



**WHY
THEY
INVADED
CZECHO-
SLOVAKIA**

Ernest Mandel

with an Introduction
by Ken Coates

Spokesman Pamphlet No. 40

Price 15p

Published by The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation for *The Spokesman*, Bertrand Russell House,
Gamble Street, Nottingham NG7 4ET. Tel. 0602-74504

Copyright © *The Spokesman*

Printed by The Russell Press Limited., (TU) Nottingham. Tel. 0602-74505

Introduction

by Ken Coates

On August 21st, 1968, five nations claiming to be "socialist" invaded a sixth nation, also claiming to be socialist. When half a million troops from the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, and the German Democratic Republic moved into Czechoslovakia, it was not only a series of solemn pledges under treaty which were broken. The plain fact is that all six governments concerned not only laid claim to pursue, in general, socialist policies: they each also laid claim to be representative of social structures which, in broad outline, had already evolved to embody "socialism". Was "socialism", then, beginning to savage itself? Were "socialist" countries no less prone to intimidate one another than their capitalist forbears?

One would search in vain through the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Mao Tse-Tung, or whomsoever else in the socialist pantheon might readily be invoked, in order to find analysis of this sort of situation. There is no consideration, in the classic literature of Marxism, of the problems of military strategy in conflicts between socialist states. Bluntly, the originators of socialist doctrine would have regarded such eventualities as inconceivable. Indeed for a society which has truly overcome the exploitation of man by man, such an eventuality is out of the question. This assumption is basic to the socialist tradition, and of course it pre-dates Karl Marx. But it was perfectly clearly said by him in the First Address which he drafted on behalf of the International Workingmen's Association to outline its policy on the Franco-Prussian War:

"In contrast to old society, with its economical miseries and political delirium, a new society is springing up whose international rule will be *Peace*, because its national ruler will be — everywhere the same — *Labour!*"

This thought has been expressed in more general terms: "A people which enslaves others forges its own chains", said Marx again: and it has been amplified:

"The victorious proletariat can force no blessings of any kind upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing", wrote Engels. It has also been elaborated, with deadly specificity, by Lenin:

"The social and political character of war is determined not by the 'good intentions' of individuals or groups, or even of peoples, but by the position of the *class* which conducts the war, by the class *policy* of which the war is a continuation . . ."

For the world communist movement, the invasion of Czechoslovakia therefore raises some fundamental questions. Either the assumptions of a century and a half of socialist thought are invalid, or there exist unsocialist elements *deep in the structure* of the socialist countries which initiated the invasion.

There is no way to avoid this dilemma. Although it is possible to maintain that the movement of half-a-million troops into another country, the arrest of its Governmental leaders, and the subsequent imposition upon them of political options which were not their own, is not an act of war, such a claim is no more convincing than the parliamentary evasions of Mr. Anthony Eden, who claimed that the British bombardment of Port Said did not indicate that there was in progress anything so untoward as a war with Egypt, but merely revealed that there existed a state of "armed conflict". Baldly, we can state with certainty that Karl Marx would have found such actions, whether they were styled as acts of war, or of some lesser form of "armed conflict", indicative of the existence of grave social tensions within the nations that initiated them.

It is widely understood that the People's Republic of Czechoslovakia was not, in fact, at the time of the action, reverting to pre-socialist political or economic norms. The dispatches of the *Morning Star's* reporter in Prague provided sharp evidence on this score. So does the fact that opinion polls in Czechoslovakia revealed that more than ninety-five per cent of the population were actively in favour of the continued socialisation of their economy. But even if Czechoslovakia had been in fact "reverting to capitalism", as it manifestly was *not*, there is ample textual evidence in the writings of, for instance, both Engels and Lenin, to indicate that they, at any rate, would have opposed military intervention of the type which occurred on August 21. The Chinese People's Republic is led by men who believe, somewhat quaintly, that capitalism is being restored in the Soviet Union. By analogy with the action of the Warsaw Pact powers, they could justify sending their armies to Moscow in order to reorganise its affairs. Stalin believed that not merely capitalism, but indeed fascism, had been re-established in Yugoslavia after 1948. Had he then betrayed the revolution by refusing to act in the manner now established by his successors? Since the vogue in Moscow, among the influential members of the ruling caucus, seems to be towards the rehabilitation of the Generalissimo, it might be useful if they would ponder on that question.

Of course, as an accompaniment of wars, one inevitably meets lies. Liars flourish behind the lines of battle as at no other time. Lies, particularly lies told in pursuance of public duty by state spokesmen, are themselves a classic indicator of underlying social tensions, and of suppressed social conflicts. An orgy of official lies accompanied the movement of troops into Prague. Almost a year after the invasion, the persons who were alleged to have invited the Soviet authorities to intervene in order to save Czech socialism, have still not come forward. Indeed, those eminent Czech and Slovak opponents of the new upsurge of socialist democracy who were nominated, by general rumour, for this honour, have since been publicly exculpated from the thought, by Mr. Husak's Government. It is, it appears, a gross reflection upon their honour, to say nothing of their nationality, to suggest that they would implicate themselves in any such treason. When the immediate given justification for the intervention has proved so absurdly unfounded, what more need be said about the more extravagant lies, which were told afterwards, concerning arms caches, enemy "tourists" and the like?

When the subjugation of socialist democracy began, after the August days, European socialists had a manifest duty of solidarity with their colleagues in the Czechoslovak trade unions and Communist Party. They had to resist, strongly, both the

disgraceful pressures of the Western Governments, such as the British Labour administration, to use the fact of the invasion as a pretext for strengthening NATO: and at the same time the official apologetics of the Russian leadership and its acolytes outside the Soviet Union, including those in Czechoslovakia itself, which were calculated to assist in the process of containing and rolling back the gains which had been made by the working people in the "Czech Spring".

