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**The American Left and Communist
Czechoslovakia, 1956-1968**

Diplomová práce

Praha 2017

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Rok obhajoby: 2017

Bibliografický záznam

GÉRYK, Jan. *The American Left and Communist Czechoslovakia, 1956-1968*. Praha, 2017. 136 s. Diplomová práce (Mgr.) Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Institut mezinárodních studií. Katedra severoamerických studií. Vedoucí diplomové práce doc. PhDr. Francis D. Raška, PhD.

Abstrakt

Práce se zabývá zejména srovnáním diskurzů a analýzou vztahů americké a československé intelektuální levice mezi lety 1956 a 1968. Začíná Chruščovovým odhalením stalinských zločinů a sovětskou invazí do Maďarska z roku 1956, které vytvořily na levici atmosféru deziluze. Globální levice v tomto období do značné míry přestává vidět ideologický vzor v Sovětském svazu a začíná znovu promýšlet základy svého myšlení. Šedesátá léta pak znamenají období rozkvětu levicové teorie. Autoři se inspirojí marxistickým humanismem, především na Západě pak nastupuje tzv. Nové Levice. Doba nabízela společná témata, která přesahovala ideologické spory dvou studenoválečných bloků, nicméně odlišný charakter režimů na Východě a na Západě vedl k různým přístupům k těmto tématům. Zároveň se v šedesátých letech zvýšila mobilita idejí a jejich nositelů i přes železnou oponu, takže docházelo k zajímavým střetům rozdílných, byť stále levicových, diskurzů. Témata, na kterých práce vykresluje intelektuální prostředí doby, jsou například filozofie člověka v kontextu technologických změn otázka taktiky v boji proti systému a byrokracii, vztah dělníků a intelektuálů či vztah ke Třetímu světu. Vedle toho práce mapuje i odlišnosti na americké levici, a to zvláště na příkladu rozdílných interpretací československých reforem konce 60. let a sovětské invaze v roce 1968.

Abstract

The main aim of this work is to compare the discourses and analyze the relations of the American and Czechoslovak intellectual Left between 1956 and 1968. It begins by Khrushchev's revelation of Stalinist crimes and by the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 which created an atmosphere of disillusionment on the Left. The global Left of this period to a substantial extent ceased to be ideologically inspired by the Soviet Union and began to rethink the foundations of its thought. So, the 1960s are the period of the flourishing leftist thought. Authors are inspired by Marxist humanism and the New Left emerges, especially in the West. There were issues which existed beyond the ideological struggle of two Cold War blocs, but the different character of the regimes in the East and the West resulted in different approaches to these issues. At the same time, the mobility of ideas and their authors or supporters increased even across the Iron Curtain. Therefore, we could see some interesting encounters and clashes of different, even though still leftist, discourses. This work tries to depict the intellectual environment of the period by dealing with issues like philosophy of Man in the context of technological changes, the tactics of the struggle against the system or bureaucracy, the relation of intellectuals and workers, or the relations with the Third World. Besides this, it also shows the differences on the American Left itself, especially by analyzing various interpretations of Czechoslovak reforms of the late 1960s and the Soviet invasion in 1968.

Klíčová slova

americká levice, komunistické Československo, Studená válka, post-stalinismus, intelektuální historie, transnacionální přístup, protestní hnutí

Keywords

American Left, Communist Czechoslovakia, Cold War, post-Stalinism, intellectual history, transnational approach, protest movements

Rozsah práce: 322 652 znaků s mezerami (včetně seznamu literatury a poznámek)

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V Praze dne 18. 5. 2017

Jan Géryk

Poděkování

Na tomto místě bych rád poděkoval především vedoucímu práce doc. PhDr. Francisi D. Raškovi, PhD. za užitečné rady a velmi vstřícný přístup při vedení této práce.

Dále pak lidem, kteří se věnují digitalizaci a zpřístupňování historických materiálů, jelikož velmi usnadnili tvorbu této práce.

V neposlední řadě pak děkuji také svým rodičům za podporu po celou dobu studia.

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Introduction

The first half of the 1950s could be understood as a period of the largest isolation of the two blocs that were part of the Cold War struggle. The Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies were under rigid Stalinist rule and there was no space for any deviation from the ideological line of Stalinist version of Marxism set by the Communist Party. On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, it was Marxist thinking that suffered during the period of McCarthyism due to fear of a Communist conspiracy. The friend-enemy duality was clearly established and it was difficult to inspire oneself by the ideas of the other bloc. This work, however, will focus on the period between 1956 and 1968, which is defined by two important events –Khrushchev’s speech at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in February 1956 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968. But why should we study the history of this particular period?

Initially, the period which this work wanted to study was defined more vaguely, with a focus on the 1960s and 1970s. However, the first intention was changed and we have chosen this specific period which could be labeled “post-Stalinism”. Here, we work in the same way as the Czech historian Pavel Kolář who, in his book *Der Poststalinismus: Ideologie und Utopie einer Epoche*, sets the beginning of the post-Stalinist period not in 1953 when Stalin died, but in 1956, that is, the year when especially Stalinism as an ideology fell.¹ Then, we end our work in 1968 because the end of the 1960s could be characterized as the time when the attempts to create a new utopia, based on anti-Stalinist leftist thought, either in terms of Marxist Humanism, or in terms of rather non-ideological New Left, started to decline. The reasons for this decline were especially the defeat of the Czechoslovak reform movement by Warsaw Pact troops led by the Soviet army and the failure of the Western New Left to realize fully its demands. It was after the 1960s, as Samuel Moyn rightly points out, when “*Westerners left the dream of revolution behind— both for themselves and for the third world they had once ruled— and adopted other tactics*”.² The new tactic was the human rights

¹ Pavel Kolář, “Ideologie a utopie epochy” (A lecture about Kolář’s book in the Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Science, Prague, December 21, 2016).

² Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 4.

discourse, substantially different from the revolutionary demands of the late 1960s. As Bronislaw Baczko remembers, in the 1970s it seemed “*that a century rather than a decade separated us from the end of the 1960s*”.³ Therefore, we will study the years 1956-1968 as a rather coherent period typical for the attempts to revive leftist philosophy, ideology, and political thinking.

By defining post-Stalinism less as a political and more as an intellectual history term, we mean that the main questions of this work will deal with intellectual history or the history of ideas. The assumption which we begin our work with is that we understand post-Stalinism as a global phenomenon. The reason is the character of Marxism as the “*most developed body of theory and practice in socialist movements*”, which, therefore, resulted in “*an international discourse with an international vocabulary*”.⁴ Internationalist elements of Communist ideology as such were even strengthened after the Bolshevik Revolution with “*vigorous Soviet loyalism*” which “*reproduced the rigidities of Comintern Marxism on every continent*”.⁵ Therefore, either Khrushchev’s speech revealing Stalinist crimes, or the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia had global implications not only geopolitically, but also in the sphere of ideology because all such events influenced the Marxist Left as a whole.

So, we have chosen the topic of analyzing the relations of the American Left and Communist Czechoslovakia also because we can very well apply the transnational or transatlantic approach here. We follow Arthur Lovejoy’s statement that ideas are “*the most migratory things in the world*” and, therefore, we will try to study them when they are on the move between nations, changing the context in which they are interpreted. In some cases, we will use even Edward Baring’s approach that goes beyond the traditional text-context relation and sees transnational networks as “*interpretative communities in their own right*”.⁶ Here we have in mind especially a unique volume edited by Erich Fromm called *Socialist Humanism* which brought together thinkers from capitalist, socialist and Third World countries who showed a unique harmony of their ideas and thus made a true transnational humanist community. In a different way,

³ Ibid., 120.

⁴ Michael Denning, *Culture in the age of three worlds* (London: Verso, 2004), 187.

⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁶ Edward Baring, “Ideas on the Move: Context in Transnational Intellectual History,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77, No. 4 (October 2016): 567, 572.

and focusing on literature rather than philosophy or political ideas, but still accurately even for them, Pascale Casanova writes that the “*journey itself becomes a constitutive theme and form of the work*”.⁷ So, our focus will be on mapping the travels of ideas across the Iron Curtain and, more generally, between the three Cold War worlds.

The central question of our work, therefore, is whether we can talk about a genuine transnational network, whether something like a global leftist community existed and worked on the new interpretation of socialist concepts in the age of political and technological turmoil in the 1960s. Should we place an emphasis on parallels between the liberation or student movements from various countries and see an anti-authoritarian common ground of the generation of the year 1968? Or is it more important to see the differences between “*philosophically oriented ‘critical theory’ of the First World, the dissident formations of the Second World, and the peasant and guerilla Marxisms of the Third World?*”⁸ When many authors of the 1960s noticed the similarities between the ruling powers of the West and the East, did it mean that the means used by the movements that resisted “bloc” Cold War thinking on both sides of the Iron Curtain were similar as well? What problems could arise when the opposition voices from the East and the West met each other? These questions are interesting since, as we implied above, the context was the same, regarding the global character of some issues, and different at the same time, regarding the different kinds of regimes the 1960s movements opposed. We can also connect to these topics the question of whether, for example, the reactions of the American Left to the events in Czechoslovakia were determined by the struggle the Left led in America, and, if so, to what extent.

In our search for the answers, we will use qualitative research methods. In particular, the close reading of primary sources will be helpful in this case. When describing the discourse, we would like to outline the complex picture of the intellectual and activist landscape of the analyzed period. In order to describe this landscape, we will not be limited by one specific kind of discourse, but we will let academics, students, politicians, and activists speak. Direct quotations will be used quite frequently in order to have as authentic a picture as possible. Primarily, we will analyze the discourse in various kinds of media, in an attempt to find the topics and discursive

⁷ Justin Quinn, *Between Two Fires: Transnationalism and Cold War Poetry* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 25.

points that were used on the Left and set them into the transatlantic context of the Cold War. We will use also the comparative method in order to compare the Left in the USA and in Czechoslovakia. But, besides discourse and comparative analysis, even more descriptive parts of this work have their value since they are based on quite a wide scale of sources, some of them not frequently used, so it offers the reader a link to many primary and secondary sources. One of the main goals of this work is thus to portray the analyzed period in a manner such that a reader could better understand its complexity. Here, the disciplinary approach will be especially that of intellectual history which tries to “*regard ideas as historically conditioned features of the world which are best understood within some larger context*” and then to “*understand*” them rather than “*defend*” or “*refute*”.⁹ The ideas that we will work with are both grander ones like socialism, as for the attempts to achieve its authentic version, or more particular ones like the intellectual-worker alliance, market socialism, or workers’ councils. As for a thematic classification, this work would like to be a contribution to Cold War history, or the history of the Left.

Now, we should specify what we mean by the “American Left” and “Communist Czechoslovakia”. The latter collocation is simple since we can explain it by its temporal and territorial position. However, we will be more interested in those Czechoslovak authors who were part of the reform movement of the 1960s or who constituted the left-oriented opposition to the regime. But, even here, it is necessary to present, at least roughly, our conception of the (American) Left. This is not an easy question since we can hardly define the Left in general, without a particular context. John Patrick Diggins is skeptical of the conflation of the Left with terms like anticapitalism, which can have also its right-wing (proto-)fascist form, rationalism, since especially the New Left was clearly uncertain about rationalism, or popular sovereignty, because particularly in American context, the Left emphasized the “*sovereignty of the unpopular*”.¹⁰ Diggins’s remarks were, however, connected more to the American context and regarding, for example, anticapitalism, we could say that to state that it is not merely leftist idea does

⁸ Denning, *Culture in the age of three worlds*, 44, 9.

⁹ Peter E. Gordon, “What is Intellectual History? A Frankly Partisan Introduction to a Frequently Misunderstood Field,” 2-3, accessed May 5, 2017, <https://sydney.edu.au/intellectual-history/documents/gordon-intellectual-history.pdf>.

