what purpose; equality between which classes and in what respect? Any direct or indirect, witting or unwitting evasion of these questions inevitably turns into a defense of the bourgeoisie, of the interests of capital, the interests of the exploiters." (Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 31, Page 393)

As to the Communist press, the new leadership also went to the other extreme and abolished Party control.

The newspapers were making their policy according to the views of the editors. The *Student Magazine* carried an interview—one of an intended series—with Radio Free Europe, an outright CIA-financed fascist organization.

The editorial boards of other papers likewise had a free hand. Now is this a Communist, a Marxist view of the role of the press? Can a socialist state survive where the media of communication is in the hands of people who are moving to undermine the leadership of the Party, attacking the socialist countries and giving expression to platforms of counter-revolution as occurred in connection with the "2000 Word" article?

In our press statement we said that we are for the maximum possible freedoms within the framework of building and defending Socialism. Because what has to be guaranteed is both democratization and Socialism, I do not believe that the Socialist countries need a system of censorship for their internal press. However, this does not mean having an open-ended and a free for all mass media. I don't think such a concept is workable. It is not in keeping with the problems that emerge out of the worldwide struggle with imperialism; it is not in keeping with the level of ideological development and further I do not think this is what the people in Socialist countries want. Instead of censorship they need a system of responsible editors and editorial boards who are given a wide area of flexibility of political judgment; but editors and editorial boards who are not political neutrals. I

don't think the Socialist countries need or can have an anti-Socialist press.

Generally, the mass media, the press, TV and radio, in most of the Socialist countries leave much to be desired. They have not grasped the concept that the most effective ideological struggle can be conducted through the most popular and expansive handling of current developments. Because this is not understood, the mass media tend to be limited in scope of coverage, heavy, clumsy and dull. I think that the people in the Socialist countries would like to see this corrected. I do not think their demand or desire is for political and ideological irresponsibility in their mass media.

That the Czechoslovak press lied about the Soviet grain shipment; that it lied about the unwillingness of the Soviet Union to give loans to Czechoslovakia; that it began to reprint falsehoods from the organs of world imperialism, has nothing to do with freedom of the press. The people in the Socialist countries want a better mass media—but also a responsible one.

Lenin long ago stated that such conduct is impermissible. Discussing the question of freedom of the Party press, he wrote:

"Newspapers must become the organs of the various Party organizations and their writers must by all means, become members of these organizations. Publishing and distributing centers, bookshops, reading rooms, libraries and similar establishments—must all be under control. The organized socialist proletariat must keep an eye on all this work, supervise it entirely and from beginning to end, without exception, infuse into it the lifestream of the living proletarian cause . . ."

Referring to objections that the Party should not apply this to the matter of literature, which requires special treatment, Lenin wrote:

"Calm yourselves, gentlemen! First of all we are discussing Party literature and its subordination to Party control. Every one is free to write and say whatever he likes, without restrictions. But every voluntary association (including a Party) is free to expel members who use the name of the Party to advocate anti-Party views. Freedom of speech must be complete. But then freedom of association must be complete too. I am bound to accord you, in the name of freedom of speech, the full right

to shout, lie and write to your heart's content, but you are bound to grant me in the name of freedom of association, to enter into, or withdraw from, association with people advocating this or that view. The Party is a voluntary organization which would inevitably break up, first ideologically and physically if it did not cleanse itself of people advocating anti-party views."

Lenin concludes:

"We must say to bourgeois individualists that your talk about absolute freedom is sheer hypocrisy. There can be no real and effective freedom in a society based on money . . . Absolute freedom is a bourgeois or anarchist phrase since as a world outlook, anarchism is bourgeois philosophy turned inside out."

ON THE POSITION OF COMMUNIST PARTIES

Attention has been called to the fact that a number of West European Communist Parties have dissented from the action of the Socialist countries. This is so. Let me point out however that the largest number of Communist Parties have understood the reasons for it—those in Central and South America, those in Africa and Asia. It is interesting to note that parties which are directly in struggle with imperialism or living in its midst, particularly U.S. and West German imperialism, have resolutely supported the action as unavoidable and necessary. That is the case of North Vietnam, North Korea, Cuba, the West German Communist Party, the CPUSA and a number of Latin American Parties.

The statement of Fidel Castro is particularly interesting. In a speech on August 23, analyzing the events in Czechoslovakia, Castro said among other things the following:

"Our people have a good deal of information about these events . . . we were observing developments in the political process in that country. A whole series of changes began taking place in Czechoslovakia approximately the beginning of the year.

"At a certain point in the process of change" said Castro, "on April 24, *Rude Pravo*, organ of the Communist Party, published an article entitled 'The Favorable Reaction of the U.S. Press Towards Events in Czechoslovakia.' *Rude Pravo* pointed out that the U.S. expects a more intelligent foreign

policy to result from the new orientation by Prague."

Castro then said:

"In our opinion anything that begins to receive the praise, support or enthusiastic applause of the imperialist press naturally begins to arouse our suspicions."