Today, systematic pressure has eroded those gains to a desperately low level. While Mr. Michael Stewart has orated about "Western defence" he has intensified the pressures upon the Czechoslovak people, since his whole military system is directed no less at them themselves, than at their Soviet and Eastern European occupiers: as often happens, the power structures of West and East have converged to choke out any threat to the status quo. The pressures from the Government of the Soviet Union have been relentless. With the fall of the Dubcek administration, the press has been muzzled, the old policemen of Novotny have been allowed to creep back into positions of great authority and influence, trade union independence has been greatly sapped, and Mr. Husak has been paraded at a convention of the world's communist parties in order to say that the occupation of his country was "an internal matter" which was no business of anyone else.

But it *is* our business. No socialist can behave as if this invasion has never happened. Not only has the Soviet Government issued a public declaration that it has the right to do the same thing again whenever and wherever it adjudges a need: but even if there were, as there are manifestly not, all the elements of repentance in the politbureau in Moscow, it would still be necessary to address the question of how such military adventures could possibly come about. This question needs answering not only at the level of micro-documentation: it also requires discussion at the level of broad sociological generalisation. This discussion has scarcely begun in the official Marxist parties. True, a number of notions have been canvassed as possible explanations as to how the conflict could have originated. The official Warsaw Pact view is, of course, that counter-revolution was imminent in Prague, and that in the given circumstances it was expedient to declare "a fig for Engels' bourgeois scruples!" and rush to restore whatever was salvable of the blessings of the old Novotny order. This view is amply discussed in Ernest Mandel's essay: it is, to put it mildly, eccentric. It is, however, shared by Fidel Castro, who believes, however, that the action of the Warsaw Pact powers was totally illegal, if necessary. The Czechs had been busy restoring capitalism, and emulating the Yugoslavs, who have already, on this view, restored it. The Chinese and Albanian communists are all too ready to believe that Mr. Dubcek was about to "restore capitalism", but, logically within the confines of such a view, hasten to add that the Russians had already beaten him to it.

What sense are we to make of this conflicting mesh of diagnoses? No factories have been auctioned off in any of these countries. The predominant sector of their productive industry remains in public ownership. Czechoslovakia, indeed, had a higher than usual proportion of socialised production. None of them, neither the Czechs, nor the Russians, nor the Warsaw pact powers in general, have licensed the unlimited freedom of private investment, introduced limited liability companies or anything of the kind. Even in Yugoslavia where the market has more sway than in any other socialised state economy, the basis of public ownership remains generally

secure. Can capitalism be restored without capitalists?

Such charges are clearly ideological rather than scientific. They illuminate nothing. What, then, is the social condition of these nations?

At the risk of being tedious, there are a number of points which need to be made. The first thing is that the countries we call "socialist" are indeed socialist in one respect: that they have passed beyond the capitalist form of organisation. To be a little more precise, what they have socialised is the means of production. That is to say that private property has either ceased to exist or largely ceased to exist in the means of production. At this stage it is unnecessary to enter into the argument about what happens when the means of production are undemocratically controlled. It is perfectly plain that some people can become extremely privileged in this situation. But it is also plain that there are, to a very considerable extent, different social and economic laws governing economies which have abrogated the private ownership of property in the means of production to those which apply in an economy which is subject to the dominance of private ownership. That is the first point.

The second point is that none of the socialist countries has yet progressed to the realisation of socialism in the second sense in which the word is understood, which concerns the socialization of the means of consumption. That is to say, none of the socialist countries has passed to a phase of general welfare distribution of commodities. It is perfectly plain that in the traditional Marxist sense socialism was about socialisation of both the means of production and distribution. It will be said that this insistence mixes up two stages of development: the "socialist" stage, and the "communist" stage which must be seen separately. But there is indeed considerable internal evidence in Marx's writing that by the word "communism" he means a *third* stage which is higher, again, than the second phase of socialisation of distribution, in which money ceased to play a vital role in determining transactions between persons. This third stage involves precisely the ultimate goal of the overcoming of the division of labour itself, as a result of which "we shall hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon and critically criticize in the evening".

It seems very clear that it is possible to conceive of the abolition of money as a basic relationship between individual people, considerably before it becomes technically possible to evolve an integrated human kind embodying the overcoming of the division of labour. If this is taken to be the case, we must be very careful when we apply the word "socialist" to a socialist country. Such countries are socialist in one sense, not yet socialist in another sense. They are socialist in the sense that in most of them the overwhelming majority of the means of production have entered into social ownership. They are non-socialist to the extent that the means of production are by no means ready to support truly social forms of distribution, or where they are ready, are, by various impediments, held back from this necessary form of distribution.

This is the problem Fidel Castro has been attempting to face, when he speaks, in Cuba, of "building socialism and communism at the same time".

However, if one can accept a framework of analysis in which the extended evolutionary process toward socialism can be grasped without eschatology, it becomes clear that within each stage of social organisation there can be located various

types of structural obstacles to development, and various interest and impulses towards it. These require the attention of socialists all over the world, because in the struggle between them, the model of socialism itself will be marked out.

The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation was concerned from the beginning to help its co-thinkers in Czechoslovakia in the brave attempts to establish "socialism with a human face".

This paper was commissioned for the first international conference on Czechoslovakia convened in Stockholm by the Foundation in February, 1969. Since then, in May, a further gathering, of British Socialists, took place in London, and it is hoped that other meetings of European socialist, communist and trade union representatives will follow. This pamphlet is offered in the hope that it will assist this future work.