¹⁰ John P. Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York: Norton, 1992), 33-38.

not mean that it could not be tightly connected to the Left. For a positive definition, we could rather turn to the Polish philosopher, Leszek Kolakowski. He sees the Left in the dynamic temporal perspective describing it as “*a movement of negation toward the existing world*”. But this is just one part of the definition. At the same time, the Left is defined by “*the direction of this negation, in fact, by the nature of its utopia*”, while utopia is “*a mysterious consciousness of an actual historical tendency*”.¹¹

But, in this work, we will deal primarily with the Left which has its origins in the thought of Karl Marx and with the New Left that also partly came from this ideological area, even though as a reaction to Old Leftist interpretations of Marxism. The reasons for this approach are, as we have mentioned above, the development of Marxist ideas and, given the historical context, their international vocabulary suitable for transnational analysis. Moreover, some thinkers that are important for our study were émigrés from Europe, like Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, or Raya Dunayevskaya. They brought to America something characteristic for the 20th century émigré authors, in Gordon’s words “*a new sensibility—deference for the European intellectual tradition combined with an acerbic, insider’s recognition of its potential dangers to human freedom*”.¹² So, we will work with the thinkers connected more or less to European Marxist socialism rather than more traditionally American progressivists like Charles A. Beard or Vernon L. Parrington and their descendants who were, as Denning writes, “*occasionally mistaken for an American Marxism*”. For Denning, these “*critical American studies*” rather “*served as a ‘substitute Marxism’*”¹³ which is connected with the fact that Marxism was never a widespread ideology in the USA.

Having some concepts important for our work at least roughly explained, we should now move to the sources and the structure of this work. As for the sources, we based our work on a combination of primary and secondary sources with the primacy of the primary ones. We used a variety of especially American left-wing periodicals, supported by their quotations in secondary sources when the access was limited in the Czech Republic. From newspaper-like periodicals, we can mention the Trotskyist-oriented *The Militant*, or more Marxist humanist *News and Letters*. Here, we should

¹¹ Leszek Kolakowski, “The Concept of the Left,” in *New Left Reader*, ed. Carl Oglesby (New York: Grove Press, 1969), 146-147.

¹² Gordon, “What is Intellectual History?” 8.

¹³ Denning, *Culture in the age of three worlds*, 173.

mention the archive of Trotskyist periodicals and journals¹⁴ which is a part of the large Marxist Internet Archive, undoubtedly a very helpful site for the study of Marxism in English. Among the magazines with longer analytical articles, we have used, for example, socialist *Monthly Review*, *Telos*, interested more in critical theory, or democratic socialist *New Politics*. Regarding *New Politics*, we should mention one thing about the following quotations from this magazine which is available via unz.org archive. The indication of the years of publication sometimes does not seem to be logical. For example, there is Irving Louis Horowitz's article on the Tri-Continental Conference in Havana held in 1966, but it is from the "Fall 1965" issue, according to the archive.¹⁵ The explanation by the current editor is that the "Fall 1965" issue was copy-written and distributed in 1966 and that this "lag appears to have been ongoing".¹⁶ Thus, we will use the dates shown on the UNZ website. As for Czechoslovak periodicals like *Literární noviny*, *Kulturní tvorba*, but also many others for example *Rudé právo* or *Listy*, we refer to the internet archive of the Institute of Czech Literature of the Czech Academy of Sciences¹⁷, also very valuable webpage. *Universities & Left Review* is digitalized and accessible for free as well.¹⁸

Among other primary sources, we can highlight especially the above mentioned Fromm's *Socialist Humanism* volume with the essays by the authors from the three Cold War worlds. Another useful volume was edited by David Cooper and composed of the contributions to the Dialectics of Liberation Congress held in London in 1967. Regarding the intellectual space in Czechoslovakia, we really appreciate Antonín J. Liehm's collection of interviews with leading Czech and Slovak authors called *The Politics of Culture*. Then, we based our work also on the books and articles written by

¹⁴ "Listing of Trotskyist Periodicals & Journals," accessed May 5, 2017, <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/>. Articles from *The Militant*, *News and Letters*, the *Bulletin*, *Independent Socialist*, and *Fourth International* quoted in this work are available here.

¹⁵ "UNZ Archive" (New Politics) accessed May 14, 2017, <http://www.unz.org/Pub/NewPolitics/>. All *New Politics* articles used in this work are available here; also *Saturday Review* is available at <http://www.unz.org/>.

¹⁶ Dan La Botz to the author, email, April 17, 2017.

¹⁷ "Digitalizovaný archiv časopisů, Ústav pro českou literaturu AV ČR," accessed May 5, 2017, <http://archiv.ucl.cas.cz/>.

¹⁸ "Universities & Left Review archive," accessed May 16, 2017, http://banmarchive.org.uk/collections/ulr/index_frame.htm.

authors like Herbert Marcuse, Ivan Sviták, or Karel Kosík. As for the secondary sources, there were some books that deal with the history of the Left. For the American context, there were John P. Diggins's *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* and Paul Buhle's *Marxism in the United States*, both covering a long period from the end of the 19th century to the date of their respective publication. The comparative analysis of the Western movements of the 1960s is shown in the book *Hnutí '68 na Západě* by Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey. Regarding the developments in the Czechoslovak intellectual sphere, there is Petr Hrubý's work *Czechoslovakia between East and West: The Changing Role of Communist Intellectuals, 1948 and 1968* or Vladimír Kusín's *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring: The Development of Reformist Ideas in Czechoslovakia 1956-1967*. Finally, two books of special value for our work focus on transnational contacts of Czechoslovak and Western authors, intellectuals, and students. The first is Justin Quinn's *Between Two Fires: Transnationalism and Cold War Poetry*, a great example of the study about literary works and ideas traveling across the Iron Curtain; the second is *Mocným navzdory: studentské hnutí v šedesátých letech 20. století* by Jaroslav Pažout which explains very well the East-West relations, especially in the context of the student movement with a special focus on Czechoslovakia and Western Europe. Regarding secondary literature, we should note that some books and articles used in this work were found in online databases like Ebrary or JSTOR with an access provided by Charles University in Prague or in Google Books.

The following work will be structured into four main chapters. The approach is chronological in the way that the first chapter begins with Khrushchev's 1956 speech and deals with the end of the 1950s and the last chapter ends with the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. But the chapters themselves are structured rather according to particular topics in order to depict the discourse of the period in various fields. Each chapter has also its own questions that are connected to our main research about comparing the discourses on the Left in the East and the West when the context is both common, regarding the Cold War and post-Stalinism as global phenomena, and different, regarding the character of the regimes. Thus, the first chapter should prove that the revelation of Stalinist crimes was a blow to the whole Communist movement. Therefore, it asks the question of how the ideological landscape changed after the events of 1956 and describes various forms of disillusionment from Stalinist kind of Communism.

The second chapter first describes the main developments of the 1960s Left and then continues with four main issues, crucial for the 1960s Left, in which we can compare the discourses in Czechoslovakia and the United States: philosophy of Man and his/her relation to the world, the question of opposition to authoritarian regimes, the possibility of an intellectual-worker alliance, and the relation to the Third World. Each of these questions was important for both the East and the West, but the answers differed, sometimes substantially, sometimes in nuances. This chapter will deal primarily with the comparison of discourses without their direct contact. What happened when ideas traveled across the Iron Curtain is the issue of the third chapter. There, we will go through the analyzed period and see what impact Western visitors from different parts of the Left, like Americans W. E. B. Du Bois, Pete Seeger, and Allen Ginsberg, or some influential Western European intellectuals, had during and after their visits to Czechoslovakia. The second part of this chapter is a variation on our comparative chapter and presents the reader with few short stories of direct East-West contacts and the possible problems of the encounters of discourses coming from various contexts. The final chapter approaches the issue of the contacts between the American Left and Communist Czechoslovakia again from a different angle. In this part, we will analyze American leftist reactions to the Czechoslovak reform movement and the subsequent Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. By comparing the reactions on various issues by authors from different parts of the American Left, we will be able to see the disputes among American Marxists and radicals themselves and have a more complex picture of both the American and Czechoslovak Left.

1. 1956 and the Reshaping of the Leftist Ideological Map

1. 1 Introductory Remarks

In order to describe the character of the Left in the 1960s and analyze the relations between the American Left and Communist Czechoslovakia, it is necessary to map the process of the creation of the ideological space at that time. We could see a substantial shift in leftist thought in the 1950s; the ideological space was to some extent emptied, especially on account of the events of 1956, so it was therefore waiting for being occupied by a new kind of ideas. In this chapter, we will focus primarily on the impact that the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the Hungarian uprisings, and the subsequent Soviet invasion, both in 1956, had on the Western and the Eastern Left.

These events weakened the Communists of the Soviet type especially in the sphere of ideology, because they created an atmosphere of disillusionment, which called at least for a discussion about the main dogmas of both the Communist regimes and the headquarters of the Communist parties in the West. This is important especially for the Communist Party U.S.A. (CPUSA), since it was a marginal party compared to those, for example, in France, or Italy. Some Communist parties in Western Europe were parts of larger working-class subcultures with a developed class-consciousness, were supported by millions of voters, and had parliamentary representations. These popular bases were, because of their mass character, quite independent of Moscow.¹⁹ However, this does not mean that the parties themselves were very independent or even liberal in the 1950s, since the French Communist Party, among other things, supported the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. This caused a wave of discontent and especially many intellectuals, following the example of Jean-Paul Sartre, ended their support for or membership in the Party.²⁰ But for the CPUSA, in comparison to these larger Western European parties,

¹⁹ Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Kyrill M. Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 354.

²⁰ On 8 November, 1956, *France-Observateur* published a manifesto called “Contre l’intervention Soviétique” initiated by Vercors and signed by many leftist intellectuals, including Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir from *Les Temps Modernes* magazine. Sartre himself published a long exposé of Hungarian

the potential split in the Party's circle seemed more dangerous, as the shifts and debates described below demonstrate, because the CPUSA was small, sectarian, and influenced even more directly from Moscow than some other Communist parties in the West.

This chapter will begin with the Stalinist part of the Left where the impact of the 1956 events was really substantial. We will try to compare the reception of those events within CPUSA and among Stalinist intellectuals in America with the reception in Communist Czechoslovakia. The year 1956 started with the 20th Congress of the CPSU where Nikita Khrushchev, in his famous "secret speech" (24th-25th February), denounced Stalin's cult of personality and reported on his crimes. Khrushchev also recommended a return to Leninism, to real democratic centralism, or the correction of mistakes that followed from the cult of personality in history, especially in the history of the CPSU, philosophy, and other sciences. In his introductory "Report of the Central Committee of the CPSU", Khrushchev also told the delegates about the possibility of differences in transitions to socialism. The trend towards relative independence in the center-periphery relationship was followed by the dissolution of the Cominform in April 1956.²¹ However, the Soviet leadership showed the limits of the new course when they made the demands of Polish strikers impossible to achieve in October and suppressed the Hungarian uprisings by deploying tanks in November 1956. When the first disillusionment after the 20th Congress was followed by hopes of liberalization, the second one during the autumn was definitive for many within the former Stalinist orbit. Others chose to – or had to, in the case of the Eastern bloc – stay and to adapt to the new conditions.

However, this chapter will not focus only on the Stalinist Left. There were other revolutionary Marxists, especially Trotskyists in the West who were anti-Stalinist since the Trotsky-Stalin struggle in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, so the events of 1956 did not surprise them that much. Some of them remained revolutionary-oriented and came with their own interpretations of the 20th Congress and the Hungarian uprising that were independent of the Moscow line. Others became anti-communist socialists or Cold War liberals even before 1956 with their own reasons for leaving the communist groups. But the shift in the opinions of these former radicals was another element in emptying the

events in a special issue of *Les Temps Modernes* with a title "Le Fantôme de Staline". – David Drake, *Intellectuals and Politics in Post-War France* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 93-95.

ideological space on the Left. This was the case especially among the so-called New York Intellectuals²².

1. 2 Changes in the Stalinist Orbit

“The theory of the party is a scientific theory to the extent to which it reflects the objective laws themselves; and where it deviates from them, the theory is transformed into the ideological elements in Marxism, i.e. into the elements of false consciousness, into the necessary illusions that every epoch has about itself.” – Ivan Sviták²³

One of the first experiences of the former Czech Constitutional Court Justice Vojtěch Cepl during his studies at the faculty of law in 1956 was when a professor of Soviet law came to the lecture hall, said *“Comrades, I have to tell you about the important changes at the Congress of the CPSU...”*, and then started crying. *“I was embarrassed. Such an old guy and he cries because of Stalin?”* said Cepl.²⁴ However, these serious emotional reactions were not uncommon, both in the East and the West, and they reflected the discovery of false consciousness and illusions described by Ivan Sviták in the introductory quotation. Peggy Dennis, the wife of the CPUSA’s General Secretary of the National Committee Eugene Dennis, remembered her feelings after she finished reading Khrushchev’s speech: the last page of it *“crumbled in my fist, I lay in the half-darkness and I wept (...) for a thirty-year life’s commitment that lay*

²¹ Muriel Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost: Československo a rok 1956* (Praha: Prostor, 2001), 33, 36, 39.

