

# **CZECOSLOVAKIA**

**1968**

**AN ANALYTICAL COMMENT**

BY

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In 1956 a representative of the Chinese Communist Party is reported to have warned Khrushchov - at that time in power in the CPSU - not to invade Poland when the former Soviet-approved Polish Party leadership was replaced by the present leader Gomulka.

The following month the Soviet army reoccupied Budapest, and this move was supported by all Marxist-Leninists as inevitable, as had been the reoccupation of Kronstadt in 1921.

Just as behind the Kronstadt revolt was the bureaucratism of Zinoviev in charge of Petrograd, so behind the Hungarian revolt was not only reaction taking advantage of revolutionary weakness and an open frontier, but also the Zinovievism of the former Hungarian leadership of Rakosi and Gerö - a dictatorship not of the proletariat but over the proletariat in favour of a new ruling class, just as in the Soviet Union.

In January 1968 the Zinoviev of Prague, Novotny, was displaced by a new leadership.

This new leadership was not more socialist but simply more liberal. It was aiming not to strengthen the working class in power by increasing working class democracy - as in the great Cultural Revolution in China - but to speed the restoration of capitalism by reducing the power of the self-satisfied revisionist party bureaucrats and their political police.

As to the claims of certain Marxist-Leninists, including the Cuban and Vietnamese Parties, that the Soviet invasion was justified by the threat of U.S. imperialism and that the situation was comparable to that of Hungary in 1956, the two situations, Hungary 1956 and Czechoslovakia 1968 were markedly different. In Czechoslovakia there was no armed rebellion, no Communists were being killed nor the red flag burned. On the contrary, although Dubcek and the new revisionist leadership were not socialists and were in fact replicas of their Soviet-Yugoslav originals, their supporters certainly included thousands of good socialists who wanted to see their country progressing not back to "free" capitalism, but forward into an increasingly democratic proletarian socialism. In 1956 socialists had to support Soviet tanks even though Hungarian workers had joined the revolt which unsuppressed could only have ended in a fascist-dominated U.S. neo-colony, this at a time when one could still hope that the CPSU would return to socialism.

In 1968 the unofficial undeclared understanding between the U.S. and the Soviet Union has long - at least since 1960 - replaced the risk of an American attack on Russia by its opposite - the constant existence of co-operation between the two for an actual though undeclared division of the world into spheres of imperialist influence. Just as Russia gives Vietnam just enough weapons to keep the U.S. army busy but not yet defeated, so Johnson makes a loud noise about Prague the day after he has been informed by Moscow - first on the list - of what they are about to do. And then he keeps his side of the bargain just as they keep theirs.

Not that gangster Johnson does not regret losing Czechoslovakia as another client state to join Jugoslavia, but he certainly never had any intention of acting for Dubcek in 1968 any more than Truman acted for Nagy in 1956, and of course Moscow knew this perfectly well.

#### BUT THE PEOPLE RESIST

However, we must clearly distinguish between the aims of the Czechoslovak neo-revisionist leaders, and the response of the Czechoslovak people to the armed invasion of their country.

The former, whether intentionally or not, were heading for the embrace of U.S. imperialism.

The latter were reacting in a splendid burst of national heroism against invasion by a foreign army come to impose a foreign dictat. Dubcek and Svobada were seen simply as the apparent leaders of national resistance, and the whole Czech and Slovak peoples joined the resistance.

If Dubcek and Svobada had really intended resistance, they would have made this clear to the Russians from the beginning, whereas in fact they made sure that in case of attack the Czech Army would not resist. They would also have issued arms to the people's militia as the Rumanian Government has done and as even the liberal Prime Minister of Spain did in Madrid in July 1936.

Now these "heroes" are safely back in office if not in power, as the quislings of the invaders.

These "democrats" wanted more freedom for capitalism. That is a very different matter from being prepared to wage a people's war for freedom to build socialism. Socialism, if it is to be real and not phoney, means an increasingly classless society and not the pseudo-socialist neo-capitalism of the USSR ruled by a new class of bureaucrats, who approximate more and more to the actual power holders of the imperialist monopoly capitalism of the west.

But it does not follow that the Czech and Slovak peoples, who for those few days were ready to fight tanks to achieve freedom, also meant freedom for capitalism. A few certainly did, others equally certainly did not.

A majority of the "intellectuals" were, as in Hungary in 1956, acting the mouthpiece of the bourgeoisie, but certainly not all were aiming to restore capitalism. It is the duty of a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Party leadership to win all who can be won for unity against the main enemy - in this case the crypto-imperialist USSR in secret alliance with the world main enemy - U.S. imperialism.

What then should be the attitude of socialists to this tragic but foreseeable development?

Should we weep for Dubcek, as do the French and Italian revisionist "Communist" Parties and our own revisionist CPGB, to say nothing of millionaire Tito?

Not at all. But Dubcek is not the Czech and Slovak peoples, nor indeed has Dubcek spoken one word for continued resistance against the seizure of his whole country by armed foreign intervention. On the contrary, the Dubcek-Svoboda line today is that of Benes to the Nazis in 1939 - non-resistance.

#### A NEW LEADERSHIP

A new Czech and Slovak revolutionary leadership will certainly arise with the immediate aim of displacing the present quisling government by one of national liberation. In doing this the revolutionary working class will offer an alliance not only to the peasantry but also to the petty bourgeoisie who played a part in displacing Novotny by Dubcek.

A real dictatorship of the proletariat means proletarian democracy, not a Kafka dictatorship of bureaucrats. It means comradeship of the people, not fear of secret denunciation. It means especially a maximum of direct democracy with guidance, not orders, from the most experienced.

In the organisation of the economy it means welfare not profit in command. It means overall planning with maximum decentralisation and maximum initiative from below. It means the direct and constant appeal to working-class solidarity instead of to individual greed.

It means above all the abolishing of class differentials and the immediate organisation of all education to be for and by the working class, as is happening today in China, whereas fifty years after the revolution Soviet schools and universities are more than ever aiming at a competitive technocracy - precisely the educational system introduced in France by Napoleon and against which last spring's student revolt was immediately directed. (No wonder those students were immediately denounced in Moscow).

#### THE WAY FORWARD

We can be sure that as a real Marxist-Leninist Party is reconstituted in Czechoslovakia, as has already happened in Poland, not only will a national liberation struggle develop, but that it will spread from Czechoslovakia and Poland to Hungary, the GDR and Bulgaria, and to the Soviet Union itself. It was Marx who said that a nation oppressing another cannot itself be free.

Such a liberation struggle will develop only under Marxist-Leninist leadership. The working class will be the vanguard because workers are the class for whom the revolution will mean freedom to develop their class aim of socialism.

The people will then be free themselves to organise their state and their whole economy and will be free, with arms in their hands, to do this in their own way of working-class democracy.

Here in England our task is to free our own country from its oppressors - the U.S. imperialists and their quisling imperialist supporters, labour or tory.

This is how we can give <sup>most</sup> support to our oppressed brothers in Central Europe, by further developing our own movement for national independence and socialism.