Why they invaded Czechoslovakia

The Social, Economic and Political background of the Czechoslovak crisis
by Ernest Mandel

A Deep Social Crisis

However one might evaluate the political significance of the events leading towards the military intervention of the Warsaw Pact powers in the C.S.S.R., it is impossible not to view them as the expression of a deep social crisis in that country. Even the staunchest apologist for the military intervention cannot fail to notice that the very excuse he advances for that military intervention — the threat of counter-revolution — reflects the existence of such a crisis. If in a socialist country, in which the working class alone represents the absolute majority of the population and together with other wage-and salary-earning strata more than two-thirds of that population, if in such a country, twenty years after the overthrow of capitalism, the danger of counter-revolution has suddenly become so acute that 500,000 soldiers have to be dispatched on the spot to crush it, this can only denote a grave social crisis.

The spokesmen for the Soviet leadership try to hide this fact by referring exclusively to a political problem. The threat of counter-revolution arose, they claim, because the Czechoslovak Communist Party had increasingly ceased to play its leading role in the state and in society and "right-wing anti-socialist forces" were coming to the forefront in the mass media, the educational system, etc. Apart from the fact that such developments, even if they were true, cannot be divorced from deeper social currents, and express in themselves great social conflicts and tensions, it is, to say the least, remarkable that the overwhelming majority of the Czechoslovak working class didn't seem to notice at all these "anti-socialist" trends, that the supporters of the Soviet leaders' line inside the C.P.C. were so completely unable to mobilise that working class to "defend socialism" that they had to appeal to outside forces instead of appealing to the workers to realise that "burning task". This in itself is an admission that the workers were in the best case — from the standpoint of the Soviet leaders — passive, and in the worse case active supporters of "counter-revolution". Surely, the remarkable situation in which socialism could be overthrown and capitalism could be restored without the Czechoslovak workers either noticing or opposing it, would suggest an extraordinary low level of political consciousness and activity — after twenty years of the communist regime! Surely, this very fact would express for anybody who continues to think in social categories, not to speak of Marxist class categories, a deepgoing social and political crisis in the country.

Deviation from the Interests of Socialism

What is the explanation of this crisis? To bring in outside factors, as the apologists of the Warsaw Pact powers' military intervention usually do, is unconvincing

to say the least. Surely the outside threats bearing down on Czechoslovakia from the NATO aggressive alliance and West German militarism were not less in the period of the Cold War or at the time of the Berlin Wall crisis than they are today. To say that the change of strategy of the imperialist powers – from direct military threat of “roll back” to attempts at “internal subversion” – were more dangerous for the “people’s democracies” implies in reality a recognition of great internal instability, and leads us back to the initial question, instead of answering it.

When the “errors” of the Novotny regime are mentioned and the way they were “corrected” is criticised, we come nearer to the heart of the matter. But surely “errors” which can create in a socialist country a situation in which the bulk of the working class becomes either unaware of or sympathetic towards a restoration of capitalism are not simply “errors”; they denote a grave and dangerous deviation from the interests of socialism, a policy leading to disastrous results. And that’s exactly where the analysis has to start.

Here the apologists for the Warsaw Pact powers’ military intervention are caught in a particularly sharp contradiction. On the one hand they accuse the Czechoslovak “revisionists” of “systematically denigrating the results of twenty years of building socialism”; on the other hand they themselves stress that after these twenty years, the threat of capitalist restoration had become imminent – surely a disaster from their own point of view. How could one then deny that this threat has to be considered, at least partially, as the *result* of these twenty years of experience, that, in other words, the Gottwald-Novotny régime has led, at least partially, to disastrous results?

It is not difficult to state precisely what these results were. They are very well known and can be easily documented. The strict bureaucratisation of social life led to a near-complete divorce between the mass of toiling people – in the first place the workers – and those who had monopolised the exercise of political and economic power. Participation of the workers in that exercise was reduced to practically nothing – contrary to all the teaching of Marx and Lenin. This divorce was equally pronounced on the technical, cultural and ideological field. A heavily centralised, uncreative and unimaginative bureaucracy “missed the bus” of half a dozen key technological innovations, thereby throwing the C.S.S.R. back from the level of one of the technologically most advanced countries of Europe and the world into the status of a country suffering a serious technological gap not only in comparison with the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. but even with the capitalist powers of Western Europe. Bureaucratic stifling of the creative power of workers and intellectuals led to a shriveling of cultural and artistic expression. Marxism, from a creative science interpreting and explaining reality in order to change it, became an apologetic dogma, intent upon justifying the status quo, with a minimum of credibility and efficiency, the overwhelming majority of the people not believing anything of that rancid propaganda. Economic growth slowed down, and finally came to a complete standstill. Even a decline of real income of the working people started to occur.

It is as a result of these objective trends of developments, of these objective contradictions between the bureaucratic system of management and the state, economic and social interests of the toiling masses, that a process of political differentiation set in, first among the leading cadres of the country themselves, and then,

on a much lower level and in a much slower rhythm, among society as a whole. The crisis of Czechoslovak society, dramatically revealed by the Warsaw Pact powers' intervention, is a result of the bureaucratic system of management, a result of the Gottwald-Novotny regime. This is the key to understanding what is happening in the C.S.S.R., and what is happening in the whole of the so-called "people's democracies".

The "Liberalisation" Process

The social significance of the "liberalisation" movement must be seen in the light of that crisis. Given conditions where the suppression of civil liberties for the working people gives the ruling party an absolute monopoly of political elaboration, it was inevitable that differentiation would start in that party, and within the ruling social strata which represents that party, themselves. Neither the possibility of open political expression, nor the juridical safeguards, nor even sufficient degree of articulation (as a result of nearly twenty years' suppression of socialist democracy) existed in the bulk of the working class to make this process *start* in the factories, the mines and the workshops, rather than among economists, writers or scientists. But this fact led to several important consequences.