²² The New York Intellectuals is a label for scholars who formed an important intellectual part of the Old Left. They started as young Marxist anti-Stalinist radicals especially during the 1930s and then they spread along nearly the whole ideological scale of the Cold War period. Their main forums in the 1950s were magazines like *Partisan Review*, *Dissent*, or *Commentary*. We can mention Irwing Howe, Sidney Hook, Daniel Bell, Irving Kristol, Lionel Thrilling, or to some extent Hannah Arendt, among others. – Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

²³ Ivan Sviták, “Filosofie kultu,” (1956) in *Lidský smysl kultury: eseje*, ed. Ivan Sviták (Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1968), 12.

²⁴ Tomáš Němeček, *Vojtěch Cepl: Život právníka ve 20. století* (Praha: Leges, 2010), 8.

shattered."²⁵ And it was not only the monument of Stalin that fell; after the invasion to Hungary, it was also the one of the Soviet Red Army. In the words of the French actress Simone Signoret who was invited to the New Year's celebration in Moscow in 1957, the Soviet soldiers "*in one short week stopped being only the heroes of 1917 and the victors of Stalingrad (...) but had transformed themselves into imperial troops invading a colony.*"²⁶

These questions of disillusionment and the following reshaping of the historical memory are important for our analysis of the creation of the ideological space of the 1960s. Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Kyrill M. Anderson emphasize that the relationship of the CPUSA to the Soviet Union as the hegemonic power was still crucial in this reshaping:

*"Since the beginning of the movement, American Communists had worn special glasses that allowed them to see only what Moscow saw and that rendered all else invisible. Stalin's victims were invisible to American Communists because Moscow did not see them. But when Moscow finally opened its own eyes, when Khrushchev (...) pointed to the bodies of Stalin's victims littering the Soviet landscape, American Communists saw those bodies as well."*²⁷

This led to a kind of double standard in judging the controversial executions in the USA and in the Eastern bloc. While the supporters of the Left worldwide, notably among the intellectuals and artists like Frida Kahlo or Pablo Picasso, demanded clemency for Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were executed for espionage related to the atomic bomb, they said almost nothing about the rumored executions of the Yiddish writers Itzak Feffer, David Bergelson, and Leyb Kvitko in the Soviet Union, or about the case of Rudolf Slánský and others in Czechoslovakia.²⁸ It was, however, quite difficult for the Left to ignore the Slánský case since the executions were an embarrassment to Western leftists. Some of them claimed that the conviction of the Rosenbergs was an example of anti-Semitism, but the executions of the Slánský group had, in fact, an anti-

²⁵ Gerald Sorin, *Howard Fast: Life and Literature in the Left Lane* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 303.

²⁶ Paul Lendvai, *One Day That Shook the Communist World: The 1956 Hungarian Uprising and Its Legacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 195.

²⁷ Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism*, 350.

²⁸ Sorin, *Howard Fast: Life and Literature in the Left Lane*, 254.

Semitic element. Nevertheless, the Communist *Daily Worker* tried to deny the connection of the Slánský case to anti-Jewish policy.²⁹ Anti-Semitism was an important issue since many American leftists were of Jewish origin. The writer Howard Fast claimed, after he had left the CPUSA in 1957, that one of the reasons for leaving the Party was the Slánský case. He asked himself how antisemites “*could hold office in a socialist country?*” and said that his “*uneasiness*” grew “*from day to day*” after 1952. But, according to Gerald Sorin, he lied because “*he remained a fiercely dedicated Communist*” until 1957 and did not publicly denounce the events in Czechoslovakia in the early 1950s.³⁰

However, the anti-Semitic atrocities in the Soviet Union were of course among the reasons Fast mentioned in his article “On Leaving the Communist Party” in 1957. The article is a typical summary of lost hopes. Here, he criticizes the Soviet Union and admits that even though his position as a writer is crippled in the United States, because of his Party membership, he can still live and write, compared to the Soviet Union where a writer could be silenced or put to death while committing far less than Fast himself. But he criticizes the CPUSA as well for its sectarian discipline and for the lack of internal discussion. In a typical sentence of the article, he says: “*In my thirteen years of Communist Party membership, none of the national leaders of the Party ever discussed my writing except when I was brought before them on charges of violating the Party line.*”³¹

Discussion was a crucial word in the turbulent year of 1956. For a while after Khrushchev’s speech, there was relatively wider space for discussion within the CPUSA. The progressive wing of the CPUSA was led by the editor of the *Daily Worker* John Gates who, especially during the spring of 1956, opened the journal for all opinions, printed attacks against the Party leaders, and called for an Americanized political association, more independent of Moscow. The conservative, Soviet-oriented wing was represented by William Z. Foster. This wing, with help from Moscow, finally took back control of the Party.³² The Party leaders finally began to follow the trend set by Khrushchev, which denounced Stalin, but did not go further in their criticism of the

²⁹ John F. Neville, *The Press, the Rosenbergs, and the Cold War* (Westport: Praeger, 1995), 85-87.

³⁰ Sorin, *Howard Fast: Life and Literature in the Left Lane*, 254.

³¹ Howard Fast, “On Leaving the Communist Party,” *The Saturday Review* (November 16, 1957): 16-17.

³² Sorin, *Howard Fast: Life and Literature in the Left Lane*, 304, 312-313.

regime. From the anti-Stalinist changes, we can mention the fact that the *Daily Worker*, according to rival Trotskyist *The Militant*, did not mention Foster's autobiography called "From Bryan to Stalin" among Foster's accomplishments.³³ But the typical, and also quite contradictory, position was that in one Howard Fast's statement from 1956 where he said that American Communists will not be able to forget "*the awful acts against Jewish culture and its leaders,*" but neither will they "*overnight forget the record of the Soviet Union (...) three decades of warfare against chauvinism and anti-Semitism (...) and the unending struggle (...) for the equality of all peoples.*"³⁴

As we have seen, the year 1956 alienated many intellectuals from the hard-line Communism of the Soviet type. We described the case of Howard Fast, but there was also for example E. P. Thompson in the United Kingdom. According to Thompson in 1957, "*The 'rejection' of Communism, or Marxism, or Belief in Progress, is now a trivial routine affair.*" It is assumed that the resignee "*must make certain stylised gestures—loss of faith, anguished self-analysis, disillusion in political action.*" But Thompson disagrees with this defeatist position and says that "*the humanist Gods of social liberty, equality, fraternity (...) stubbornly remain on the Communist side*". And that is why he remains a Communist even though not a Party member.³⁵ We can say that this position was one of those that laid the intellectual foundations of the New Left, even though it was still more ideologically oriented and rooted in the philosophical Marxist tradition. In any case, not only intellectuals, but also ordinary Party members were in high numbers leaving Western Communist parties shortly after the events of 1956 and this resulted in remapping of the ideological space. The CPUSA undertook a re-registration of its members in the winter of 1957-58 and only 3000 people stayed in the Party, which meant the loss of "*more than three-quarters of its membership in the two years since the Khrushchev speech, and total membership stood at less than 5 percent of the peaks of 1939 and 1946-1947.*"³⁶ And finally, when the *Daily Worker*

³³ James P. Cannon, "Cannon Explains the Death of the Stalin Cult Shows Pressure of Soviet People on Bureaucracy," *The Militant*, March 26, 1956.

³⁴ Sorin, *Howard Fast: Life and Literature in the Left Lane*, 305.

³⁵ E. P. Thompson, "Socialism and the Intellectuals," *Universities & Left Review* 1, No. 1 (Spring 1957): 31.

³⁶ Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism*, 353.

began to support the suppression of the Hungarian uprising, the journal had to cease publication because of a lack of subscribers.³⁷

1. 3 Czechoslovakia after the 20th Congress of the CPSU

The shock caused by the 20th Congress of the CPSU provoked similar reactions in the Eastern bloc. In Czechoslovakia as well, neither Party members, nor intellectuals were used to discuss things connected to the regime at official forums, but the sort of changes that appeared in the Soviet Union created an atmosphere of uncertainty where, at least, limited discussion was necessary. Jiří Pelikán talked about the explosion that was caused by the exposure of Stalin's crimes among ordinary Party members, even though the representatives of the Central Committee had, as their task, not to provoke discussion at the basic level of the Party. The French historian Muriel Blaive quotes this remark, but she is more moderate than Pelikán in the description of the state of emotions. She admits, however, at least the chaos of the explanatory campaign, where lower cadres were not able to explain the changes to Party members because they were not sure about them as well.³⁸

Blaive also describes discussions from meetings of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC) in the spring of 1956 that focused on local cult of personality. Some voices were critical; for example Július Ďuriš said that *"It is necessary to say openly that comrade Gottwald was also capable of threatening people after the year 1948 and that he more and more limited the collective decision-making of the presidium by his influence."* On the other hand, there were people like Václav Kopecký who defended Gottwald and pointed out Gottwald's modesty by stating that Gottwald *"did not say 'Trust me', but always 'Trust the Party, comrades.'"*³⁹ Vladimír V. Kusín showed in his book some unpublished remarks on the 20th Congress of the CPSU that emphasized the need for discussion of theoretical matters as well: *"If the dispute is theoretical, it is wrong to call for a majority decision. Science and theory do*

³⁷ Sorin, *Howard Fast: Life and Literature in the Left Lane*, 314.

³⁸ Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost*, 65, 57.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

not rest on majority decisions. (...) I believe that in countries with a strong democratic tradition (...) the Party should strive to keep up this tradition.”⁴⁰

Muriel Blaive, however, does not believe that these statements were somehow crucial. Compared to Poland and Hungary, the Czechoslovak population did not support these rare critical voices and Czechoslovakia was in 1956 the Stalinist exception between two demonstrating countries. Blaive disagrees with one tradition of the interpretation of the year 1956, advocated especially by former reform Communist historians, that overestimates the democratic character of Czechoslovak society and, therefore, makes it difficult to explain the passivity of Czechoslovaks.⁴¹ There is also the question of historical memory. According to Blaive, reform Communist historians succeeded in forgetting that they themselves had advocated Communist ideology and they legitimized their sources mainly by their participation in the reform movement of 1968. These historians interpret the passivity in 1956 almost only by the intensity of repression, or say that this passivity was in fact active.⁴² In a similar way, in the USA, some of the New York Intellectuals used this strategy referred to by Alan M. Wald as “*political amnesia*”. It is a process when an intellectual focuses on secondary aspects of his or her earlier thought, “*omitting, minimizing, or reinterpreting what was primary*”.⁴³ While for the New York Intellectuals, it was mainly minimizing the importance of their revolutionary Marxist political views from the 1930s, for the Czechoslovak historians, the point was not to remind people of their ideological positions in the 1950s. But both shifts are interesting for the intellectual historian and for the remapping of the ideological space of the 1950s and 1960s.

We should not say, however, that the year 1956 was of no importance for the future reform movement in Czechoslovakia. We can point to the student Majáles parade and especially to the 2nd Congress of Czechoslovak writers – both were critical to the dogmas of the regime and found their successors in the 1960s. According to Jiří Pernes,

⁴⁰ Vladimír V. Kusin, *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring: The Development of Reformist Ideas in Czechoslovakia 1956-1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 22.

⁴¹ Blaive mentions Eduard Táborský (“*seemingly non-rippled surface hides the whole sea of latent, and from time to time rebelling anticommunism*”), Jiří Pelikán, or from the exiles Ivo Ducháček (“*evolutionary revolution*”, “*invisible civil war*”). Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost*, 149-153.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 215, 225.

⁴³ Wald, *The New York Intellectuals*, 12.

