The Prague Spring

Early in 1968 Alexander Dubček replaced Antonín Novotný as secretary general of the Communist party of Czechoslovakia. The change came not because of public pressure for reform, but because of dissatisfaction within the party over Novotný's neo-Stalinist failures. Dubček began to permit criticism from the public and to consider reform. Already by March 1968, public discussion, censored less and less, was becoming unusually forthright. In April the party proclaimed its Action Program, which stated that "if party resolutions and directives fail to express correctly the needs and potentialities of the society, they must be altered." When critics began to question even the legitimacy of the Communist party, the Soviet Union became alarmed. Ominous troop maneuvers and high-level meetings failed to slow the momentum toward reform, and so on August 27, 1968, armies of the Warsaw pact invaded Czechoslovakia and reinstalled a Stalinist-style regime. Until November 1989, Czechoslovakia was one of the most politically regressive countries in Eastern Europe.

The first of the following two readings is part of an article by Zdeněk Mlynář, who, while a student in the Soviet Union, was a close friend of Mikhail Gorbachev. Assigned by the Czechoslovak party in 1967 to draft policy recommendations to the party congress planned for 1970, Mlynář unexpectedly concluded that a pluralist system would be best. In 1967 Mlynář thought of himself as a reform communist, not a democrat, but it is clear from this statement of May 1968 that his notion of socialism comes perilously close to democratic pluralism. He left the party as a consequence of the Soviet invasion and in 1977 emigrated. During the 1980s he lived in Vienna as the leader of the opposition in exile.

The second reading is Ludvík Vaculík's "Two Thousand Words." Published in four Prague newspapers on June 27, 1968, just before the beginning of a special party election process, and signed by many other public figures, this plea inspired both widespread support in the Czechoslovak public and serious concern among the Soviets. One author has called it "probably the most important single document of the revival process." Actually about 2,700 words in length in English translation, it is printed here in full.

From Stalinism to Pluralism, ed. Gale Stokes
1996
(3)

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Towards a Democratic Political Organization of Society

Zdeněk Mlynář

May 5, 1968

The basic problem is the position of man in socialism. This may sound like a very abstract idea to some people, but what I mean is a very concrete thing which is felt in everyday life. Socialist man is not a private owner, and therefore the stimuli which are created by private property relations have disappeared. If in these conditions we try to keep people, either as individuals or as members of a certain group, in the position of *objects overwhelmingly directed from above*, one tendency will be more and more in evidence: People will begin to separate the pursuit of their own private interests and needs from the pursuit of the collective, group, and social interests.

They understand anyway that they have no influence over the collective interest and will therefore leave this to other anonymous creatures (we know the expression "Let them decide and solve the problem"). But people do realize that they can have a direct influence on their own private circumstances and therefore use their initiative to find ways and means of ensuring the best standard of living *for themselves*, from their material conditions to the amount of free time they have.

The traditional utopian ideal of collectivism as the basis for a new social order was turned under the old political system into a situation where *official collectivism* has become just a hollow-sounding phrase. It is now a cloak under which a person can build his atomized private life or produce the most favorable conditions for his own individual "survival." And thus, one of the most characteristic features of the breakdown of the official ideology of the old political system is the huge disparity between the formal political activity of nearly every "upright citizen" and the *completely different values* for which this same citizen increasingly shows a preference in his private life. It was mere "window dressing" for a citizen who was part of some organization to go to the right meetings and take part in various activities, to present himself at elections and vote without being forced to do so for the prescribed candidate, when in reality he increasingly expended his most important activity and talent on his private interests, regardless of whether this activity was connected with the formally professed fetish of "the social good" or not. And so we

were led to the phenomenon which we can see today, that the people who are really the most "honest," those who are devoted to the ideas of collectivist communism, and so forth, *objectively* perform in some situations the socially negative role of sectarians. And incidentally it is these facts which will be among the strongest barriers the democratization process will come up against. . . .

Unless there is a change in the position of people in the political system, this state of affairs will not change; without an alteration in people's economic relationships (which the new system should be trying to create), an efficient and dynamic socialist economy cannot be created. . . . And only in this way will people begin to turn their initiative, activity, and talent away from advancing their own private affairs, toward the goal of the social whole, to the search for ways to satisfy their own needs and interests *in harmony with* the whole development of society. . . .

Of course, this is a thesis, a premise. But it is one which does hold some water. It is based on a concept of socialism as a social order which will preserve the *active forces in European capitalist development* . . . the necessary independence and subjectivity of the human individual. It is in conflict with other conceptions of socialism which do not have this end in view and which are based on the historical conditions of the development of other civilizations, for instance of the East, as we can clearly see in the Chinese conception of socialism.

In general, it has been suggested here that *more than one* kind of political organ must be created. The political system which is based on this principle is called a *pluralist system,* and it would therefore be true to say that an experiment is going on in Czechoslovakia to create a pluralist society for which there is at present no real analogy among the socialist states.

A pluralist political system is quite often identified just with the existence of a large number of political parties. But I do not think this is really right, and all the less so for a socialist society. It is very easy to understand why this question is so much discussed at the moment in Czechoslovakia. . . .