In the first place it can easily be understood that the slowly growing debate inside the ruling bureaucracy about the origins and the solutions of the crisis of the C.S.S.R. necessarily took forms and expressions congenial to the social nature of those who started that debate. It therefore took on the general character of a search for rationalisation and reform of the bureaucratic rule, rather than a search for its radical replacement with a system of socialist democracy, in the true marxist and leninist tradition. This led in turn to the predominantly technocratic slant of the "liberalisers". It was not so much a question of replacing the rule of a privileged bureaucratic stratum by that of the working class; it was rather a question of replacing a despotic, fumbling and inefficient "political" bureaucracy by an efficient "rational", scientific, well-educated technocratic one. This became all the more the centre of the "struggle for power" inside the C.P.C. as the economic questions came more and more into the forefront, and the weight of "economic efficiency" and "scientific management" loomed especially large in the debates.

The particularly revolting, despotic character of the "political" bureaucracy's rule (suppression of socialist legality; mock trials; torture of political prisoners; censorship; suppression of inner-party democracy; police violence against all strata of society; overwhelming power of the secret police, etc., etc.) became the main target for attack of this "technocratic" wing of the bureaucracy for several reasons. It was easy to create around these issues a united front with nearly all strata of society, as these aspects of bureaucratic despotism were universally feared and hated. It was easy to demonstrate that "destalinisation" and abolition of the secret police's power — which had been slowly and moderately initiated in the U.S.S.R. itself since 1956 — had been introduced with great delay and limitations into the C.S.S.R., i.e. that the C.S.S.R. was not following the example of the "model state". It was an objective obstacle to modernisation of the economy, since bureaucratic over-centralisation and suppression of initiative at regional and plant

level seemed to be one of the causes of the slow-down of economic growth.

But the very nature of a political campaign centred around these issues increased the seemingly dominant place which technocratic and intellectual layers played in the "liberalisation" process. It tended to divorce that process from the immediate interests of the working class and to maintain that working class under conditions of widespread apathy. The proposals of the economic "reformers" (see below) acted in the same direction.

A combination of the internal logic of the "liberalisation" debate as sketched above, and the material self-interests of the technocratic wing of the bureaucracy (expressed in the slogan: "If you want better managers, you'll have to pay for them"), lent the "economic reform" process a particularly unattractive aspect for the bulk of the workers. It made the nature of the "liberalisation" process as an inner-bureaucratic struggle appear very clear to most of the more critical and progressive layers of society.

But one thing is the nature of that "liberalisation" process, as seen by its proponents (the "liberal" technocratic wing of the bureaucracy) and opponents (the "political" despotic and conservative wing of the bureaucracy), and quite another thing was the objective result of that process. "Liberalisation" of the economy and society was impossible without a loosening of tight political control over the population. Reduction of that tight police control was in turn impossible without bringing again to the surface all those different political currents which had never ceased to exist under the Gottwald-Novotny regime, but which had simply been stamped into silence by the bureaucratic dictatorship. And the re-appearance of all the various political currents expressing, in the last analysis, the various social interests and trends which exist in the country, could only lead to a slow process of political apprenticeship of the working class and the youth, a process of political differentiation and re-alignment in the country, which became greatly speeded up after the January 1969 Plenum of the C.C. of the C.P.C.

It is necessary to delineate these various aspects of the recent evolution inside the C.S.S.R. to understand how wrong and un-marxist is the assumption that the "liberal" leadership of the C.P.C. either had "freed the country from bureaucratic oppression" or "passively assisted" a process of "counter-revolution". What this leadership had done was in the last analysis to allow the real social and political forces present in the country to express themselves and constitute themselves more freely than before, in the interests of *consolidating* the C.P.C.'s government over the country, both economically and politically. Economically it didn't succeed (in any case, more time would have been needed to reveal all the contradictions inherent in that attempt). Politically, its success was striking. All evidence shows that between January and August 1968, and especially since May 1968, the C.P.C. increased its popularity and its roots in the working class and other toiling strata of the population by leaps and bounds, and acquired a mass basis and mass adherence larger than in any previous phase of its history. This in itself was a contradictory and transitory phenomenon. But it shows how unfounded is the argumentation of the apologists for the military occupation of the country. The biggest weakness of the socialist regime in the C.S.S.R. was political apathy, indifference and non-participation of the working class (this is also the underlying assumption of the apologists). This weakness was not increased but in the process

of being overcome by the acceleration of the "liberalisation" process after January 1968.

Revising the Theory of the State

Couldn't that differentiation process lead to reactionary forces reappearing side by side with revolutionary socialist ones? Undoubtedly. Hadn't the discredit with which the Gottwald-Novotny regime had covered communism in the eyes of large parts of the population increased such a danger? Indeed it had. Wasn't the anti-socialist trend already predominant among writers, scientists, journalists dominating the mass media, be it openly anti-communist, be it under the guise of "revisionism"? Absolutely not.

One should state in the first place that this is not a question of speculation but a question of material proof. All the propaganda material of the apologists of the military occupation of the C.S.S.R. has been unable to show any evidence of a significant anti-socialist trend in the politically active population of the C.S.S.R. Nothing similar to the reappearance of Cardinal Mindszenty or of political expressions of the former ruling classes of the country in Hungary in 1956 occurred in the C.S.S.R. (we are convinced that even in Hungary, these trends were largely minority ones, and that workers could have neutralised them). The U.S.S.R. propaganda material (like the White Book published by the journalists' association) is so desperately devoid of evidence that it is forced to have recourse to childish tricks: presenting swastikas painted by angry youth on Soviet tanks as "proof" of Nazi mentality, whereas these signs were evidently expressions of indignation, identifying the Soviet tanks with the hated Nazi ones (an incorrect identification, but provoked by the unjustified Soviet intervention); publishing "captured" underground radio stations as "proof" of the strength of "counter-revolutionary gangs", forgetting to mention that these radio stations were installed by leading cadres of the C.P.C., etc.