Blaive somewhat underestimates the significance of the writers' congress, even though she refers to it in her book. The Congress did not motivate people to some direct actions, but, for example, the theoretical magazine of the Central Committee of the CPC *Nová mysl* reported that there “*was on a full scale established the spirit of a free, creative discussion and of an open exchange of opinions*”.⁴⁴ The rejection of dogmas and the search for the truth and authenticity appeared especially in the Congress speeches of František Hrubín and Jaroslav Seifert. “*What do the people want from poetry? (...) Making slogans? No! They want it to show where life flows. (...) A poet of the people is not one who talks about them, but who speaks out of their souls...*,” said Hrubín.⁴⁵ Seifert then used a famous formula on writers as the conscience of the nation/people: “*I wish we were the conscience of our people. Because, I'm afraid, we were not that for several years. (...) When anyone else conceals the truth, it could be a tactical maneuver. When a writer conceals the truth, he lies,*” said Seifert and continued with the criticism of censorship regarding the works of Vladislav Vančura or Josef Hora.⁴⁶

The writers' congress, according to Vladimír Kusín, revealed for the first time signs of “*a rapprochement between, and even unification of, views held by progressively thinking Communists and non-Communists alike, i.e. transgression of the artificially erected barrier between the purported vanguard and the 'masses'*”⁴⁷: an issue, dangerous for the Communist bureaucratic establishment, that finally appeared during the late 1960s. In 1956, however, this connection between intellectuals and workers was still limited, compared to the revolutionary situation in Hungary. Jiří Pešek, one of the participants of the students' Majáles, said that at the beginning, Majáles had not been political; students just “*wanted to make use of the temporary*

⁴⁴ Jiří Pernes, “*Doslov: Rok 1956 očima československého historika,*” Afterword to *Promarněná příležitost*, by Muriel Blaive, 470, 473-474.

⁴⁵ František Hrubín, “*Diskusní příspěvek Františka Hrubína 24. 4. 1956,*” in Michal Bauer, “*II. sjezd Svazu československých spisovatelů 22.– 29.4. 1956,*” *ALUZE: Revue pro literaturu, filozofii a jiné*, No. 3 (2010): 100-101.

⁴⁶ Jaroslav Seifert, “*Diskusní příspěvek Jaroslava Seiferta 27. 4. 1956,*” in Bauer, “*II. sjezd Svazu československých spisovatelů,*” 104-105.

⁴⁷ Kusin, *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring*, 20.

weakness of the regime” and celebrate. “*People were still frightened. That is why the students did not try to join with the workers.*”⁴⁸

The union of intellectuals and workers, an important thing for the Left, was not fulfilled in 1956 in Czechoslovakia, but there were steps towards another typical discursive element of the 1960s – the critique of bureaucracy. One of the student resolutions in 1956 demanded public discussion in the press about the important actions in the spheres of the state and economic life, and the control of the leadership from below. Students also disagreed with Antonín Novotný’s statement on the binding character of the decisions of the Central Committee because it goes against the principle of leading the workers by persuasion.⁴⁹ Ivan Sviták’s words from that time express an interesting critique of the regime from a clearly anti-Stalinist position. Sviták sees the powers behind the cult of personality “*whose support was in the bureaucratic style of work that ties the initiative of the people and the participation of the workers in political life*”.⁵⁰ He concludes with the pronouncement that “*to solve the problem of bureaucratism means to have a key to solve many questions important for socialism*”.⁵¹

The limits of the Party discourse were set by Khrushchev’s policy and did not shift the Party towards the “socialism with a human face” that appeared in 1968. Antonín Novotný stated that the struggle against bureaucratism should go hand in hand with disproving the Trotskyist opinion that bureaucratism changes the class character of the regime.⁵² The short period of thaw in 1956 was not followed by a period of openness. But still, Vladimír Kusín wrote that “*more than anywhere else, the year of 1956 in Czechoslovakia was the beginning of reform, not just a demonstration of public opinion*”. Regarding the comparison with Poland and Hungary, he adds that “*to measure the quality of a nation only by its rising to the level of momentary heroism is to reduce historical valuation to only one of its many indicators*”.⁵³ This could be true,

⁴⁸ quoted in Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost*, 96.

⁴⁹ “Rezoluce Fakultní organizace ČSM Matematicko-fyzikální fakulty UK,” in *Majáles 1956: nevydařená revolta československých studentů*, ed. John P. C. Matthews (Brno: Prius, 2000), 41-43.

⁵⁰ Sviták, “Filosofie kultu,” 14.

⁵¹ Ivan Sviták, “Proměna filosofie,” (1956) in: Sviták, *Lidský smysl kultury: eseje*, 28.

⁵² Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost*, 99.

⁵³ Kusín, *The Intellectual origins of the Prague spring*, 26-27.

but, on the other hand, the Czechoslovak events of 1956 had practically no significance for the shifts on the global Left, compared especially to Hungary.

The point is that, after 1956, the Soviet-led countries ceased to be that ideologically inspiring for the Western Communists as they were earlier. Zygmunt Zaremba, a Polish socialist living in French exile, points out that there was a Conference of Twelve Communist Parties in Moscow, 1957, where only the European and Asian Parties from the socialist bloc participated. According to Zaremba:

*“This exclusion of Communist parties from capitalist countries reflected the Kremlin's realistic view that the order of the day contained not revolutionary outbursts in capitalist countries, but an internal threat to the Communist system. (...) At the same time, ideological emphasis was transferred from the revolutionary apostolate to the state problems of the Soviet Union and imperial problems of the ‘socialist system’.”*⁵⁴

The Communist movement, as it follows from the resolutions of the 1957 Conference, altered its principles. The Western Communist parties were told to defend democracy and parliamentarianism; there was *“the retreat from the canon of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ realized by revolutionary means, the retreat from spreading Communism by armed force”*.⁵⁵ In other words, Communist regimes were more concerned with their own internal problems. In the sphere of ideology, they began balancing between conservatives and revisionists; in the sphere of world politics, the focus shifted from the rhetoric of global class struggle to the rivalry of two systems.⁵⁶ The desire for *“establishing unity of action”* between the Communist and Socialist parties *“on the many pressing issues that confront the working-class movement”* despite ideological differences⁵⁷ seemed like accepting the fact that the Communist movement itself had been weakened after 1956. We should take this also as an important factor in

⁵⁴ Zygmunt Zaremba, “Communism in the Era of “Enlightened Despotism,” *New Politics* 2, No. 1 (Fall 1962): 108.

⁵⁵ Zygmunt Zaremba, “A Discussion: Socialist-Communist Collaboration,” *New Politics* 3, No. 1 (Winter 1964): 70.

⁵⁶ Zaremba, “Communism in the Era of “Enlightened Despotism,” 109, 112.

⁵⁷ “Declaration of the Twelve Communist and Workers Parties, Meeting in Moscow. 1957,” accessed November 15, 2016, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sino-soviet-split/other/1957declaration.htm>.

remapping the Left since the idea of two closed blocs was strengthened at the expense of the possibility of the Communist takeover in the West. So, the Soviet Union started to lose its position as the leader of the world Communist movement in both the East and the West and leftists started to look elsewhere for inspiration.

1. 4 Changes on the Anti-Stalinist Left in the 1950s

Regarding the above-mentioned possibility of cooperation between socialists and Communists, Zygmunt Zaremba mentions two points of view on the changes in the Eastern bloc that were present among the anti-Stalinists after 1956: “*The first held that the changes in the Communist camp were purely tactical in nature*” and rejected “*joint action with Communists*”; “*the second held that these changes were basic in nature*”, and supported “*unification of the labor movement*”.⁵⁸ In a discussion with Zaremba, Vilém Bernard, another exile social democrat, points out that the Socialist International passed a resolution in March 1956 in Zurich rejecting “*any united front or any other form of political co-operation with the parties of dictatorship*”. The necessary precondition for the talks with the Communist parties on the international level should be “*the re-establishment of genuinely free democratic labor movements in all those countries where they existed before and have been suppressed or eliminated by the Communist dictatorship*”.⁵⁹

From the voices that were in favor of at least limited cooperation, we can mention E. P. Thompson, who had left the Communist Party in the United Kingdom, but ideologically remained a Marxist. Thompson stressed the humanist vision of communism and said that without building intellectual and cultural bridges with colleagues in Poland or China, the movement would “*lend fuel to Stalinism*” and “*to the antihumanists—the irrationalists, the self-devouring disillusionists, the decryers of progress—in our own midst*”.⁶⁰ In the USA, we should mention A. J. Muste, who wanted to end the divisions on the American Left and was not against a broader leftist

⁵⁸ Zaremba, “A Discussion: Socialist-Communist Collaboration,” 70.

⁵⁹ Vilem Bernard, “A Discussion: Socialist-Communist Collaboration,” *New Politics* 3, No. 1 (Winter 1964): 78.

⁶⁰ E. P. Thompson, “Socialism and the Intellectuals: A Reply,” *Universities & Left Review* 1, No. 2 (Summer 1957): 22.

movement, including Communists. In December 1956, Muste called a meeting out of which emerged the American Forum for Socialist Education, an organization that, contrary to some Old Left Trotskyist ones, accepted Communists within its own ranks. Doing this, the American Forum “*opposed the uneasy consensus of Old Leftists and liberals on the issue of anticommunism.*”⁶¹

This consensus is important for the American Left in the 1950s, but it is important whether we mean anti-Communist (i.e. anti-CPUSA or anti-Stalinist) or anticommunist consensus, since the former included those who still remained more radical Trotskyists in the second half of the 1950s, while the latter was composed notably by the New York Intellectuals, who had abandoned their radical positions. But both groups, since they had common roots in the anti-Stalinist Marxism of the 1930s, together opposed the cooperation with the CPUSA. Regarding the Trotskyists, around the parties like the Workers Party (WP) or the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the disputes between them and the Communists were mainly about the role of the bureaucracy in the Communist regimes and about the invasion to Hungary in 1956.

The position of American Trotskyists during the events in the Eastern bloc in 1956 was that the repudiation of Stalin was not enough since the bureaucracy still did not give power to the workers. By his attack on Trotskyists, according to *The Militant*, “*Khrushchev tried to fix rigid and inviolable limits to the repudiation of Stalin’s past*”.⁶² The connections between Stalin and the Party bureaucracy were especially emphasized, for example with a quote from Leon Trotsky’s *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) on the bureaucrats: “*In Stalin each one easily finds himself. But Stalin also finds in each one a small part of his own spirit. Stalin is the personification of bureaucracy.*”⁶³ *The Militant* disagreed with the Communist justification of the invasion, that there was a risk of the capitalist overthrow of the regime. The Trotskyists interpreted the Hungarian uprising as the voice of the workers. The typical argument says:

⁶¹ Jeffrey W. Coker, *Confronting American Labor: The New Left Dilemma* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 131.

⁶² Morris Stein and John G. Wright, “Why Kremlin Repudiated Stalin,” *The Militant*, March 5, 1956. We could see very similar attack on Trotskyists also in the above mentioned statement by Antonín Novotný.

⁶³ Morris Stein and John G. Wright, “What the Kremlin Now Admits About the Stalin’s Cult,” *The Militant*, March 12, 1956.

*“The bureaucracy will not simply change its reactionary character through inner reflection. It must be overthrown, and this must be done by the socialist masses and not by the imperialists... (...) To drown the workers uprising in blood (...) is not to combat the capitalist restoration threat but to crush the only class force capable of defeating it.”*⁶⁴

Within the Trotskyist ranks, we do not see such turbulent changes as there were in the CPUSA since the SWP and the WP were independent radical parties. Trotskyists were closer to the New Left of the 1960s than Communists since they called for the socialist democracy from below and criticized bureaucracy, but we count them still as Old Leftists. They remained within the realm of classical revolutionary Marxism, especially with their approach to the working class as the only one with revolutionary potential and with the importance of ideological questions for them. Here, the ideological map was not changed very much during the late 1950s. Much more important for the road to the 1960s were those who left the radical Left and became its ideological opponents.

For example, in a series of articles in the 1930s, Sidney Hook criticized the Communists from the more radical Left, stressing the need to revert to true revolutionary principles: *“Despite its best revolutionary intentions, the Communist Party has neither advanced the cause of revolutionizing the situation of the masses, nor has it done anything to advance the immediate interests of producing classes”*. That is why he called for *“a new communist party and a new communist international”*. In the 1950s, even though still interested in Marxist philosophy, there was a completely different Hook, as it follows from his book *Heresy, Yes – Conspiracy, No*: *“communism (...) is the greatest menace to human freedom in the world today.”*⁶⁵ Hook’s 1950s interpretation of Karl Marx goes against the dogmatic Communist one: *“I regard it as a grave historical political error to permit the Communists to claim Marx as their own. Marxism is one of the best standpoints from which to criticize Communism.”* Moreover, he challenges some basic postulates stated by Marx himself, like the primacy of the economic development with politics being a mere superstructure. On the other hand,

⁶⁴ “An Open Letter to Members of the Communist Party,” *The Militant*, November 12, 1956.