What is clear above all is that the direct fusion of the Communist party with the state, and the idea of the leading role of the Communist party . . . is one of the critical points of the old system. So a guarantee is needed to make it possible for this to happen again. Therefore, the fundamental problem of the development of socialism is thought to be the formation of an opposition. Some people think that it is even necessary for an opposition party to be *outside the National Front* and to be created immediately, because even the whole idea of the National Front as a platform for dispute between the different political interests seems to some people a kind of fraud, when they take into account what the National Front has stood for in the last twenty years.

I am not one of those people who think that the idea of the development of the National Front as outlined in the Action Program . . . is the last word on the theory and practice of Marxism or of socialism.[1] But I do think that the idea of a model of,

[1]A key moment in the development of the Prague Spring was the publication on April 9 of the party's Action Program. One of the more interesting parts of the program was its suggestion that the National Front, which was the mass agent of the party, was the place where those who wished to criticize the regime could articulate their views and thereby have some influence. The opposition rejected this effort to ward off the creation of political parties.

for instance, two political parties, which would operate on something like the principle of the well-known system of opposition in Great Britain, is not only not out of the question but, on the contrary, has its own logic and virtues. There is nothing antisocialist in principle in this idea as a *mechanism* of governing, just as there is nothing antisocialist in the mechanism of the so-called division of power. . . .

When I look at our current social situation, the present state of the political system, and the practical possibilities for it to be transformed, it does not seem to me that the attempt to create political parties outside the National Front, parties which would put forward programs and a platform of opposition and attempt to win state power at elections . . . would be a guarantee of our democratic development.

I don't want to frighten anyone by saying this, but I should like to state the fact that there is enough scope in the situation as it is at the moment for all the other forces in this society, given maintenance of the principle of the National Front, to oppose the tendency to a monopoly. And I say, "the principle of the National Front" on purpose, not wanting it to continue on its present basis. The possibility of the independent development of political parties themselves cannot be ruled out. It could take place by their being reconstructed, integrated with other groups, or by the constitution of a new party, *but this should be on the basis of the existence of a National Front.*

From Stalinism to Pluralism (ed. Gale Stokes)

The Sphere of Culture

For many East European thinkers the proper sphere of human engagement always remained cultural and artistic, not political, and the appropriate style of discourse traditional, not Marxist. In a single-party state, of course, any effort to establish freedom of expression quickly becomes political. In Czechoslovakia before 1968 censorship sharply restricted the ability of writers to express their views directly, but several authors still managed to publish works that were good literature and at the same time thoughtful assessments of the Czechoslovak situation. Ludvík Vaculík's The Axe, *published in 1966, describes a cover-up of official bungling that resulted in a woman's suicide. A reporter pays the price for this bungling because he decided, before the suicide occurred, to write about the woman in an article that, as he put it, "could be printed, but would nevertheless allow me to preserve some modicum of integrity." The following year Milan Kundera's novel* The Joke *related the tragic consequences of a young man's incautious postcard to his girlfriend in which he said, "Optimism is the opium of the people. A healthy atmosphere stinks of stupidity. Long live Trotsky."*

Later, when someone described The Joke *as "a major indictment of Stalinism," Kundera responded, "Spare me your Stalinism, please.* The Joke *is a love story." Nevertheless, in February 1967 the Novotný government considered it necessary to reaffirm its restrictive policy in the arts. In June, Vaculík and Kundera responded. In his speech to the Fourth Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak writers, which follows, Kundera suggested that culture is a more significant sphere of endeavor than politics, thereby assigning a rather different role to the intelligentsia than did Konrád and Szélenyi in their analysis.*

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A Nation Which Cannot Take Itself for Granted

Milan Kundera

June 1967

In spite of the fact that no nation has existed forever, and the very idea of the nation is a relatively recent one, most nations nevertheless take their existence for granted as a gift from God, from nature, from time immemorial. Nations feel their culture, their political system, and their frontiers as their own personal affairs, as questions and problems. But national existence itself is for them something that they never think to question. The unhappy, uneven history of the Czech nation, which has even come perilously close to death's door, has made it impossible for us to allow ourselves to be lulled into this false sense of security. The existence of the Czech nation has never been a matter to be taken for granted, and it is this fact which is its central predicament.

It is seen most clearly at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when a handful of intellectuals made an attempt to resurrect the half-forgotten Czech language and, in the next generation, an almost extinct nation as well. This resurrection was the result of deliberate intention, and every choice is a matter of deciding between the pros and the cons. The intellectuals of the Czech Revival, although they made a positive decision, also knew the weight of the arguments against them. . . .

For the great European nations, with their so-called classical history, the European context is something natural. But the Czechs have been through periods of wakefulness and periods of sleep, and several vital phases in the evolution of the European spirit have passed them by. They have had to appropriate, acquire, and create the European context for themselves over and over again. For the Czechs have never been able to take anything for granted, neither their language nor their being a part of Europe. And the nature of their Europeanness is their eternal conundrum: either leave the Czech language to stultify and become a mere European dialect and Czech culture a mere European folklore, or the Czechs must become one of the European nations with all that this entails.