The evidence shows overwhelmingly that the explosion of free speech and free writing after January, 1968, was largely confined to a confrontation of opinions about the way to organise a really socialist Czechoslovak Republic, and did not question the social-economic foundations of the C.S.S.R.: the nationalisation of the means of production, the monopoly of foreign trade and the basic principles of a socialist planned economy. Opinions differed as how to manage and organise that infrastructure efficiently. No significant trend appeared in society proposing a return to a capitalist mode of production.

In the second place, one can easily relate this dominant ideological trend with the prevailing social structure. The remnants of former ruling classes or propertied peasantry represent a much smaller part of the population than in Hungary, not to speak of Soviet Russia at the time of the N.E.P. The working class and the other layers of wage and salary earners without large material privileges represent the overwhelming majority of the population. To believe that these social classes or layers would be willing to go back to capitalism is of course to deny one of the essential hypotheses of marxism. There is no evidence to substantiate such an assumption.

But couldn't that working class be tricked by "conscious counter-revolutionary minorities" to accept a "gradual" restoration of capitalism, starting with transformations of the superstructure which would then be extended "step by step" to the infrastructure of society? By accepting this preposterous thesis, the apologists of

the Warsaw Pact powers' military intervention (and the Soviet leaders) revise the basic marxist-leninist theory of the state, and adopt a social-democratic theory of "gradual" change of the class nature of a state which flies in the face of all history. History shows again and again that it is impossible to revert from power of one class to power of another class without large-scale class struggles, not only on the ideological field. If it is true that ideological changes and struggles precede social revolutions and counter-revolutions, it is completely untrue that a social class could lose political and economic power as the result of only ideological offensives of other classes. On this point, the Soviet revisionists have now happily come to an agreement with Mao's revisionism, which claims the same preposterous thesis. If this thesis had been true, the "ideological counter-offensive" of the catholic church after 1815 would have led to the restoration of power of the nobility. Nothing of this type happened of course.

If one rejects the revisionist conception of a "gradual" change of the class nature of a state and an economy, then however one twists or turns around the problem, one is always confronted with the same problem: would it have been possible for capitalism to be restored in Czechoslovakia by a tiny minority of society, and in the interests only of that tiny minority, with a politically active and articulate working class? Wouldn't such attempts have led to a sharpening of class struggles, to violent social and political conflicts between the working class and the small group of people interested in restoring capitalism? And would a decisive defeat of the restorationists not be favoured by all efforts which increase the activity and participation of the working class in political life, whereas all those who limit or suppress that participation thereby automatically reduce the barriers against restoration of capitalism?

The Class Nature of a Workers' State

Subjacent to the problem of the "gradual" restoration of capitalism is the whole problem of defining the class nature of a state and an economy, and more precisely the class nature of a socialist, a workers' state. Here two methods violently clash with each other.

The marxist method, also applied by Lenin, was an objective method of social analysis. Class power was a function of social structure, of a given mode of production, of a given set of production relations, and of the rule of a certain social class. To divorce the class nature of the state of this whole analysis of infrastructure would mean to deny the very foundation of historical materialism. You cannot have a bourgeois state and bourgeois class rule, without a capitalist class owning the means of production, without an economy based upon the relations between the private owners of the means of production and the sellers of labour power, and without the laws of motion of capitalism (e.g., the flux of capital from sectors with less profit to sectors with higher profit) being operative. Otherwise, the whole of marxism loses its meaning.

But the degradation of marxism to a subservient maid of day-to-day polemics by different factions of the ruling communist parties has led to a growing substitution of purely subjective criteria for social analysis to these elementary categories of marxism. For the leading group in the Kremlin, as for Mao Tse-tung, counter-revolutionists on the capitalist road are no longer people who play a definite role

in a definite social structure. They are simply all those who happen to disagree with the ruling group at a specific juncture. This, of course, leads to the most fantastic results. Already Ulbricht wrote recently about the "bourgeois(!) theory of workers' self-management". In other words: if you give workers full say over the management of the economy, you . . . restore capitalism! The absurd identity at which this type of reasoning arrives at is obviously: workers' power equals capitalist power. One could not move further away from marxism and leninism than by uttering such absurdities.

The revision of the marxist-leninist theory of the state which is at the basis of these extremely subjectivist conceptions arises from a mechanical identification of party and class which leads to the famous "leading role of the party". In complete contradiction with what Marx taught in his writings on the Paris Commune, and what Lenin taught in "State and Revolution", the leaders of the U.S.S.R. defend the idea that rule by the working class equals rule of the communist party, and rule of the communist party equals rule of the leading group of the communist party recognised by them. These revisionist ideas rest on a series of assumptions, one more absurd, unhistoric and erroneous than another: the conception that the party (or party majority) is always right; that the interests of the working class are homogenous and by some miracle automatically expressed by the ruling party; that the material privileges which the leaders of that party combine with the monopoly of exercising power do not in the least influence their political decisions and ideological evolution; that these leaders are only devoted to defend "workers' power" and not their own group power and privileges; that any questioning of that group's power and privileges somehow automatically threatens "socialism" and strengthens "the danger of capitalist restoration" — all this divorced from concrete analysis and precise alternative solutions proposed to social problems in each specific stage of development of the new society.