⁶⁵ quotes in Wald, *The New York Intellectuals*, 3-4.

Hook still finds useful Marx's rationalism and scientific sociology, and his interest in human alienation, applicable in the mass society of the 1950s.⁶⁶

But Hook was not alone. Many his colleagues from the ranks of the so-called New York Intellectuals changed their opinions in a similar way. Some of them, like Irving Kristol, moved more directly to the right; others became deradicalized socialists, for example Max Shachtman, and especially Irving Howe who founded democratic socialist *Dissent* magazine; still others (Julius Jacobson) kept some revolutionary convictions, criticized both above mentioned groups, and established the magazine *New Politics*.⁶⁷ As for the second group, we should add that people like Howe rejected both Stalinism and Cold War imperialism, but their left-wing position was stronger in domestic politics – in economic affairs, or in their opposition to McCarthyism. In the sphere of international relations, they firmly supported the West. In 1952, Howe and Stanley Plastrik said:

*“The ‘third camp’ concepts seem now to us meaningless. (...) We are opposed to war. (...) But, as democratic socialists, our place is in the Western world, the democratic world, no matter how sharp our criticisms of its bourgeois leadership. The struggle between Stalinism and the West is not merely a struggle for the imperialist division of the world but, also, and in terms of consequences, more fundamentally a struggle between two ways of living: between democracy, however marred, and the most bestial totalitarianism ever known.”*⁶⁸

Since this quote, as well as other signs of deradicalization of these former anti-Stalinist revolutionary Marxists, is from the period before 1956, it is clear that the reasons for it originate somewhere else than in the disillusionment caused by the 20th Congress of the CPSU or by the invasion of Hungary. One reason is, of course, that many of those writers were former Trotskyists who, in opposition to Stalin, monitored Stalinist crimes much better than the CPUSA members. In November 1956, for example, Irving Howe shouted at Howard Fast during a debate at Brandeis University: *“You have blood on your hands!”* And for those in the auditorium who felt sorry for Fast, he later added: *“They didn’t understand the passion, (...) the Moscow trials, the murder of the Jewish*

⁶⁶ Sidney Hook, “What’s Left of Karl Marx?” *The Saturday Review* (June 6, 1959): 13, 58.

⁶⁷ Wald, *The New York Intellectuals*, 280, 295.

⁶⁸ quoted in *Ibid.*, 322.

poets and writers.”⁶⁹ Howe was critical to the events happening in the Eastern Europe even since the Communists had taken power in Czechoslovakia: “*Why did the Czech workers help the totalitarian bandits seize the government? (...) Why do the workers still think that there is socialism in Russia? Why have they not learned that the Stalinists are totalitarian despots?*” wrote Howe in 1948.⁷⁰

In the 1950s, other reasons were added explaining the rejection of the Marxist ideology by many former radicals or, in other words, the shift from anti-Stalinism to anticommunism, or even anti-Marxism. With the lost hopes in possible anti-Stalinist results during the period of regime changes in Eastern Europe and with the advent of the Cold War, and its direct consequences like McCarthyism, the intellectuals had to choose the side they were on, since the Communist regimes were no longer war-time allies. Many people were also afraid of harassment by the FBI and possible isolation from their colleagues.⁷¹ Alan M. Wald mentions also the importance of Hannah Arendt’s book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), which in some sense played a conservatizing role with its conflation of Stalinism and Hitlerism under one concept of totalitarianism and the following accentuation of the differences between the Stalinist regimes and Western liberalism.⁷² English writer Kingsley Amis in 1957, at that time still a leftist before his right-wing turn similar to some New York Intellectuals, added more pragmatic reasons for apathy and leaving the leftist politics by many. He writes: “*When we shop around for an outlet we find there is nothing in stock: no Spain, no Fascism, no mass unemployment.*” In other words, “*very few causes offer themselves to the cruising rebel. No more millions out of work, no more hunger marches, no more strikes...*”⁷³

1. 5 Concluding Remarks – A Space Left for the New Left

Summarizing the changes and shocks that transpired during the 1950s, we can describe the state in which the Left entered the 1960s. In 1956, the 20th Congress of the

⁶⁹ Sorin, *Howard Fast: Life and Literature in the Left Lane*, 315.

⁷⁰ Irving Howe, “Observations on the Events in Czechoslovakia,” *Labor Action* 12, No. 10 (March 1948), accessed November 18, 2016, <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/howe/1948/03/czech.htm>.

⁷¹ Wald, *The New York Intellectuals*, 289.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 269-270.

⁷³ Kingsley Amis, *Socialism and the Intellectuals* (London: The Fabian Society, 1957), 7, 9.

CPSU and the Soviet invasion of Hungary represented major blows to the Communist parties around the world. The comparison of reactions within the CPUSA and the CPC demonstrated the international character of the Communist movement with Moscow as its center. Reactions in various Communist parties included the disillusionment of many members. But, in the West, where the Communist parties did not govern and did not exercise control over populations, Communism of the Soviet style definitely lost its former attractiveness and the Parties lost many of their members. The confirmation of the bureaucratic rule and the suppression of the uprising in Hungary, where many workers participated, kept only the old hard-liners in the Party while the disillusionment of many more independent members was definitive. Even in Czechoslovakia, even though its population did not openly express anger like people in Poland or Hungary, the ideologically-driven enthusiasm of the early 1950s was over. Students mocked regime slogans during the Majáles parade; writers began to talk about more existentialist topics and stressed the importance of conscience as a subjective category⁷⁴ – something that was followed upon by the 1960s intellectuals.

So, that was one area on the Left that was remapped during the late 1950s. The second was not directly influenced by the events of 1956, but rather by the Cold War atmosphere in general. Anti-Stalinist intellectuals did not wear the glasses that obscured reality as the CPUSA members did, so they made the decision to change their position on the political scale earlier. Forced by the circumstances to choose ideologically between the East and the West, even many former Trotskyists chose the West and became democratic socialists, if not directly Cold War liberals. The important thing here is the suddenness of this break with their radical intellectual roots. Alan M. Wald criticizes them not for their rethinking of Marxism or for their role in stabilizing capitalism, but for “*the falsification of past history so as to erase the revolutionary anti-Stalinist tradition*” to which they had belonged. This political amnesia caused the ignorance on the part of the 1960s New Left, which resurrected some former Stalinists like Lillian Hellman or Paul Robeson as moral beacons, rather than followed the earlier thought of the New York Intellectuals, since young radicals saw them as parts of the

⁷⁴ We could read this for example in the Seifert’s speech at the Writers’ Congress. Also in Ivan Sviták essay, we can see an interesting combination of socialism with more existential elements: “*We should especially trust ourselves, and our experiences about life around us. And if we look around properly, then the basic questions about life should place us into the ranks of socialism.*” Sviták, “Filosofie kultu,” 17.

Cold War establishment. The rehabilitation of Robeson and others “*was the logical by-product of the dismal record of all but a few of the founders of the intellectual anti-Stalinist left*”, writes Wald.⁷⁵

But, at the same time, as the space on the Left was being emptied, there were some elements that began to fill it with new content. This new content shifted from internationalist Marxism focusing primarily on the working class. The problems of class, elites, and the structure of society needed a rethinking from the more traditionally American leftist perspective. Out of this emerged books like C. Wright Mills’ *The Power Elite* (1956) or later Michael Harrington’s *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (1962). Harrington was, according to John Patrick Diggins, a “*link between the remnants of the Old Left and the birth of the New*”⁷⁶ and contributed to similarly oriented magazine *Liberation*, with a former editor of *Dissent* Sidney Lens as one of its major figures, which sought to reorient the Left and “*focused on a variety of issues rather than a single political ideology*”.⁷⁷

Many young radicals, opposing the capitalist West and finding no inspiration in the Soviet-led East, started to identify themselves with the Third World or they tried to discover the self. The universal modernist ideal of a rational man was challenged and race and gender became important categories in expressing one’s own identity.⁷⁸ This shift away from modernity and the postulates on the Enlightenment was significant for the emerging New Left. Also, as we will see in the next chapter, outlining the leftist philosophy and politics of the 1960s, the New Left focused more on specific problems and formed a heterogeneous movement, rather than political parties. From this rather practical approach anti-anticommunism emerged, even though not a desire to cooperate directly with the Communists.

⁷⁵ Wald, *The New York Intellectuals*, 309-311.

⁷⁶ Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 201.

⁷⁷ Coker, *Confronting American Labor*, 132.

⁷⁸ Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 213.

2. The American and Czechoslovak Left in the 1960s

2. 1 Historical Introduction

*“During one of the infrequent recess periods, the Soviet delegation went off to see some of the sites and memorials of the American Revolution. As they approached the monument at Bunker Hill (...) the oldest member of the Soviet group took off his hat and began to move his lips. Those very close to him heard him recite the famous lines from Emerson...”*⁷⁹

This is a part of Norman Cousins’ reminiscence of the third of the Dartmouth Conferences (at that time at Andover, 1962), an event where the leading American and Soviet intellectuals met one another and discussed the most urgent problems of the period. This rather poetic image in the quotation should emphasize the atmosphere of the pioneering moments of official contacts between intellectuals of the two Cold War blocs at the meetings where they could talk about such delicate questions like the danger of nuclear war. These kinds of encounters marked the process or policy that was, especially on the Soviet side, called “peaceful coexistence”⁸⁰ between the East and the West. Our focus on the intellectual history of the period has its rationale since, regarding the coexistence policy and the reluctance of the leaders to engage in a direct conflict, even the Kremlin ideologues stressed that *“the main battles between two camps will be taking place on the ideological front”*.⁸¹

This could have resulted in other depoliticization of the public spheres of both blocs since each one wanted to present itself as united and homogeneous. But for many

⁷⁹ quoted in Philip D. Stewart and Harold H. Saunders, *The Dartmouth Conference: The First 50 Years 1960—2010* (Kettering Foundation, 2010), 10, accessed March 2, 2017, https://www.kettering.org/sites/default/files/product-downloads/Dartmouth_50_Years.pdf.

⁸⁰ The term refers to the Soviet policy focusing on the possibility of reducing the hostility between two superpowers or, in general, between the East and the West. The practical consequence was for example a less active approach in the support of the national liberation movements in the colonies, for example in Algeria. See Jiří Pelikán, “The Struggle for Socialism in Czechoslovakia,” in *Lives on the Left: A Group Portrait*, ed. Francis Mulhern (London: Verso, 2011), 66. (The numbers of pages are from the ebook version – see Sources).

⁸¹ Petr Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West: the changing role of communist intellectuals, 1948 and 1968* (South Bentley: Western Australian Institute of Technology, 1979), 14.

authors this was only rhetoric, so they used rather the liberal theory of convergence in order to describe the East-West relations.⁸² Both approaches, however, made the impression that there were no other new alternatives. Thus, these two kinds of depoliticization soon found its opponents because it was difficult to cover the real problems of this turbulent period. As the editors of the *Monthly Review* magazine later wrote about the American conditions, it was possible “to stave off economic stagnation and mass unemployment by waging a Cold War” and depend economically on the military-industrial complex, but it was impossible to do other things like to control the consequences of the Cold War, to prevent the capital accumulation process from exercising its normal polarizing effect, or to cover the “problems of racial and national oppression which are built into the very foundations of capitalism”.⁸³

These issues promoted the necessity of the emergence of new left-wing thought labeled simply the New Left. C. Wright Mills, one of the intellectual predecessors of the New Left, questioned the depoliticizing proclamations of “the end of ideology”, used mainly by the intellectuals connected with the Congress of Cultural Freedom, already in 1960 in his famous *Letter to the New Left*: “The end-of-ideology is on the way out because it stands for the refusal to work out an explicit political philosophy. (...) What we should do is to continue directly to confront this need.”⁸⁴ Another important document of the period, the *Port Huron Statement*, a manifesto of the organization Students for a Democratic Society, formulated this notion this way: “Doubt has replaced hopefulness -- and men act out a defeatism that is labeled realistic. The decline of utopia and hope is in fact one of the defining features of social life today.”⁸⁵ By this and other statements, however, the world entered a decade full of revolutionary thought and a search for a positive utopia.