Only the second choice can guarantee real life for the Czechs, but it is an extraordinarily difficult choice for a nation which all through the nineteenth century had to devote most of its energy to building its foundations, from secondary education to an encyclopedia. Yet as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, and

especially in the period between the two world wars, a cultural flowering occurs which is without any doubt the greatest in Czech history. In the short space of twenty years there grew up a whole pleiad of men of genius, who in a bewilderingly short space of time raised Czech culture for the first time since the days of Comenius on to a European level, as a self-sufficient entity.

This great period, which was so brief and so intense and which we still feel nostalgia for today, was quite naturally a period of adolescence rather than of maturity. Czech letters were still in a predominantly lyrical style, at an early stage of development, which needed nothing more than a long, peaceful, and uninterrupted period of time. For such a fragile culture to be interrupted for almost a quarter of a century first by occupation and then by Stalinism, for it to be isolated from the rest of the world, to destroy its many rich internal traditions and to lower it to the level of fruitless propaganda, all this was a tragedy which threatened to thrust the Czech nation once more, and this time decisively, back into the suburbs of European culture. If in the last few years Czech culture has again been developing, if today it is without any doubt the most successful of our national activities, if many outstanding works of art have been created and certain cultural activities, such as the Czech cinema, are experiencing the greatest flowering in the whole of their history, then this is the most important national event in the past few years.

But is the nation, as a community aware of what is happening? Is it aware of the fact that an opportunity has presented itself of carrying on from the point at which interwar literature was interrupted, during its promising adolescence? And that this is a chance that will not be repeated? Is it aware that the fate of its culture is the fate of the nation? Or has the Revivalists' view that without strong cultural values our national existence cannot be guaranteed lost its validity today?[1]

The position of culture in national life has certainly changed since the time of the Revival, and the danger of our being suppressed as a nation hardly threatens us today. But nevertheless, I don't think even today that our culture has completely lost its meaning for us as a means of protecting the nation and justifying its existence. In the second half of the twentieth century great prospects of integration have been opened up. Mankind's evolution has for the first time been united in a single world history. Small units blend with larger ones. International cultural efforts are being concentrated and united. Mass traveling is developing. All this makes a few world languages all the more important, and the whole of life becomes more and more international, and the influence of the languages of small nations all the more limited. . . .

It is a priority for the whole community to become fully aware of the importance of our culture and literature. Czech literature, and this is yet another of its oddities, is not at all aristocratic; it is a plebeian literature addressing itself to a broad section of the public. Its strength and its weakness can be found in this fact. It is strong in

[1]The Czech Revival occurred in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. Technically, the Revivalists were the first handful of scholars and concerned nobility that began standardizing the Czech language late in the eighteenth century. They were followed by the Awakeners, who created literary Czech and established the foundations of Czech historiography in the decades prior to the revolutions of 1848. Modern Czech national consciousness began during the Revival.

that it has a well-established hinterland in which its words echo powerfully, but weak in that it is not emancipated enough and too dependent on the public, on their receptivity and education, and it seems all the time to doubt the strength of its own convictions, its own cultural level. Sometimes today I become very frightened when I think that our civilization is losing that European character which was so close to the hearts of the Czech Humanists and Revivalists. Greek and Roman and antiquity and Christianity, the two basic sources of the European spirit which created the conditions for the development of Czech culture, have almost vanished from the consciousness of the young Czech intellectual, and this is a loss which can never be replaced. It has to be remembered that an iron continuity exists in European thought which is more powerful than every revolution and every idea, which has created its own vocabulary, its own terminology, its own myths and themes, without a knowledge of which European intellectuals cannot communicate. Recently I read a shattering document about the knowledge of world literature possessed by future teachers of Czech, and I wouldn't like to imagine what their knowledge of general world history is like. Provincialism doesn't only have its impact on the nation's literary achievements, but is a problem of the nation's whole existence, especially its schooling, its journalism and so on.

A little while ago, I saw a film called *Daisies*.[2] It concerned two splendidly repulsive girls, supremely satisfied with their own cute limitations and merrily destroying everything which they didn't understand. It seemed to me then that I was watching a profound and very topical parable about vandalism. What is a vandal? He certainly isn't an illiterate peasant who burns a hated landowner's castle in a fit of anger. A vandal, as I observe him around me, is socially secure, literate, self-satisfied, and with no very good reason for trying to get his own back on somebody. A vandal is an arrogant, limited person, who feels good in himself and is willing at any time to appeal to his democratic rights. This arrogant limitedness thinks that one of its basic rights is to change the world into its own image, and because the world is too big for it to understand, it chooses to change the world by destroying it. In exactly the same way, a youngster will knock the head off a sculpture in a park because it seems to insult him by being bigger than he is, and he'll do it with great satisfaction, because any act of self-assertion satisfies man.

People who live only in the immediate present, unaware of historical continuity and without culture, are capable of transforming their country into a desert without history, without memory, without echoes, and without beauty. Vandalism today is not just something that is fought by the police. When representatives of the people or the relevant officials decide that a statue or a castle, a church, an old lime tree, is pointless and order it to be removed, that is just another form of vandalism. There's no substantial difference between legal and illegal destruction and there is not a great deal of difference between destruction and prohibition. In the chamber a certain Czech deputy recently demanded, in the name of twenty-one deputies, a ban on two serious, "difficult" films, one of them, by an irony of fate, *Daisies*, a parable about vandals. He uncompromisingly denounced both films and at the same

[2]Věra Chytilová directed *Daisies*, which remains one of the classics of the remarkable wave of excellent Czech films that appeared between 1963 and 1968.

time declared quite explicitly that he didn't understand them. There is no real contradiction in such an attitude as this. The biggest sin of these two works was that they were above the heads of those who did not like them and thus insulted them.