Then said Castro:

"There began a honeymoon in the relations between the liberals and imperialists. A whole real fury was unleashed; a whole series of political slogans in favor of the 'formation of opposition parties' began to develop in favor of open anti-Marxist and anti-Leninist theses such as the thesis that the Party should cease to play the role which the Party plays in Socialist society and that it should play only a guiding, a spiritual leadership."

"In short, the reigns of power should cease to be in the hands of the Communist Party. We had no doubt that the political situation was deteriorating and going down hill on its way back to capitalism and that it was inexorably going to fall into the arms of imperialism."

Such was Comrade Castro's conclusion.

Opportunism

The crisis has surfaced weaknesses of opportunistic corrosion in some sections of the world Communist movement as it has exposed influences of opportunism in our Party's councils.

As always, opportunism penetrates our ranks in the name of tactics; it penetrates our trade union cadre by the way of tactics that is supposed to reflect a low level of consciousness. I do not argue against tactics, but very often arguments developed beyond their tactical limitations have become the basis for opportunistic policies.

Some of our Jewish comrades argued for tactics to be able to take into account the feelings of nationalism amongst the masses. Here again, one cannot deny the need for such tactics, but for some, these arguments in the end become enlarged and become the basis for opportunistic and unprincipled positions.

Arguments for the need to take into account national problems, feelings of nationalism and questions developed beyond the tactical limitations, become the basis for opportunistic trends.

Opportunism is an expression of a lack of courage. It is a method of seeking favors or shielding one's own organization or one's self from the enemy. Opportunism is a way of shying away from sharp class-viewpoints. Opportunism is a form of ingratiation oneself; it is groveling before the enemy. It is a form of retreat, a compromise of principled questions. People are led along this path because there seem to be momentary benefits. The enemy press now takes notice without attack. You have gained respectability. Some anti-Communist liberals now seek you out; they now hail you as "an independent thinker." You do not challenge their attacks on the Party or on "Communism as it is practiced in the world" because it would tarnish your new respectability. The penetration of the virus of opportunism is not always noticed until there is a crisis. In the end, these momentary gains turn into a political mirage. It is a setting for an ambush. Opportunism is always defended and hidden behind lofty abstractions of democracy, freedom and rights; behind concepts that are abstracted from reality, but especially concepts abstracted from class reality.

Let us compare reactions to two crises, the Czechoslovakian crisis and the Middle East crisis. In fact, compare your own reactions to these two crises. Did you organize protest meetings on the Middle East crisis? In fact, have you in any way publicly condemned the Israeli aggression?

Of the two crises, as we know so well, one is a brutal imperialist aggression for oil, for territory, for enslavement of a people; it is an aggression accompanied by the most bestial violence, by the use of napalm; the murder of men, women and children. This aggression continues.

On the other hand, one may argue, whether the facts warranted the military action by the Warsaw Pact countries. One may argue whether all other alternative paths were probed. But there can be no doubt, this is not an action for material gain; it is not an action to destroy the independence of a people; it is not an act to destroy a people. It is an action in defense of Socialism.

But there are Communist Parties who hesitated for days and then they reluctantly condemned the imperialist aggression in the Mid East. Some have not done so to this very day.

The Rumanian Party not only did not condemn the aggression but took an active part in the defense of Israel's aggression; an active part in preventing any effective action against Israel. Where were the lofty sounding words about sovereignty then? Where was the opposition when the sovereignty of the Arab countries was being trampled down by imperialism? Now many talk about the right of self-determination. Is it possible that they have just heard about this idea now? Because they obviously did not know about it during the Mid East crisis.

When have the Rumanian and Yugoslav comrades called large demonstrations against U.S. imperialism as they are doing now against the Warsaw Pact powers? The answer to this odd behavior is opportunism. It is opportunism in both cases—in both crises.

In both cases it is ingratiating yourself to the enemy. Anti-Sovietism is the main ideological pillar of world imperialism. It is also the most penetrating form of opportunism. The events of the last weeks again show that the main problem within sections of the world Communist movement is opportunistic erosion. The most urgent task of the world movement is to stop this erosion. This is a necessary precondition for a new period of new offensive struggles against imperialism and for world Socialism.

The Role of Blocs

Some leaders of some Socialist countries speak for a policy of doing away with "blocs" in international relations, but the only effect of such a "no bloc" policy is to dismantle the world Socialist family of nations. The "independence" of a small Socialist nation within a framework where they do not have the protection of the Socialist world is questionable. Also because there is very little they can do about imperialist blocs, therefore, such a policy only results in a weakening of the Socialist camp.

I think it is correct to question, can Yugoslavia or Rumania or Czechoslovakia have long periods of independent dealings with U.S. imperialism if they do not have close ties with the world Socialist community? To think so, in my opinion, is an illusion. The problem does not emerge so sharply only because the main sector of the Socialist world is not fragmented. One must ask what would happen if all the countries of Socialism went the way of no ties—to a position of no blocs. They could be peeled off one by one. Some Socialist countries get temporary benefits in just

the same manner as non-union elements in a shop get benefits because the rest of the workers are organized and fight the corporation. If all the workers in a factory took the same position, they would soon all be at the mercy of the boss.