We cannot show in detail here how much these assumptions are in contradiction with marxist-leninist theory, and have operated in practice at the expense of the working class and against the interests of socialism. We can only recall that for the classical marxist-leninist theory, expressed, among other places, in the two key texts referred to above, dictatorship of the proletariat was identical with socialist democracy. The whole marxist-leninist critique of bourgeois democracy leads to the conclusion that *all workers* (and not only the party supposed to represent their historic interests) should enjoy more material possibilities to realise democratic freedoms than they enjoy in the most democratic bourgeois republic. This implies that all groups of workers should have free access to print shops, newspapers, radio and television stations, that the right of assembly and organisation should be open to them, provided they respect the socialist constitution. Even the exclusion of bourgeois from these rights was for Lenin not a matter of principle but a matter of expediency and the given relationship of forces (which are a thousand times more favourable in the C.S.S.R. anno 1968 than they were in the U.S.S.R. anno 1918). Because Lenin rejected the slogan "Soviet power without communists", the Kremlin revisionists have arrived at the conclusion "Communist power without Soviets". The correct answer is of course "soviet power, i.e., democratic power of all workers, among which communists fight for hegemony by political means, by superior organisation and defence of their class, by better proposals and sharper analysis, but neither by

police repression nor censorship of other working class groups, tendencies and parties". That is why the decisions taken in the C.S.S.R. before the August, 1968, invasion to restore the right of tendencies in the C.P., and the right to organise other socialist groups, is not "revisionist" at all, but a return to the classic norms of Lenin and Marx in the matter.

The practical nexus with the problem of "the danger of restoration of capitalism" is again evident. Under the given international conditions, restoration by armed intervention from abroad is impossible without a world war. Restoration by a victorious uprising of "counter-revolutionists" from within is only possible (given the social relationship of forces) under conditions of extreme apathy of the working class. Socialist democracy, by creating favourable circumstances for overcoming that apathy, is thereby the best bulwark against capitalist restoration.

The Economic Reforms

Among "unofficial" opponents of the C.P.C. the critique of the Sik-Dubcek economic reforms looms exceptionally large. Among the "official" apologists of the Warsaw Pact powers' military intervention, these economic reforms occupy a very secondary place in the indictment of Dubcek & Co. This apparent contradiction is clarified by the fact that the economic reforms introduced in the C.S.S.R. are only continuation – in the historical sense; their concrete forms are of course quite different – of the trend towards greater economic decentralisation and greater use of market mechanisms, opened up in the U.S.S.R. since several years. In fact, one can state that the C.P.C. under Dubcek went not as far in that direction as the U.S.S.R. government, and that especially in the realm of economic collaboration with the imperialist powers and monopolies, nothing comparable to the agreements of the U.S.S.R. with the Fiat monopoly, or similar agreements of Rumania and Poland, had been introduced in the C.S.S.R.

It is of course impossible to analyse in detail the meaning and contradictions of the economic reforms in the limited space allotted to that problem here. It is undoubtedly true that each important step towards market economy and towards decentralisation of investment decisions threatens in the long run the planned nature of the economy. But threat does not automatically lead to its realisation. After all, Lenin, by introducing the N.E.P. in 1921, went much farther in the direction of market economy than any of the economic reforms at present introduced in Eastern Europe. The N.E.P. eventually threatened the socialised basis of the Soviet economy; but that threat was resolved by accelerated industrialisation and collectivisation of agriculture, i.e., it did not lead to restoration of capitalism. In order to evaluate the degree of the threat and the way to neutralise it, it is necessary to make a concrete analysis of the problems of the economy at a given moment, of its main trends of development and of the relationship between social forces, and not limit oneself to general statements about the danger of market economy.

On the other hand we do not agree at all with those who, taking a purely technocratic and "economistic" point of view, measure everything in percentages of economic growth and the rhythm of development of productive forces. For sure, the development of productive forces is a precondition for building a real socialist society. "Socialisation of misery" is nonsense. But a necessary precondition does not mean a sufficient precondition. Social forces, their degree of self-conscious-

ness and participation, are equally decisive. To use means for the development of productive forces which increase social injustice and inequality, and provoke thereby demoralisation and decline of political consciousness of the masses, is to take a step backward and not forward in that field.

We reject equally the simplified "counter-argument" to the classical thesis of stalinism on the development of productive forces, a "counter argument" now especially popular among the Yugoslav official theoreticians. The root of bureaucracy is in centralisation. To fight bureaucracy you have to fight centralisation. Market economy is the only substitute for centralisation, therefore "socialist market economy" is the only efficient way to fight bureaucracy.

It is simply not true that the main root of bureaucracy is centralisation. The main root of bureaucracy is social division of labour, i.e., the material, cultural, technical and political impossibility for the mass of the producers themselves to administer directly the economy and society. One can say that relative backwardness (too low a level of development of productive forces, the material poverty of society) is in the last analysis the main cause of this permanence of the social division of labour after the overthrow of capitalism. But this is a very general and abstract point, not a concrete analysis and certainly not an argument in favour of market economy. In fact, under conditions of market economy, "objective laws" take again the place of conscious planning for determining a whole series of socio-economic processes, thereby inevitably increasing social inequality, injustice and alienation, which in turn tend to decrease the workers' participation in political life and to increase the power of bureaucracy.

Under the concrete conditions of the economic situation in the C.S.S.R. of 1966-8, an increase in decentralisation, and an increased use of market mechanism in the field of consumer goods, was probably unavoidable to bring the economy again into focus with the main goals of harmonious and accelerated economic growth. But this was not the main social question involved in the reforms. "Decentralisation" can mean two things. It can mean a strengthening of *factory managers* both with regard to planning authorities and to workers; it can also mean a creation of elements of workers' power at factory level. The first trend would be viewed with utmost distrust by the workers, especially if it implied the right of the managers to fire workers, change wage rates, increase "labour discipline", etc. The second trend is a first step in the direction of socialist democracy. During the major part of 1968, it was not clear to the Czechoslovak workers which of these two reform trends would prevail, and Dubcek was by no mean identified with the second one. He did not go beyond an experimental play with workers' councils as elements of co-management at factory level.