In a letter to Helvetius, Voltaire wrote a wonderful sentence: "I don't agree with what you say, but I will fight to the death to defend your right to say it." This expresses the basic ethical principle of modern cultural life. If we return in history to a time when this principle did not apply, then we are taking a step from the modern age into the Middle Ages. Any suppression of views, especially any violent suppression of incorrect views, tends eventually to militate against truth, because truth can only be arrived at by a free and equal dialogue. Any infringement of freedom of thought and speech, however discreet the means and however subtle the name for such censorship, is a scandal in the twentieth century and inhibits and shackles the flourishing of our literature.

But one thing is beyond dispute: If a flowering of our art has occurred, it is due to the fact that intellectual freedom has been broadened. The fate of Czech literature is at this moment vitally dependent on the extent of our intellectual freedom. I know that when they hear the word *freedom* some people immediately get their backs up and object that the freedom of socialist literature must surely have its limits. We know that every sort of freedom has its limits, limits which are determined for instance by the level of contemporary knowledge, education, prejudice and so on. Except that no new period has ever tried to define itself in terms of its own limitations! The Renaissance did not define itself by the limiting naïveté of its rationalism, for this was apparent only in historical perspective. Romanticism defined itself by saying that it went beyond and outside the limits set by classical canons and by making a new discovery which it was able to master outside those limits. And so also the words *socialist literature* will have no real meaning until they mean a similar liberating act of transcendence.

The trouble is that in our country it is always considered to be a greater virtue to guard frontiers than to cross them. The most diverse, transient sociopolitical circumstances are supposed to justify the various limitations which are put on spiritual freedom. But the only great politics are those which place the interests of the age before transient interests. And the greatness of Czech culture is the vital interest of the age for the Czech nation.

This is even more true in that today the nation has quite exceptional opportunities open to it. In the nineteenth century, our nation was living on the periphery of world history. In this century, however, it is living right in the very center. As we know quite well, the fact of being in the center of the world's stage is not always a matter of milk and honey. But on the miraculous soil of art this hardship becomes a source of great wealth. Even the bitter experience of Stalinism can be turned paradoxically into something of unique value.

I don't like it when people equate "fascism" with "Stalinism." Fascism, based on a quite open antihumanism, created a situation which was fairly simple from the moral point of view: It left humanistic principles and virtues untouched because it appeared as their antithesis. Stalinism, however, was the heir of the great humanist movement, which even within the Stalinist disease preserved many of its original

attitudes, ideas, slogans, expressions, and dreams. To see such a humanistic movement turning into something exactly the opposite before one's own eyes, taking along with it the last traces of human virtue, replacing love for mankind with cruelty to people, love for truth with a renunciation of it, and so on, to watch this process going on, opens up incredible insights into the most fundamental aspects of human values and virtues. What is history, and what place has man in history, and anyway, what is man? None of these questions can be answered in the same way after that experience as before it. No one could emerge from this period of history the same as he was when it began. And of course, it isn't just a question of Stalinism. The whole story of this nation from democracy, fascist slavery, and Stalinism to socialism (coupled with its unique national problem) has something quintessential in it, something which makes the twentieth century what it is. This experience perhaps means that we are able to pose more meaningful questions, to create more meaningful myths, than people who have not gone through this anabasis. This nation has perhaps been through more than many other nations have during this century, and if its genius has been alert during that time, it may well know more than most others as well. This greater knowledge could change into a liberating crossing of previous boundaries, into the ability to surpass the limits of previous knowledge about man and his destiny, and thus give significance, maturity, and greatness to Czech culture. For the time being these are just possibilities, just chances, but there have been many works appearing in the past few years which show that these chances are very real.

But again I have to put the question: Is our nation aware of these possibilities? Does it know that these are *its* chances? Does it realize that historical opportunities don't occur twice? Does it realize that to lose these chances means to lose the twentieth century for the Czech nation?

"It is universally recognized," wrote Palacký,[3] "that it was the Czech writers who would not allow the nation to perish but resurrected it and gave a noble purpose to its endeavors." Czech writers took on the responsibility for the very existence of their nation and they bear it still today, because the standard of Czech letters, their greatness or insignificance, courage, or cowardice, provincialness or their wide humanistic outlook determine to a considerable extent what is to be the answer to our most important national question. Is it worthwhile for the nation to exist at all? Is it worth having a language? And these terribly fundamental questions, which lie at the root of the existence of the contemporary nation, are still waiting for a conclusive answer. That is the reason why everyone who through his bigotry, his vandalism, his philistinism and his narrow-mindedness sabotages the cultural revolution which has largely already begun, is sabotaging the very existence of this nation.