⁸² Excerpts from Zbigniew Brzezinski and Samuel Huntington, *Political Power: USA/SSSR*, accessed May 13, 2017, <http://pages.uoregon.edu/kimball/Brzezinski.htm>.

⁸³ Paul M. Sweezy and Harry Magdoff, “The Old Left and the New,” *Monthly Review* 21, No. 1 (May 1969): 7-8.

⁸⁴ C. Wright Mills, “Letter to the New Left,” *New Left Review*, No. 5 (September/October 1960), accessed March 3, 2017, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/humanism/mills-c-wright/letter-new-left.htm>.

⁸⁵ “The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society,” (1962) accessed March 3, 2017, <http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/huron.html>.

In Czechoslovakia, the ideological vacuum was similar, but there was also the idea of a specific Czechoslovak road to socialism, whose realization was interrupted in 1948. The imported Soviet model made impossible for the Czechs and the Slovaks to follow Sartre's advice that the essential thing is building socialism with nation's own hands since "*one makes oneself a socialist by making socialism*".⁸⁶ The negative experience with Stalinism showed that the creation of an independent socialist society was not the case in Czechoslovakia. As Ludvík Vaculík said in his interview with Antonín J. Liehm, they learned "*a great deal about socialism and the concept has become much more carefully defined, but it is really a negative definition: we now know, more clearly than ever before, what socialism isn't*".⁸⁷ It sounds then quite paradoxical that the new Czechoslovak Constitution (1960) contained the preamble, which talked about the completion of the goal of building socialism and that the country changed its name into the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Even though these changes may seem like standard propagandistic slogans, Petr Hrubý holds quite a logical opinion that even these promulgations led some groups within the Party intelligentsia to take it seriously and demand appropriate changes.⁸⁸ In any case, besides a little thaw in the context of the Eastern bloc, this revival of historical memory and increased international contacts with the West contributed to the notion of building socialism rooted in the Czechoslovak democratic tradition.

What was important in both Czechoslovakia and the USA was the generational aspect of the changes on the political map. In Czechoslovakia, the student youth was not that substantial as in the West since the leading reformist and intellectual figures of the 1960s were usually one generation older. But the question of the clash of generations was important as well, as Milan Kundera noticed: "*It makes a big difference whether a person became engaged in his first conflicts with society under the occupation, or during the heady years of 1945 and 1946, or during the peak of the Stalinist era, or after it. The difference of a few years is felt as a generation gap...*" because of differences in generational tactics and philosophies.⁸⁹ However, in Czechoslovakia, the

⁸⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Introduction: The Socialism That Came in from the Cold," in *The Politics of Culture*, ed. Antonín J. Liehm (New York: Grove Press, 1970), 6.

⁸⁷ Ludvík Vaculík and Antonín J. Liehm, "Ludvík Vaculík," in *The Politics of Culture*, ed. Liehm, 198.

⁸⁸ Petr Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 291.

⁸⁹ Milan Kundera and Antonín J. Liehm, "Milan Kundera," in *The Politics of Culture*, ed. Liehm, 140.

student element played its role. Especially in the second half of the 1960s, there were some more radical groups, even though usually under the Czechoslovak Union of Youth (CUY), that were challenging traditional power structures and trying to achieve autonomy. Notable personalities were for example Jiří Müller, Zdeněk Pinc, Lubomír Holeček, or Karel Kovanda.⁹⁰ The student strike at the Strahov dormitory and its violent suppression in October 1967 was one of the events directly preceding the Prague Spring; students were very active also during the protests against the Soviet occupation after August 1968.

In both the East and the West, it was true for the youth that there was “*no large revolutionary current against which to measure their unappeasable radicalism*”⁹¹, but in the USA, the statement that the history of the 1960s radicalism is the history of the student movement is closer to the truth than anywhere else. At the beginning of the 1960, students were looking for some new ideas and theories, and organized the first groups around the journal *Studies on the Left* (Wisconsin, 1959), and Students for a Democratic Society (Michigan, 1961).⁹² Their ideas stressed especially the necessity of independent thought not influenced by ruling ideologies in both the USA and the USSR. “*How could we become enthusiastic about either of the superpowers, armed to the teeth for our annihilation?*” asks Paul Buhle, a New Left veteran and the author of the book *Marxism in the United States*.⁹³

But, shortly after, other practical activist issues occurred, namely the need to assist the Civil Rights Movement in the South and the Vietnam War. Especially in its inspiration in the Civil Rights Movement and its “*generous sense of community*” the New Left found its original ethos.⁹⁴ Around 1965, according to Buhle, there was a shift from orthodox Marxism and working-class combativeness towards traditional American forms of radicalism like women’s emancipation, utopian experiments, and racial unrest. In this sense, Buhle quotes one 1964 pamphlet called *Negro Americans Take the Lead*:

⁹⁰ Jaroslav Pažout, *Mocným navzdory: studentské hnutí v šedesátých letech 20. století* (Praha: Prostor, 2008), 80.

⁹¹ Antonín J. Liehm, “Author’s Foreword: On Culture, Politics, Recent History, the Generations – and also on Conversations,” in *The Politics of Culture*, ed. Liehm, 47.

⁹² Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 222.

⁹³ Paul Buhle, *Marxism in the United States: A history of the American Left* (London: Verso, 2013), 221.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 237.

*“The pitiable subordination of American intellectuals to European historical norms and organization is seen nowhere as sharply as in their inability to recognize the specific American radicalism in the Negro movement.”*⁹⁵ The new tactics and forms of struggle, like sit-ins and other forms of passive resistance, that the students learned in the South, where many of them personally participated, were useful also in the fight for change at universities. A leading figure of the Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley, Mario Savio, stressed the struggle of students *“against impersonal and irresponsible bureaucracy”* and said that the activists *“encountered the organized status quo in Mississippi, but at Berkeley, it is the same”*.⁹⁶

The movement for reforms (or revolution) at universities was, of course, not just internally oriented, but connected to many other important issues of the period. The Free Speech Movement was a reaction to the limitations to support the Civil Rights Movement at the university, many demonstrations were held against the so-called “multiversity”, the connection of universities and their research with the interests of the government and large industrial corporations, especially when tied to military research. Contrary to “multiversities”, students organized “free universities” (San Francisco, Philadelphia, Berkeley) offering alternative methods of education as the starting points for leftist movements in society. In the late 1960s, demands of students affiliated to the Black Power movement are present as well, for example, the one to change university curricula in order to reflect the situation of African-Americans. Radical Black students also acted rather separately during the occupation of university buildings at Columbia in April 1968.⁹⁷

Towards the end of the 1960s, the focus of the movement changed. The radicals to some extent succeeded in spreading their anti-war sentiments to the wider public or made issues like racism and poverty central in the public debate. But since these topics were accepted as important issues by mainstream liberals, the New Left in some sense lost its distinctive character. On the other hand, these issues, even though transferred to the center of attention of Americans, were not solved sufficiently. Both these aspects led

⁹⁵ Ibid., 222, 225.

⁹⁶ Mario Savio, “Konec historie,” in *Studenti a ideologie na Západě: Dokumenty*, ed. Jiřina Šiklová and Miluše Kubičková (Praha: Horizont, 1969), 192.

⁹⁷ Ingrid Gilcher-Holtheyová, *Hnutí 68 na Západě: Studentské bouře v USA a západní Evropě* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2004), 28, 30, 34, 75.

the New Left to emphasize either its countercultural or violent elements. John Patrick Diggins writes about the final period of the existence of the SDS in a way that “*the spirit of Port Huron collapsed in sectarian rancor*”. He explains it by these changes of attitude: “*women would express resentment at the male-dominated SDS, black radicals would deride it as ineffective, Communists would penetrate the organization and eventually take it over.*”⁹⁸

This general and historical introduction briefly presents the atmosphere of the 1960s. Its aim is not to describe the chronology of the events in every detail, but rather to cover some important changes in the thought of the period. We focused mainly on the New Left, but that does not mean, as the reader can see in the following subchapters, that the older generations of intellectuals, more traditional democratic socialists or those still representing the Old Left, disappeared from the scene. In the USA, there operated magazines such as *Monthly Review* or *New Politics*, in Czechoslovakia, besides the new student periodicals, there were important magazines like *Literární noviny* or later *Literární listy*. The next four subchapters will use the thought of the older, but in the 1960s still active thinkers maybe even more than the thought of the youth. The structure of the rest of the chapter will not be chronological, but it will follow these topics: the focus of 1960s philosophy; the strategies and tactics used by the Left of the period; the relationship between intellectuals, workers, and other specific groups in society; the relation of 1960s thinkers to the Third World. Every topic will be analyzed comparatively with the focus on similarities and differences between the West and the East, especially between the USA and Czechoslovakia.

2. 2 Philosophy on the Left in the 1960s: Issues and Impulses

Since our work is interested primarily in the intellectual history of the 1960s, especially in its transatlantic comparative aspects, we cannot avoid describing the main philosophical currents of the period. We will not, of course, cover everything, but will focus on the authors and issues on the border between philosophy and social and

⁹⁸ Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 267-268, 242. By Communists, Diggins means rather small radical parties typical for their return to more rigid organizational structure like Progressive Labor Party, according to Diggins “*Maoist in inspiration, Leninist in organization*”. *Ibid.*, 256.

political theory, specifically on those affiliated with the Left. That is why we will not deal with, for example, the philosophy of language, which was one of the most growing fields of the period, even though especially Noam Chomsky or also John Searle supported student and anti-war movements.⁹⁹ But that does not mean that there is no connection between the philosophy of language and the author's political views. Chomsky said that, on the one hand, "*a Marxist-anarchist perspective is justified quite apart from anything that may happen in linguistics*", but, on the other hand, "*the fundamental human capacity is the capacity and the need for creative self-expression*" and "*one particularly crucial realization of this capacity is the creative use of language*". That is why "*one tries to think about the modes of social organization that would permit the freest and fullest development of the individual*".¹⁰⁰

But more important for us will be considerations on issues like automatization in production and its consequences for work as a kind of human action, the changes in the definition of man in the light of science, or philosophical characteristics of political systems, bureaucracies, and repression. From the most inspiring names in analyzing these topics we can mention Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, or Hannah Arendt from the older generation of American, even though immigrant, philosophers, and Karel Kosík or Ivan Sviták from Czechoslovakia. The seminal works of the period are especially Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) and Kosík's *Dialektika konkrétniho* (1963). From among the important philosophical groups of the 1960s, that connected the East with the West and the Third World, we can definitely point out the Praxis School (Gajo Petrović, Rudi Supek among others) and its journal *Praxis* or the Korčula Summer School organized between 1964 and 1974. Finally, we should mention other influential European or Third World philosophers connected more or less to the Left: Jean-Paul Sartre, Jürgen Habermas, or Frantz Fanon.

One of the most important problems at that time was the human existence itself and the awareness of the people that it is in danger. After all, one famous passage from the *Port Huron Statement* says: "*Our work is guided by the sense that we may be the last generation in the experiment with living. But we are a minority -- the vast majority*

⁹⁹ From the more political works of both authors we can mention Searle's reminiscences on the atmosphere at Berkeley, where he was a professor, called *The Campus War: A Sympathetic Look at the University in Agony* (1971) or Chomsky's *American Power and the New Mandarins* (1969).