It is necessary to see these developments in their true setting. The central world contradiction is between capitalism and Socialism; the power balance between these two systems has reached a historic turning point. The very heart of the Socialist base of power is the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries. The unity of this base is the very essence of this moment in history. The balance of power is hinged to this unity.

There has been some erosion of this base. It is an opportunistic type of erosion. In a crisis or in a period of offensive struggles, can the Socialist world now depend on all its sectors? I think it is very doubtful. I think the defections during the Middle East crisis and now, is a case in point. In Europe, West German imperialism is the central focal point. Based on some current private maneuvers with West German imperialism, can these countries be a reliable force of anti-imperialism in Europe. Maybe—but there are some doubts. I think one must ask the question, was Czechoslovakia headed for this type of defection? Was it not moving to separate itself from the Warsaw Pact? I think it was. Did it not change its policy toward the Middle East? It obviously did. Did it not start the unilateral drift of its own relations toward West Germany without regard to the effects on the rest of the Socialist countries? This cannot be denied. Did it not open the gates for an anti-Soviet policy. I think it did. Did not their leaders say that Czechoslovakia had given too much for Vietnam and the Arab countries in the struggle against imperialism?

If one takes these policy shifts—and there are many others—it is clear that it was headed for an “independence” that is a separation from the world Socialist camp. This is not a path to independence; this is the path to separation from the Socialist community and in the end, for a dependence on the imperialist world. Such a defection from the world Socialist family would have qualitatively changed the balance of world power. Because of its geographic position, such a defection would have opened a broad roadway into the very heart of the Socialist world.

This is the very meaning of the Warsaw Pact.

Should not the development in specific Socialist countries be the concern of the rest of the Socialist world? I don't see how

it could be otherwise. I think the danger in Czechoslovakia went further. But even if the danger was limited for the moment to the danger of such a defection, the action was warranted.

What are the implications of a policy of “orientation of trade relations to the West”—to the imperialist countries—for a Socialist country basically lacking in most raw materials? Czechoslovakia has no oil. So, for her oil needs, which include most of the chemical industries, she gets 99.5% of her oil from the Soviet Union. For oil that would cost \$60.00 per ton on the capitalist market, she pays \$40.00 for Soviet oil. 83.6% of the iron ore, 53.3% of all other metals, 53.8% of cotton, most of her grain imports, all come from the Soviet Union. Under such conditions, a shift to the West would be a shift to imperialist domination. What imperialist country would not use such a relationship to squeeze—for the elimination of socialism and for domination by the forces of imperialism.

Only within a Socialist family of nations does such a shortage of raw materials not become a reason for inequality. The Warsaw Pact military forces did not go into Czechoslovakia to establish such domination.

There can be no independence for a Socialist country that is dependent on imperialism for its raw materials.

Confidence in the Future

As the crisis subsides; as life returns to normal in Czechoslovakia; as the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia again wins its struggles for leadership, a number of facts will emerge that will sustain the correctness of the actions taken by the five Warsaw Pact nations.

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia will be the key force in helping to draw all of the lessons of this crisis. The Socialist world shall never again be forced to take such an action.

The direction of this examination is already indicated in the words of Comrade Dubcek that Czechoslovakia had “not taken into account the international situation and the strategic and other interests of her allies as factors in her internal developments.”

It is a setback for the revolutionary movement that the political situation in Czechoslovakia deteriorated to the point that military action by the five Warsaw Pact Socialist neighbors was necessary.

This relationship among Socialist countries has not been, nor will it become the rule. It is an exception brought on by an unusual set of circumstances—including the very special presence of Czechoslovakia, being as it is in the very heart of the Socialist world and having a border with West Germany, which is the very heart of the imperialist world in Europe.

To dogmatically and mechanically keep repeating the rule when a special set of circumstances requires an exception to it, is not Marxism. It is not realistic in any phase of life.

To agree that an exception is necessary does not destroy the correctness of a rule. On the other hand, one cannot take an exception and make it into a rule. Thus the need for military action by one's Socialist neighbors in defense of Socialism is the exception to what is the rule between such countries. It is not now the rule. It is an exception to peaceful relations of mutual respect between them. The military action is for a very brief period. It is an action of a very special kind because it is the exception. It is not going to destroy Czechoslovakia's sovereignty—it is going to strengthen it.

It is an exception to our Party's program on this matter, but it does not destroy the rule, and we need not make the exception a rule in our program. This approach is not limited to Communists.

The same applies to relations between a part to the whole. There are times when they contradict. We work to resolve such contradictions. In most instances there is no contradiction, but if life presents no path of unity, we take the position that the whole must prevail.

There are some momentary contradictions in the Czechoslovakian situation. For a partisan of Socialism, the choice had to be in support of the defense of Socialism.

Such is a class approach to struggle. Life does not always give one only a good choice and a bad choice. There are times when it forces you to take the necessary choice—when there are no good choices available.

To close one's eyes to this nature of struggle is to close one's eyes to reality. One must see things as they are and then say it as it is.

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