[3]František Palacký (1798–1876) is considered by Czechs to be the "father of the nation." A historian, he believed that the nation was the carrier of ideas and progress. In 1848 he wrote a famous letter from Prague to the Frankfurt parliament in which he stated: "I am not a German. . . . I am a Czech of Slavic blood," which shocked the parliament, as it considered Prague a German city. For additional remarks by Kundera on Palacký, see Document 37.

class, its methods of rule fill some of the most shameful pages in history. Men will marvel at the grandiose ventures it accomplished and will be ashamed of the means it used.

When the new class leaves the historical scene—and this must happen—there will be less sorrow over its passing than there was for any other class before it. Smothering everything except what suited its ego, it has condemned itself to failure and shameful ruin.

From Stalinism to Pluralism, ed. G. Stokes 1996

Marxian Opposition in Poland

In Poland the rule of the "Muscovites" began to unravel in March 1956 with the death of the general secretary of the Polish United Workers' party, Bołesław Bierut. In June the workers of Poznań took to the streets to protest economic conditions and had to be put down by force. After a series of negotiations inspired by the crisis, Khrushchev finally acquiesced in the selection of Władisław Gomułka as first secretary of the party. Gomułka was one of the few Polish communists to survive Stalin's purges of the 1930s and one of even fewer to spend the war underground in Poland. Because he harbored doubts about the wisdom of collectivizing the fiercely independent Polish peasantry and about imposing Soviet models on a country with such a long history of confrontation with Russia, in 1948 he had been imprisoned for "right-wing bourgeois nationalism." His return to power in October 1956 indicated that Khrushchev was willing to tolerate a certain degree of "national communism," albeit within a commonwealth of socialist states led by the Soviet Union.

Popular at the beginning as a Polish patriot, by 1970 Gomułka had become reviled as a man who had conducted attacks on the church, permitted a surge of anti-Semitism, administered an economic decline, put down a student revolt, and finally, in 1970, suppressed shipyard strikes with scores of deaths. One of the first indications of dissatisfaction with his regime came as early as 1964 when a furor broke out over a letter that thirty-four prominent writers sent to Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz demanding "a change in Polish cultural policies in the spirit of rights guaranteed by the Constitution." Despite the innocuousness of the letter, the writers found themselves in serious trouble, although with one exception, no one was imprisoned.

More fundamental was a thesis written by two University of Warsaw graduate students, Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski. The two students claimed that the new class of workers created by industrialization could best create a workers' revolution through plural workers' parties, although they opposed parliamentary regimes. When the authorities would not permit them to defend their thesis, they wrote a second version, Open Letter to the Party, *portions of which appear here, and for which they received jail terms. Both men were important figures in Solidarity politics, and when Solidarity formed a government in 1989, Modzelewski was elected senator from Wrocław and Kuroń became minister of labor.*

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The Kuroń-Modzelewski Open Letter to the Party

Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski

Early 1965

According to a widely held opinion, the present regime and its first leaders, brought into the country by the Red Army, had no economic and social base and were only able to establish themselves in a situation where real national sovereignty was lacking. Thus, the *causes* of the formation of the bureaucratic system are put outside Polish boundaries, and the causes of what happens outside Poland holds little interest for the proponents of this view. They are interested in the effects only, in the present state of things interpreted as the "*raison d'état*" of Poland. The nationalist ideology, thus despite appearances, helps to solidify the social relationships on which the rule of the bureaucracy is based.

We do not dispute the role played by external circumstances in the abolition of capitalism in our country: the weakness of authentic independent revolutionary elements, the decisive role of the Red Army, our government's very great dependence on the Soviet bureaucracy—long since elevated into a ruling class—the situation in the international workers' movement.

All this, of course, effectively accelerated the process of bureaucratization. However, we believe that this process was objectively conditioned by the country's level of economic development and by its economic and social structure; this holds true for czarist Russia as well as for the Poland of the interwar period, and for the great majority of countries in our camp. This process was conditioned as well by the relative international isolation of these countries (since the large industrial powers remained capitalist). When capitalism was abolished in these countries, they were backward, with meager industry and a great unused surplus of manpower evidencing itself in unemployment and, most of all, rural overpopulation. Their economies were, in one way or another, under the domination of the capitalists of the advanced imperialist nations.

In such countries, only industrialization could bring real improvement in the material, social, and cultural conditions of life of the rural and urban masses and ensure progress for society as a whole. Industrialization, therefore, is in the interests of the entire society and constitutes the principal task of the new governments which abolished capitalism in the interests of the workers and ruled in their name.

Reprinted from George Ivan Weissman, ed., and Gerald Paul, trans., *Revolutionary Marxist Students in Poland Speak Out* (New York: Merit Press, 1968), pp. 39–43, 65, 68–69, 75–78.

With industrial capacity low, the economic surplus (the difference between production and current total consumption, that is, the basis of accumulation) was also low. Aid from the developed capitalist countries could not be expected. To the contrary, the mechanism of the world market makes the underdeveloped countries exporters of food and raw materials and brings their economies under the domination of the capital of the imperialist powers which control the world market, thus holding back industrialization and perpetuating underdevelopment. Independence from the mechanism of the international capitalist market was therefore essential to development. Industrialization had to be accomplished rapidly or not at all.