¹⁰⁰ Noam Chomsky, "Linguistics and Politics," in *Lives on the Left: A Group Portrait*, ed. Mulhern, 265.

of our people regard the temporary equilibriums of our society and world as eternally-functional parts."¹⁰¹ A pressing idea was the notion that in the world everything is possible, especially given the Cold War context of a danger of nuclear war and the large technological progress. But these possibilities existed alongside persisting alienation. In the words of C. Wright Mills, "*the means of history-making (...) have never in world history been so enlarged and so available to such small circles of men on both sides of The Curtains*".¹⁰² The paradox that the socialist humanist philosophers wanted to overcome was the situation in which, according to Predrag Vranicki "*man, the creator of history, has been largely powerless, disfranchised*". For Vranicki, similarly as for Karl Marx, alienation exists when man is transformed into a component of machinery. When man "*experiences his powers as a set of factors apart from himself, the possibility will exist for such factors to act toward him as a superior authority*".¹⁰³

The point is, for many theorists from the 1960s, that alienation exists in both capitalism and socialism in their actual forms. Raya Dunayevskaya sums it up when she says that the essence of exploitation "*is not a question of nationalized vs. private property, it is a question of freedom*".¹⁰⁴ Then, it is necessary to emphasize some problems that transcend the ideological differences between two Cold War blocs, and that are general for the modern era. As we will see throughout this chapter, this urge is common for philosophers from both the West and the East since they question the manipulating power from below and from the point of freedom of man to express his/her potentialities without ideological predetermination. One type of manipulation present in the whole interconnected world is evident in the definition of enemy. As the American anthropologist Jules Henry notices, "*an interdependent world political economy has within it sufficient conflicts of interest to make all nations potential enemies to all others*". The consequence of this is "*a psychological predisposition to accept almost any nation at all as inimical when the government chooses to so define it*".¹⁰⁵ Vranicki would add to this connection between war and economy that an

¹⁰¹ "The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society".

¹⁰² Mills, "Letter to the New Left".

¹⁰³ Predrag Vranicki, "Socialism and the Problem of Alienation," in *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*, ed. Erich Fromm (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 276-277, 279.

¹⁰⁴ Raya Dunayevskaya, "Marx's Humanism Today," in *Socialist Humanism*, ed. Fromm, 68.

¹⁰⁵ Jules Henry, "Social and Psychological Preparation for War," in *The Dialectics of Liberation*, ed. David Cooper (London: Verso, 2015), 43. The book consists of principal addresses delivered on the

alienated man who is “no more than a commodity producing other commodities can with equal ease become part of a mechanism which sees an enemy in another man or nation”.¹⁰⁶

Focusing first on the critique of affluent industrial societies, we can see that especially in the West, philosophers criticized even the supposedly positive things. For example the shortening of the time at work does not necessarily mean progress in the struggle against alienation. Since “he does not know how to live in present, create” how it is possible for “a man who is alienated in his work” to “rediscover himself in his leisure time?” asks Mathilde Niel.¹⁰⁷ Herbert Marcuse agrees with the skeptical tone of Niel’s question when he says that a “possessor of free time” is not a “different subject” because even in his/her free time, man “is subordinated to the same norms and powers that rule the realm of necessity”.¹⁰⁸ Even the exercise of one’s political rights only contributes to the strengthening of administration because it is still within the framework established by the repressive society. “By testifying to the existence of democratic liberties which, in reality, have changed their content and lost their effectiveness” people are in danger, according to Marcuse, that “even progressive movements threaten to turn into their opposite”.¹⁰⁹ According to this argumentation, it follows that people have to question even the instruments of democracy and freedom when these prevent the real alternative to repressive consumer society from occurring. The fact that the suppression of alternatives is “no longer terroristic but democratic (...) and even satisfying does not change this condition” since “advanced industrial society can take care of humanistic values while continuing to pursue its inhuman goals”.¹¹⁰ One of Marcuse’s main points is that it is mainly the power of established societies that blocks utopia from coming about. Without this suppression, it would have

Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation in London 1967 and its first edition was published in 1968. (The numbers of pages are from the ebook version – see Sources.)

¹⁰⁶ Vranicki, “Socialism and the Problem of Alienation,” 277.

¹⁰⁷ Mathilde Niel, “The Phenomenon of Technology: Liberation or Alienation of Man?” in *Socialist Humanism*, ed. Fromm, 311.

¹⁰⁸ Herbert Marcuse, “Socialist Humanism?” in *Socialist Humanism*, ed. Fromm, 101.

¹⁰⁹ Herbert Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” accessed March 4, 2017, <http://www.marcuse.org/herbert/pubs/60spubs/65repressivetolerance.htm>.

¹¹⁰ Marcuse, *Socialist Humanism?* 104, 102.

not been impossible for the dynamic productive technological forces of contemporary societies to realize utopia.¹¹¹

What Czechoslovak progressive philosophers did not share with the part of the Western philosophy represented by Marcuse was the skeptical approach to the exercise of one's political rights since their achievement was what reformists in Czechoslovakia to a large extent fought for. But many other issues were similar – also because, as Petr Hrubý mentions, it was not possible for people working in the social sciences to be isolated from the West. The influence was substantial and even though neo-Stalinism could be preserved politically by force, “*the old naïve and sincere belief in its theoretical tenets could not be resurrected*”.¹¹² From the most important events with a numerous Western participation we can mention the Liblice Conference on Franz Kafka (1963) or the Christian-Marxist Dialogue in Mariánské Lázně (1967), both strengthening the existentialist elements in Czechoslovak philosophy.

The main target in Czechoslovakia was the impersonal bureaucratic system, in which men who constitute its parts are, in Sartre's words, “*doubly suspect because they are turned into things and because they are never completely mere things*”. Such men are easy to manipulate, but it means that they are also potential traitors because foreign agents can manipulate them as well. It follows, then, Sartre continues, that “*one must suspect men rather than institutions*” and that “*it allows the 'thing' to liquidate its own ministers if need be*”.¹¹³ Sartre here followed Karel Kosík's criticism of Stalinist society as the one of universal manipulation without standard intersubjective contacts, “*a society in which an anonymous and irresponsible mass has replaced thoughtful and responsible individuals*”.¹¹⁴ Kosík placed emphasis on the rule of anonymity and irresponsibility on both sides – the system and the manipulated who, instead of passivity, should express their desire to end control and manipulation by old as well as by new methods. But he does not see any substantial difference between the East and the West since they represent the choice only between universal manipulability and universal marketability. The victory of one bloc or system over the other means, in any

¹¹¹ Herbert Marcuse, *An essay on liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1969), 3.

¹¹² Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 173.

¹¹³ Sartre, “Introduction: The Socialism That Came in from the Cold,” 14.

¹¹⁴ Karel Kosík and Antonín J. Liehm, “Karel Kosík,” in *The Politics of Culture*, ed. Liehm, 409.

case, “*the triumph of the system, not a liberating breakthrough from the system to the world*”.¹¹⁵

The fundamental polemic between the bureaucratic regime and its critics was, according to Kosík, over the concept of Man. A new concept of Man, qualitatively different from the mere emphasizing his/her being a mechanical part of the system, represented for Kosík a blow to the very essence of the regime. But also in general, he felt that this should be one of the questions to which Czechoslovak philosophy should contribute. The same holds true for other basic philosophical concepts like truth, existence, or nature.¹¹⁶ Here, philosophers of the 1960s found inspiration, for example, in existentialism, but mainly in the young Marx, especially in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. The rediscovery of Marx’s early work was for Czechoslovak philosophers a kind of rescue. As Vladimír V. Kusín notes, “*there was sufficient ‘social demand’ for an authentic philosophical point of departure*”. And since non-Marxist, “bourgeois” philosophers were not politically tenable, especially in the early 1960s, “*no one was better suited to supply what was needed than the young Marx, the authentic Marx*”.¹¹⁷

It is, therefore, logical that Marx was the most influential personality for Eastern European philosophers since he served not only as a legitimating figure of the classic of Communism, but, on the other hand, also as a useful weapon of criticism against actual Communist regimes. Czechoslovak philosophers still somehow adhered to Marx, even though they tried to connect his thought with existentialism, Christian thinking, or Freud. But they did not go further into positions of, in some sense, anti-Marxist Marcusean left-wing radicalism. And compared to existentialism, they stressed the character of man as a social being. In this sense, Milan Průcha quotes from Marx’s *Theses on Feuerbach*: “*The essence of man is not an abstraction inherent in each individual. In its reality it is the totality of social relations.*”¹¹⁸ Finally, besides the

¹¹⁵ Karel Kosík, “*Naše nynější krize*,” (1968) in *Století Markéty Samsové*, ed. Karel Kosík (Praha: Český spisovatel, 1993), 26-27, 49. The essay *Naše nynější krize* was published as a series in *Literární Listy* in 1968.

¹¹⁶ Kosík and Liehm, “Karel Kosík,” 398, 400.

¹¹⁷ Kusín, *The Intellectual origins of the Prague spring*, 48.

¹¹⁸ quoted in Milan Průcha, “Marxism and the Existential Problem of Man,” in *Socialist Humanism*, ed. Fromm, 144.

newly discovered Marxist humanism, Czechoslovak philosophers still pointed out the scientific character of Marxism and its compatibility with contemporary science.¹¹⁹ As Ivan Sviták wrote, it is thanks to Marx and Freud that the people are aware of their alienation and of the forces besides consciousness that govern them.¹²⁰

In the West, the main figures of critical theory worked with the Marxist assumptions and at the same time saw their inadequacies in the context of the affluent society of the 1960s. Even earlier, German authors Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who spent the Second World War in the USA, challenged Marx's optimistic idea that the increasing domination of nature would lessen the domination of men over men. For Adorno and Horkheimer, when those who dominate the environment are alienated people, this domination would only increase the control among people.¹²¹ Erich Fromm follows this argument and states that Marx was not aware of affluent alienation, i.e. he "*did not foresee the development of capitalism to the point where the working class would prosper while all the society would become alienated to an extreme degree*".¹²²

Here, we should mention some historical facts about the reception of the young Marx in the USA. According to the summary by Raya Dunayevskaya, one of the first authors who dealt with *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* was Herbert Marcuse in his work *Reason and Revolution*. But it was few just years after his emigration from Germany caused by the Nazi takeover, so Marcuse used a German edition when no English translation was yet available. The first time the *1844 Manuscripts* were published in English was as appendices to Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom* (1958), but as Dunayevskaya herself says, it was "*not until 1961, when Erich Fromm included a translation of the 1844 Manuscripts in Marx's Concept of Man, that Marx's humanism reached a mass audience in the United States*".¹²³ The *1844 Manuscripts* then provided one of the bases for philosophical arguments in a

¹¹⁹ In comparison to the 1950s this included previously ignored sciences like sociology or psychology. Sociology was allowed in Czechoslovakia, after its substitution by scientific communism, again in 1964. Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 404.

¹²⁰ Ivan Sviták, "The Sources of Socialist Humanism," in *Socialist Humanism*, ed. Fromm, 24-25.

¹²¹ Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 348.

¹²² Erich Fromm, "Introduction," in *Socialist Humanism*, ed. Fromm, ix.

¹²³ Dunayevskaya, "Marx's Humanism Today," 75.

debate on humanism, for which there was a pressing need in the early 1960s. In 1965, in his Introduction to the volume *Socialist Humanism* Erich Fromm called the renaissance of humanism in different ideological systems “*the most remarkable phenomena of the past decade*”. Humanism, as “*a belief in the possibility of man’s perfectibility*”, and the conviction that “*what matters most is the human reality behind the concepts*”, has usually emerged, according to Fromm, “*as a reaction to a threat to mankind*” – in the 1960s specifically to the threat of the nuclear war.¹²⁴ The term humanism resonated in the Eastern bloc as well, since the Soviets began to use it frequently, too, at the turn of the 1950s and the 1960s. For example, the report of the Soviet delegation on the 13th International Congress of Philosophy was called “Humanism in the Contemporary World”. By this change of discourse, they replied to the humanist ethos of some liberation movements in the Third World and, then subsequently provoked the West to focus more on humanism as well.¹²⁵

So far, we have focused more on the criticism of the ruling ideologies in the 1960s, but humanism or new radicalism offered also some positive proposals for change, either more abstract or concrete. Keeping in mind the enormous technological progress, the philosophers of the 1960s usually did not refuse its achievements as such, as, for example, some counter-cultural groups did, but stressed that progress in technology should be accompanied by a change in human relationships that should be fraternal and productive. Humanist socialism then would serve as an instrument for teaching how one can develop freely his/her personal qualities.¹²⁶ For Ivan Sviták, “*only in our century have people realized that it is possible to change the world*”, but still, “*increased technology without a change in human relations can bring only the dark future of Orwell’s 1984, not socialism*”.¹²⁷ But, in any case, the possibilities of automatization are an issue, which was shared by many Western philosophers. The *Port Huron Statement* called in 1962 the fact that fewer people are needed in the production of goods, while production is increasing at the same time, “*the dominant optimistic economic fact of this epoch*”.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Fromm, “Introduction,” vii-viii.