The more the Czechoslovak workers intervened in the process of "liberalisation" after January 1968, the more they became free to express their own views, and the clearer it became that workers' councils exercising real power were their main objective. This returns to the tradition of socialism and communism of more than sixty years ago. And as the Yugoslav experience has fully confirmed — and as Marx predicted in his critique of Proudhon more than a century ago — real workers' power cannot be exercised at plant level; the replacement of capitalist competition by competition between "producers' collectives", within the framework of market economy, can only threaten to reproduce growing social inequality, primitive accumulation of capital, i.e., threaten to reproduce capitalism itself. Therefore socialist democracy in Czechos-

lovakia will be consolidated only when economic power will be wielded not by individual workers' councils in individual factories, but by a congress of workers' councils at the level of the national economy.

The U.S.S.R.'s Enemy: Socialist Democracy

In the light of the preceding analysis we can try to answer the question: what were the reasons for the Kremlin's military intervention in the C.S.S.R.? It was certainly not against the "danger of capitalist restoration" contained in the economic reforms, because these reforms are the only part of the "January programme" of the C.P.C. which remain practically in force. It cannot be against a threat of foreign military intervention, because there is not a shred of evidence that such an intervention was about to occur. It cannot even be against the "internal" counter-revolution, for not only was this "counter-revolution" extremely weak if not non-existent, but the results of the military intervention have, if anything, strengthened it instead of weakening it, as anybody could foresee.

The conclusion to be drawn is the following: The Warsaw Pact powers' military intervention in the C.S.S.R. was not directed against social counter-revolution in that country, but against political revolution in the U.S.S.R. and its allies. The threat which the Kremlin was afraid of was not the growing influence of imperialism in Czechoslovakia, but the growing influence of Czechoslovakia in the U.S.S.R. and neighbouring countries. Not "capitalist restoration" but socialist democracy was the enemy. This is why the main demand was restoration of censorship and suppression of the new party statute of the C.P.C. This is why the decisions of the XIVth Congress of the C.P.C. have to be abolished. This is why no new party congress has the right to be convened. The Kremlin is not afraid of the insignificant "bourgeois counter-revolutionists" in the C.S.S.R. It is afraid of the Czechoslovak workers and communists, and the echo which their fight for workers' and socialist democracy can have in Poland, in the G.D.R., in Hungary and especially in the U.S.S.R. itself.

This is the only conclusion which fits the overall analysis of social forces and processes in existence in the C.S.S.R. before the invasion. It is also the only conclusion which fits the subsequent behaviour of the Soviet leaders, in the face of near-universal condemnation of their action by revolutionary socialists and progressive forces the world over.

After the admirable passive resistance of the Czech workers, students and intellectuals in the face of the invasion had forced the Kremlin to withdraw the myth of having sent its armies to the C.S.S.R. "on the appeal of communist leaders" (no Czechoslovak leader has dared till now to take responsibility for this appeal!), the Kremlin tried by a clever manoeuvre to turn a political rout into a half-victory. It forced the leading "liberal" bureaucrats of the C.P.C. to capitulate and to accept a lesser evil policy. Accepting the Moscow *dictat*, they thought that it was preferable that they should apply half of Moscow's programme rather than have the Soviet army put in power a conservative leadership which would apply all this programme. The results of this capitulation have become clear — and with them the real purpose of Moscow's "turn" towards an "agreement" with the C.P.C.'s leadership. Whereas, for the first time for 20 years, the Czechoslovak workers were united with the C.P. before and during August, 1968, a growing rift has now appeared between the most militant and politicised sectors of the working class, the students and the

intellectuals on the one hand, and the party leadership on the other hand. Simultaneously, the "leading nucleus" of the liberal reformers around Dubcek has been fragmented into at least three if not four or five sub-tendencies. The more these two processes occur together, the easier become the future manoeuvres and black-mails of the Kremlin, the greater becomes the danger of demoralisation and renewed apathy of the Czechoslovak masses. And this is the main goal which the Soviet leaders want to obtain, nearly at any cost.

Till now they haven't achieved this. The political consciousness and mobilisation of the Czechoslovak workers and youth remains admirable. It merits every support of socialists and revolutionists throughout the world. But it cannot go on for ever, under a rapidly deteriorating relationship of forces. Either new and powerful factors will come to the assistance of the Czechoslovak masses (a similar process in other Eastern European countries, especially in the U.S.S.R., would be the best help; a powerful intervention of the C.P.s and the labour movement in the West, and the revolutionary movement in the so-called "third world" would also be useful), or the Kremlin will finally attain its goal — at least for the time being.

The World Struggle for Socialism

Any success for the world revolution generally is felt the world over; any defeat of revolution, if it is grave, has unfavourable results in many other countries. This elementary truth, which has been confirmed again and again since 1848, provides us with a supplementary and final criterion to judge — and condemn — the Soviet leaders' action against the C.S.S.R. If this action had really been to "suppress threatening counter-revolution", one could have expected its positive results to be felt at least in some places in the world. In reality, the very opposite is true. Everywhere, the Warsaw Pact powers' invasion of the C.S.S.R. has had negative results, strengthening reactionary classes and conservative political tendencies. In the imperialist countries it has strengthened anti-communism more than any event in the last 10 years. It has divided the labour movement, the communist world movement, and the revolutionary forces, and put many of them into disarray. By bringing pressure to bear upon the Vietnam and Cuban revolutions to support its actions in the C.S.S.R., the Kremlin has even weakened the defence of these crucial revolutions throughout the world. The only people who really rejoice are the imperialists and professional anti-communists. Their key argument, "We told you so", utterly discredited during the last years, has again gained some credit among disoriented and immature working people in the West and other parts of the world.