Enormous reserves of unemployed manpower were the basis for development. Therefore industrialization was of necessity carried out through employment of these reserves and by the rapid construction of new productive forces. (This is what is called the extensive method of economic development.) Furthermore, the increase in employment could not be accompanied by a rapid increase in consumption because this would entail a diminution of the already meager economic surplus, making impossible rapid development of the productive apparatus and employment of still unused manpower, thus putting a brake on industrialization. The maximum increase in employment and production had to be brought about while keeping consumption at the lowest possible level. The aim was the maximum economic surplus—thus production for production's sake. This aim expressed the needs of industrializing the country as long as the construction of the industrial base was incomplete; therefore, for a certain time, production for production's sake corresponded to the demands of economic development and to the interests of society as a whole.

In the course of industrialization there was a massive influx of unemployed manpower from the countryside into the industries being built, an increase in the size of the working class, the higher technical cadres, the intellectuals, and an explosion in the number of technocrats. At the same time the need to restrict consumption forced a significant cut, in comparison to prewar standards, in the salaries of the technocrats, intellectuals, and office workers; similarly the restriction of workers' wages to a very low level was regarded by the older workers as a wage cut; finally, a policy tending forcibly to deprive the peasants of agricultural surpluses beyond the basic needs of their families and their farms.

Thus, industrialization, although it represented the interest of the society as a whole, did not correspond to any of the various interests of any class or social group considered separately. The natural aspiration of each group in society, of the peasants as peasants, of the workers as workers, of the plant managers as plant managers—and not as individuals who had lately improved their financial and social circumstances or had reasonable hope of so doing—was the greatest possible increase in their individual incomes, and the improvement of the material and social position of their own group—hence, in any event, a tendency to maximum consumption.

On the contrary, however, the needs of industrialization required production for the sake of production. Industrialization was a *raison d'être*, a primary goal of the new state. It pursued this end despite the specific interests of the other classes and social strata, indeed to a certain extent, against them. Against the peasants, forcibly

deprived of their agricultural surplus and constantly threatened with expropriation en masse, against the workers—whose wages were kept at the lowest possible level—and even lower, against the intellectuals and the technocrats. The achievement of such industrialization required that they be deprived of any opportunity of expressing their special interests and of struggling to defend or fulfill them.

Concentrating all political decisions, as well as control over the means of production and the collective product, in the hands of the new state required that production be freed from regulation by the market, and that the opportunities for the workers, technocrats, or peasants to act on their own initiative be as strictly limited as possible. The "one-party" system was introduced to meet these requirements. All other groups in society were prevented from having their own parties—first and foremost, the working class—by placing all organizations under state tutelage, by reinforcing the apparatus of constraint against the producers, by concentrating all news and propaganda media exclusively in the hands of an all-powerful elite, by eliminating the freedom of artists and intellectuals to create, and by establishing a centralized system of economic management. All this was accompanied by massive police terror.

The elite, in thus concentrating in its hands alone social and political power, as well as power over the productive process and the division of the product created (i.e., ownership), made industrialization its class interest and, in a sense, its personal interest. It made "production for production's sake" its class goal and the basis for consolidating and extending its rule.

This elite was thus transformed into a new ruling class, "the central political bureaucracy," and the state it ruled into a bureaucratic class dictatorship. It can be said, therefore, that the needs of industrializing an underdeveloped country gave birth to the bureaucracy as a ruling class; it alone could answer these needs, since in the conditions of the country's underdevelopment, it alone adopted industrialization—production for production's sake—as its class interest.

We have already seen that the class goal of the bureaucracy is production for production and that this goal corresponds to the interests of economic development in an underdeveloped country in the first phase of its industrialization, that is, when the industrial base is being constructed. The length of this phase is determined primarily by the degree to which the economy is saturated by industry at the start of intensive industrialization. In Poland, the end of this period came in the second half of the 1950s. In 1956, the productive apparatus was already three times larger than in 1949, and in 1960, four times larger.

Suppose that after having completed the essential tasks of this phase, the bureaucracy maintains its class rule as well as the same class goal. Let us consider the situation which flows from this hypothesis: A mass industrial base has been built; the forced investment of the preceding years has permitted the development of industrial capacity and the employment of idle manpower at breakneck speed. Production for production is characterized by the attempt to limit, as far as possible, all growth in production to Sector A.[1] It seeks to convert all growth in production

[1]Soviet Marxists divided the economy into two sectors: Sector A contained industries making products that were used in further production, such as steel and machine tools, and Sector B contained industries making products that were simply consumed, such as clothing and food. By emphasizing Sector A, they believed they could sustain rapid growth.

into new means of production. Therefore, continuing this tendency, when the economy is "saturated" by industry, signifies that the expanded means of production must be used exclusively—aside from a certain increase in consumption which is absolutely necessary but kept as small as possible—to create new means of production, to enlarge the productive apparatus. In other words, the growth of industrial capacity must be followed by the growth in the share of the national income allotted to capital accumulation.

Intensive industrialization cannot take place under conditions of equilibrium. Since the economic surplus is small, industry cannot be built up all at once without distortions. The disproportions, which appear in the course of the rapid increase in productive capacity, create the necessity for supplementary investments and lead to the still further enlargement of capital accumulation fund.

Suppose that the productive apparatus which has increased many times over due to industrialization must be fully utilized; this means that the conditions must be created for full utilization of the enlarged industrial capacity. This would entail—under the hypothesis of the maintenance of production for production—such an increase in accumulation that consumption would be pushed below the socially necessary minimum. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that such phenomena as full employment, the development of an industrial civilization, and the raising of the cultural level of society go hand in hand with an increase in consumption needs deemed essential by that society. In these conditions, reducing consumption below the essential level threatens the system with economic, social, and political catastrophe. Therefore, it is impossible to push consumption back down below this level and, consequently, equally impossible to raise the rate of accumulation so as to permit total utilization of the increased industrial capacity.

Thus the low level of overall consumption, in the last analysis, limits production itself. The bureaucratic system is not exempt from this law. However, this limitation is not brought about by the difficulties of realizing the value created on the market, but by direct restriction of enlarged reproduction. Keeping production as the goal of production after the construction of the industrial base has been completed—under conditions of industrial "saturation"—*creates a contradiction between the already developed industrial capacity and the low level of consumption.* This contradiction is the cause of an underutilization of industrial capacity, of waste of the economic surplus, and it puts a brake on economic development. Therefore, it is the source of a crisis.

It is clear that the crisis is getting worse, as not only the material conditions of the workers but also their social and cultural condition deteriorate. This situation is reinforcing the enslavement of the workers in the shops; it is depriving them of the chance to satisfy even their minimum desires within the framework of the present productive and social relationships.

The crisis is forcing the workers to stand up against the bureaucrats and the system in order to defend the present level of their material and cultural existence.

The bureaucracy will not concede one zloty of its own free will. In any case, given the crisis and the lack of economic reserves, it has nothing more to concede to

pressure. Under these circumstances, any large-scale strike action will inevitably turn into a political conflict with the bureaucracy. This is the only way the workers can change their conditions. Today, in the epoch of the universal crisis of the system, the workers' interests lie in revolution: in the abolition of the bureaucracy and the production relationships associated with it, in taking control of their own labor and its product—control of production—into their own hands, that is, in establishing an economic, social, and political system based on workers' democracy. The interests of the majority of wage earners, because of their proletarian situation, are parallel to those of the workers.

This general crisis of social relations flows from the fact that the productive relations, on which the power of the bureaucracy is based, have become an obstacle to the development of the economy and the source of its crisis and that all segments of society are without hope of progress or of satisfying their minimum class interests within the framework of the system. Thus, no more than the economic crisis can be overcome on the basis of present productive relations can the general social crisis be overcome within the framework of present social relations, which only aggravate the crisis; it can be overcome only by the abolition of the prevailing production and social relationships. *The only road to progress is through revolution.*

In the circumstances of the system's general crisis, the bureaucracy is isolated in society. No class in society will rally to its side; at most, the rich peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie will remain neutral. But only the workers, as a result of the conditions of their life and labor, sense the need of abolishing the bureaucracy. As we have already seen, the primary sources of the economic and social crisis lie in the production relations in the heavy industry sector, that is, in the relations between the workers and the central political bureaucracy actualized in the process of production. This is why the working class must be the principal and leading force in the revolution. The revolution which will abolish the bureaucratic system, therefore, is in essence proletarian.

It is often said that the powerful state apparatus, with all of the modern means of material coercion at its command, is in itself a sufficient prop for the ruling class and enables it to maintain itself over the long run even in the total absence of social support. The essence of this argument, despite its seemingly modern form, is a misunderstanding as old as class society and the state. In October 1956, we saw how the powerful machine of coercion in Hungary became impotent, toppled, and evaporated in the space of a few days. The workers produce and transport arms, fill the ranks of the army, and create the entire material power of the state. If the walls of the prisons, barracks, and arsenals remain standing over long periods, it is not only because they are made of solid materials but because they are protected by the hegemony of the ruling class, the authority of the government, fear and resignation before the social order in power. The existence of these psychological walls permits the government to install itself securely behind brick walls. The social crisis strips the regime of its hegemony, its authority; it brings the overwhelming majority into conflict with it, and finally it arrays the working class against the ruling bureaucracy. The inevitable deepening of the crisis undermines the psychological walls, which are the government's real protection. A revolutionary situation causes them to collapse, and then the brick walls are no longer an obstacle. The economic and

social crisis cannot be overcome within the limits of the bureaucratic system. *Revolution is inevitable.*

We have shown that revolution is the gravedigger of the old society. At the same time, it is the creator of the new. The question now before us is whether the working class, which by its very nature is the principal and leading force of revolution, is capable of offering a valid program.

This would be true if the program is advanced by the social class whose particular interest is most in accord with the needs of economic development and satisfaction of the needs of other classes and social layers—in other words, whose program permits the realization of the interests of society as a whole. The class interest of the workers requires the end of bureaucratic ownership of the means of production. This doesn't mean that workers' wages must be equal to the total value of the product of their labor. The level of development of productive forces in modern society creates the necessity of a division of labor permitting the existence of nonproductive sectors supported by the material product of the workers.

1. The present level of productivity implies a social division of labor in which the function of production is separate from that of management. There must be workers and managers. In the process of production, the working class is not destined to manage but to produce. In order to manage, it must organize itself and be organized by its state.