The blow against the C.S.S.R. was a double blow against the world struggle for socialism. Not only has it greatly assisted the imperialists to whitewash their own crimes in Vietnam, Latin America, Africa, the Arab world, etc. It has also destroyed for the time being the possibility to show the workers of the West that socialism can guarantee much more real democracy and freedom for the toiling masses than capitalism. Such a process was in course in Czechoslovakia. It would have immensely strengthened the world struggle for socialism. By suppressing it with armed force, the Kremlin has delivered a deliberate blow against that struggle.

One can object: but didn't the Czechoslovak leaders take a moderate and right-wing position on world revolution? Hadn't they influenced their people in a "neutralist" sense towards the Vietnam revolution? Wasn't there in general a lack of sym-

pathy with revolutionary struggles going on in other parts of the world in the C.S.S.R. before August, 1968? There is undoubtedly some truth in these objections, although they often overstate their case.

It is true that the Czechoslovak people had learned to distrust official propaganda — even when that propaganda happened to defend a just cause like that of the Vietnamese people. It is also true that twenty years of miseducation and political repression did not create a favourable climate for mass fervour for the cause of world revolution. But here again, it is necessary to understand that the main process which had begun after January, 1968, was one of political reactivation and differentiation of the working class and the youth. After a few months of that process, clearly a left had emerged besides the right, even — and above all — among the students. During the Youth Festival in Sofia, the Czechoslovak delegation joined the German S.D.S. for a militant demonstration against the U.S. Embassy, for the defence of the Vietnamese revolution. It was beaten up by Bulgarian secret police protecting the U.S. Embassy. It is hard to defend the thesis that it was at that moment "to the right" of the Bulgarian, Soviet, Polish or Hungarian state leaders. And a similar process would have occurred on a wide scale, in the whole country, had the military intervention not taken place.

Historically, the process of replacing bureaucratic dictatorship by socialist democracy in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. has several goals: workers' powers in the economy, i.e., democratically centralised self-management; political workers' democracy; revolutionary internationalism are some of its main elements. The different factions of the bureaucracy define themselves towards these goals in a contradictory way. Their various reforms can only be partial; their rule must be overthrown to realise this programme in full.

Tito is right-wing in foreign policy; but who can seriously defend the thesis that workers' self-management, even in its partial and insufficient Yugoslav form, is "right-wing" compared with full rights enjoyed by factory managers in most of the other Eastern European countries? Dubcek's foreign policy was also right-wing, although less so than Tito's. But surely the reintroduction of basic democratic rights for the working class after January, 1968, was not "right-wing" compared to the complete suppression of workers' rights in many other socialist countries. Finally, can anyone call Brezhnev "left-wing", with his foreign policy based on "peaceful coexistence", with his constant deals with Washington, even around the Czechoslovak issue; with his conservative party régime denying members elementary rights enjoyed till late in the twenties; with his complete exclusion of the mass of the workers from all direct participation in plant management? Having understood this contradictory nature of the different wings of the bureaucracy, one has to reject the demagogy about the "right-wing Dubcek tendency", and see only the interests of the masses in this struggle. And the Czechoslovak masses have made crystal-clear, for anybody who wants to see, where they stand, and what they fight for.

SPOKESMAN PAMPHLETS

1.	A Strategy for the Left	Laurie Aarons	5p
2.	The 'Cultural Revolution' in China	Isaac Deutscher	12p
3.	The Draft Programme	Communist Party of Australia	7½p
6.	Bureaucracy and Technocracy in the Socialist Countries	Serge Mallet	10p
7.	The Crisis in the Czechoslovak Communist Party	Interview with Czech Communist	10p
8.	The Action Programme	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia	15p
9.	Oil, Oppression and Resistance in Iraq	Interview by Chris Farley	10p
10.	Socialism Lives in Czechoslovakia	Czech Socialist Movement	2½p
11.	Trade Unionists: We Can Defeat the Tory Bill!	Ken Coates, John Hughes and Others	5p
12.	War Crimes in Vietnam	Jean-Paul Sartre and Vladimir Dedijer	7½p
13.	The Struggle for Quebec	John Fekete and Others	30p
14.	Power and Humanism	Lucien Goldmann	15p
15.	The Students and the Revolution	Rudi Dutschke	6p
16.	Defend Democracy	Spokesman Editorial Board	5p
17.	Women's Liberation and the New Politics	Sheila Rowbotham	12p
18.	An Open Letter to the TUC	Bill Jones and others	2½p
19.	The Solution is Workers' Control	Ernie Roberts	5p
20.	Oil and Imperialism	Malcolm Caldwell	27p
21.	The Myth of Motherhood	Lee Comer	8p
23.	Behind the Dole Queue	T.U. Research Group	5p
24.	Women's Liberation in Labour History	Jo O'Brien	10p
25.	The Left Challenge for the 70's	Communist Party of Australia	8p
27.	The Quality of Life and Workers' Control	Ken Coates	12p
28.	Neighbourhood Councils and Modern Technology	Stephen Bodington	12p
29.	The Third Indochina War	Fred Branfman	15p
30.	The Hull Sit-in	People First Society	16p
31.	Chile: No More Dependence	Salvador Allende	15p
32.	What is Economic Growth?	Stephen Bodington	12p
33.	Women and the Struggle for Workers' Control	Audrey Wise	12p
34.	Europe: Time to Leave — and How to Go	Michael Barratt Brown	12p
35.	After the Chilean Coup	Russell Tribunal on Brazil and Repression in Latin America	10p
36.	Technology and the State	John Eaton	8p
37.	Self Management and the Struggle for Socialism	Michel Raptis	15p
38.	The Chilean Coup d'Etat	James and Betty Petras	15p
39.	Third World Liberation The Key	Prince Sihanouk	15p

A limited number of copies of back issues of THE SPOKESMAN and some numbers of the LONDON BULLETIN are still available at 40p a copy.

Obtainable from

The Partisan Press, Bertrand Russell House, Gamble Street, Nottingham. NG7 4ET.