2. This is why it is necessary for the working class to organize, in addition to workers' councils in factories, delegations from plants throughout the country. That is, it must organize *councils of workers' deputies* with a central council of deputies at their head. Under this system of councils, the working class would set the goals of social production, would make the necessary decisions, and supervise carrying out the plan at every step. At each level the councils would become the instruments of economic, political, executive, and legislative authority. They would be truly elective bodies for the voters, organized on the basis of factories. Voters would be able to recall their representatives and replace them at any moment, without regard to regular election dates. Workers' delegations would become the framework of the proletarian state.

3. If workers' delegates in the central council of deputies had before them only a single project for the distribution of national income presented by the government or by the leadership of a single party, their role would be limited to that of a perfunctory vote. As we have shown, monopolistic power cannot have a proletarian character. That automatically becomes a dictatorship over the working class, a bureaucratic organization serving to atomize workers and keep them and all of society in subjection.

In order for the system of councils to become the expression of the will, of the thinking, of the activity of the working masses, *the working class must organize itself into more than one party.* What does a plurality of parties mean in practice? The right of every political group recognized by the working class to publish its own newspaper, to present its program via the modern information media, to organize cadres, to carry on political campaigns—in brief, to be a party. The existence of more than one workers' party requires freedom of speech, press, assembly, *the end of preventive censorship,* complete freedom of scientific research, of literary and

artistic creation. Without freedom of expression for different currents of thought in the press, in scientific research, in literary and artistic experimentation, without complete freedom to create, there is no workers' democracy.

For the same reasons, we oppose parliamentary regimes. The experience of the last twenty years shows that they are no guarantee against dictatorship and that, even in the most perfect forms, they are not governments of the people. In the parliamentary system, the parties only fight to be elected: The moment the vote is cast, the electoral platforms can be thrown into the wastebasket. In parliament, the deputies feel themselves bound only to the party leadership which named them as candidates. Voters are grouped in arbitrary election districts according to purely formal criteria. This atomizes them. The right to recall deputies is a complete fiction. Participation of citizens in political life amounts to nothing more than reading statements of the leaders in the press, listening to them on the radio, and seeing them on TV—and, once every four or five years, voting to choose the party to govern them. The rest takes place by virtue of a mandate, without the voters' participation. Furthermore, parliaments only exercise legislative power. The executive apparatus holds the only real power, the power over those who control the material force, that is, the power over surplus values.

Therefore the parliamentary system is one in which the working class, and the entire society, finds itself deprived of all influence on government—by virtue of voting. To formal voting every four or five years, we counterpose the permanent participation of the working class, organized in a system of councils, political parties and unions: Workers would assume the correction and supervision of political and economic decisions at all levels.

In the capitalist system, the bourgeoisie, which controls the surplus value, is above parliament. In the bureaucratic system, the untrammeled rule of the central political bureaucracy lies behind the parliamentary fiction. In the system of workers' democracy, if representation of the entire body of citizens takes a parliamentary form, the working class will be above parliament, organized in councils and controlling the material base of the existence of society, namely, the product of labor.

4. The working class cannot decide on the division of the labor product directly; it can only do so through its central political representation. Furthermore, the working class is not absolutely homogeneous in regard to its class interests. Conflicts between the decisions of workers' delegations and the interests and tendencies of workers in particular factories and particular sectors of the working class are inevitable. The mere fact of separation between management and production holds within it the possibility of the development of an elected power with a certain amount of independence, and this holds true as much at the factory level as at the state. If workers were deprived—above and beyond the right to vote—of the possibility of self-defense against the decisions of their representational system, the system would degenerate and act against the interests of those it is supposed to represent. If the working class were deprived of the possibility of defending itself against the state, workers' democracy would become a fiction. The possibility of defense must be guaranteed by *trade unions absolutely independent of the state with the right to organize economic and political strikes*. The different political parties would fight to maintain the proletarian character of trade unions in seeking to exert influence over them.

The *Praxis* Group

Although Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 *appeared in a complete version first in 1932, they did not enter fully into the consciousness of Marxian thinkers until after World War II. The emphasis on "self-estrangement," or alienation, in these manuscripts led some to argue that the young Marx was more relevant to the problems of the industrializing world than was the older Marx of* Capital, *or than the Engels who had codified Marx's views. This turn to the younger Marx took place in the West as well as in Eastern Europe and produced the hope in the 1960s that it might be possible to create a non-Stalinist Marxism that would perform the ideological function of informing political action while at the same time sustaining fundamental human values.*

One of the most important groups of East European thinkers involved with this effort to create "socialism with a human face" was the group of Yugoslav philosophers who published the journal Praxis *in Zagreb from 1964 to 1974. Because* Praxis *appeared in a Western-language version as well as in a Serbo-Croatian edition, it became an international forum for innovative Marxian critiques of the modern condition that attracted authors from many countries. After many difficulties the journal lost its state stipend in 1974 and had to cease publication. In the following selection a Belgrade philosopher, Mihailo Marković, presents a thumbnail sketch of the emergence of the* Praxis *group and a brief overview of the group's basic position. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Marković became a prominent adviser of the Serbian president, Slobodan Milošević.*