¹²⁵ Dunayevskaya, “Marx’s Humanism Today,” 71.

¹²⁶ Niel, “The Phenomenon of Technology: Liberation or Alienation of Man?” 315.

¹²⁷ Sviták, “The Sources of Socialist Humanism,” 26-27.

¹²⁸ “The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society”.

For Noam Chomsky, not only that “*automation makes it unnecessary for people to carry out the kind of imbecile labour*”, but the technological achievements of the era also permit “*enormous possibilities for eliminating repressive institutions*”. So, Chomsky sees in technological progress even a potential for democratization. The argument that advanced technology leads to a concentration of power is for him nonsense.¹²⁹ *The Triple Revolution* memorandum¹³⁰ shares an optimistic approach toward the possibilities of contemporary and future technological progress, but points out some obstacles and paradoxical results. Many people could become unemployed, and therefore, taking into consideration minimal unemployment insurance and social security, they could live below the poverty line, even though the productive potential of society would be sufficient to supply the needs of all Americans. According to *The Triple Revolution*, it is the income-through-jobs link as the main distributive mechanism which acts as a brake. Therefore, the authors urge a break with this traditional link between jobs and incomes and “*to provide every individual and every family an adequate income as a matter of right*”.¹³¹

Regarding Czechoslovakia, the kind of thought which aimed at the new conditions caused by scientific development and the new possibilities in the fulfillment of the needs of man was present as well. The classic socialist framework was present especially in the early 1960s when, for instance, Antonín J. Liehm still believed that socialism is the only system capable of forming “*a society in which industry is subordinated to the needs of man, and in which the highest aim is maximum development of human personality*”.¹³² What is evident in Liehm’s quote is the shift from ideological proclamations towards a focus on the needs of individual human

¹²⁹ Chomsky, “Linguistics and Politics,” 269.

¹³⁰ A manifesto sent to President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 signed by a few dozen leading American public intellectuals like Michael Harrington, Gunnar Myrdal, Bayard Rustin, or Irving Howe among others. The three revolutions the authors have in mind are the cybernation revolution, the weaponry revolution, and the human rights revolution – the biggest emphasis is placed on the cybernation one. “The Triple Revolution,” in *Socialist Humanism*, ed. Fromm.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 408-409, 414.

¹³² Liehm, “Author’s Foreword,” 57. The quote is from Liehm’s article Pokus o odpověď in *Literární Noviny* in which he replied to the opponents who criticized him and some other authors who had been active also during the Stalinist period, and tried to explain his previous positions compared to the contemporary humanist one.

personality. Even the official discourse agreed with this to some extent, and it was precisely the development of sciences, whether technical, natural, or social, which should help. One of the main works which formed the scientific discourse and tried to “*put the economic reform into a much wider perspective of the scientific and technical revolution*” was the collective volume written by more than 60 authors called *Civilizace na rozcestí: Společenské a lidské souvislosti vědecko-technické revoluce* (1966).¹³³

One of the leaders of the interdisciplinary team which worked on this book, Radovan Richta, claimed that one of the team’s aims was to show the link between socio-human and techno-scientific turning points, and, therefore, to differentiate between scientific-technical revolution and a rather obsolete frame of industrial revolution. This traditional frame, according to Richta, works with an old structure of work as elementary operation of machines. The main weak points of the discourse of industrial revolution are the statement that elementary work “*does not neither depend on the development of human forces nor give rise to them*”, and a mistaken view that the problems of man and those of productive forces are independent.¹³⁴ Richta denies that the conception of his team was merely technocratic and he emphasizes that it is in the development of human forces where the socialist world has deficiency. As for the comparison with the West, he mentions the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other leading technical institutions that substantially broaden their humanities branches in order to recognize the importance of the human factor in the scientific-technical revolution.¹³⁵

Scientific discourse was typical for the Eastern bloc in the 1960s. The ideological enthusiasm of the 1950s was gone, but it still was not possible to re-orient the language to a different political system. Here, the focus on science served as supposedly neutral language. According to Petr Hrubý, the 1960s in Czechoslovakia represented “*mostly an uninterrupted attempt to get decision making power out of the hands of Party hacks into the hands of specialists*”.¹³⁶ Even the young Václav Havel noticed this accent when he said that “*technology is supposed to be the ultimate basis on which our society rests and we are forever stressing the scientific nature of all our*

¹³³ Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 211.

¹³⁴ Radovan Richta, “Logika změn naší doby,” *Kulturní tvorba*, May 25, 1967.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 493.

undertakings and solutions".¹³⁷ But still, there was an important group of philosophers who tried to focus more on philosophical aspects of humanism, to connect Marxism with existentialism or phenomenology, or to look back and find a Czech philosophical tradition to follow. The concepts of truth or conscience were used more frequently; the ways how to oppose organized evil were sought in individual ethics or in the search for a compromise between Christianity and Marxism.¹³⁸ As for the question of national culture and its philosophical aspects, it was a much more important issue than in the West, as we will see in one of the following subchapters, since the sovereignty of the Czechoslovak state was not perfectly secure and since the intellectuals began to search for the nation's path back to Europe. As Sartre writes, "affirming their cultural personality" was important for the Czechs and the Slovaks "in order to dethrone the reign of the 'thing' that had reduced them to mere atoms".¹³⁹

To conclude this subchapter, we should mention Karel Kosík's *Dialektika konkrétního*, the most influential Czechoslovak philosophical book of the 1960s published early in 1963, so it could serve as a further impulse for philosophers during a period of thaw. The general characteristic of the book in one of its first reviews in English, in the West European magazine *Studies in Soviet Thought*, says that the writing in some aspects resembles Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* or Sartre's *Critique de la Raison Dialectique*, but still "it is a book by a Marxist-Leninist, not by an existentialist".¹⁴⁰ It is quite true since for existentialists as well as for empiricists, the world has ceased to be a totality. For Kosík, on the other hand, totality "signifies reality as a structured dialectical whole, within which and from which any particular fact (...) can be rationally comprehended".¹⁴¹ Similarly as for other Marxists, the potential for

¹³⁷ Václav Havel and Antonín J. Liehm, "Václav Havel," in *The Politics of Culture*, ed. Liehm, 385.

¹³⁸ The inspiration in the field of ethics came also from Russia where dissenters like Alexander Solzhenitsyn suggested that the ethical rebirth should start from the individual. As for the Christian-Marxist dialogue we can mention especially Milan Machovec. Later in the 1970s he published his most important book on this issue called *Jesus für Atheisten* (1972), in English *A Marxist Looks at Jesus* (1976). Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 410-411.

¹³⁹ Sartre, "Introduction," 30-31.

¹⁴⁰ Nikolaus Lobkowitz, "Review: Dialectics of the Concrete: A Study of the Problem of Man and the World by Karel Kosík," *Studies in the Soviet Thought* 4, No. 3 (September 1964): 248.

¹⁴¹ Karel Kosík, *The Dialectics of the Concrete: A Study of the Problem of Man and the World* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, Inc., 1976), 24, 18.

emancipation for Kosík lies in the idea that “*the world of man’s fetishised praxis*”, giving the impression of being natural and fixed, is recognized “*as the result of man’s social activity*”. The essence of social reality is not something independent of human praxis, so man “*can change socio-human reality in a revolutionary way, but he can do so only because he forms this reality himself*”.¹⁴² In the English-speaking world, however, readers could read the whole book in English first in 1976; it was translated by James Schmidt and Karel Kovanda. But before that, one chapter was translated in 1968 for an American magazine for critical theory *Telos*. The editors praise Kosík’s work since “*he masterfully destroys much of the nonsense that has passed as official Marxism in the past half a century and he has replaced it with a methodologically powerful approach*”. On the other hand, they admit that the developments and liberating tendencies in Eastern Europe “*had largely gone unnoticed in the West until Czechoslovakia’s ‘New Course’ and the subsequent Russian repression indicated that something very important was taking place in the Communist world*”.¹⁴³

2. 3 The Protest Movements of the 1960s: Programs and Tactics

Having briefly described the historical situation and philosophically analyzed the challenges of the era, we can now focus on the leftist protest movements of the 1960s themselves. The turbulent period with some new situations with no historical precedent demanded not only a specific philosophical understanding, but also new strategies, tactics, and programs of various movements in society. The movements we deal with in our work have in common that they struggled for their visions of authentic socialism – in the East mainly against the power apparatus and the rigid one-party system; in the West rather against the affluent majority satisfied with values imposed by the market. As Antonín J. Liehm remarked on the field of culture, true socialism comes to “*liberate culture from the two tyrannies of the past – the tyrannies of power and of the marketplace*”.¹⁴⁴ But a potential obstacle in achieving this was the fact that there was no

¹⁴² Ibid., 2, 7. Also explained in Ivan Landa, “Kosíkova dialektika konkrétního,” in *Hledání české filosofie: Soubor studií*, ed. Erazim Kohák and Jakub Trnka (Praha: Filosofia, 2012), 237.

¹⁴³ “Introduction to Karel Kosík,” *Telos*, No. 2 (Fall 1968): 20.

¹⁴⁴ Liehm, “Author’s Foreword,” 65.

consensus on the means – disputes existed on the role of ideology, on political rights, some groups were more reformist, others more revolutionary etc.

As we have mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, towards the end of the 1960s, some groups shifted from protest to resistance or from permeation to left-opposition, if we use Hal Draper's terminology. The latter distinction means the difference between manipulating the establishment while being its part and openly opposing the establishment from outside.¹⁴⁵ We can mention the radicalization of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and its abandonment of the integrationist approach under the lead of Stokely Carmichael or the radical mix of anti-war movement and counterculture present in the events organized by the Yippies and their founders Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman, for example, during the Democratic Party Convention in 1968.¹⁴⁶ This kind of radicalization had, of course, its opponents. Even earlier, in 1965, Irving Howe called such a development of tactics the "*recognition of impotence*" because self-confident groups "*live and work within society in order to transform it*".¹⁴⁷ Also the alliance between students and some older progressive academics broke up when radical students refused to accept any compromise. There is the example of John Searle who turned against the New Left, or Eugene Genovese who referred to the radicals as "*the pseudo-revolutionary middle-class totalitarians*".¹⁴⁸ Similarly in Germany, this was the case of Theodore Adorno and Jürgen Habermas who initially sympathized with the student movement, but later Adorno even called the police on student radicals.¹⁴⁹

But what the whole New Left, at least until it was partly infiltrated by disciplined and centralized Maoist groups, had in common, was the interest in various forms of participatory democracy as the counterbalance to the Old Left ideal of democratic centralism. The concept of participatory democracy had, according to Buhle, its roots in "*the age-old American radical idea of direct democracy by the producing classes*"¹⁵⁰ and great emphasis was placed on it in the *Port Huron Statement*.

¹⁴⁵ Hal Draper, "In Defense of the 'New Radicals,'" *New Politics* 4, No. 3 (Summer 1965): 9.

¹⁴⁶ Gilcher-Holtheyová, *Hnutí 68 na Západě*, 46, 92.

¹⁴⁷ Irving Howe, "New Styles in 'Leftism,'" *Dissent* 12 (Summer 1965): 297.

¹⁴⁸ Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 252.

¹⁴⁹ Gilcher-Holtheyová, *Hnutí 68 na Západě*, 102.

¹⁵⁰ Buhle, *Marxism in the United States*, p. 231.

Participatory democracy here means the politics seen as “*creating an acceptable pattern of social relations*” that “*has the function of bringing people out of isolation and into community*”. It rests on the principle that “*decision-making of basic social consequence*” is “*carried on by public groupings*”.¹⁵¹ In Czechoslovakia, the idea of a kind of participative democracy was lively especially around 1968. In student circles, for example, Karel Kovanda opposed the representative model of the faculty self-government and called for the formation of a student organization from below; both among the workers and the intellectuals, there was a support for the creation of independent workers’ councils. The most radical in this sense was Hnutí revoluční mládeže (The Movement of Revolutionary Youth) founded by people like Petr Uhl, Petruška Šustrová or Jaroslav Bašta. In its founding manifesto, they wrote: “*We are convinced that the path of the Czechoslovak people towards socialism (...) will be the path of breaking the bureaucratic machinery, the removal of the bureaucracy as a social stratum, and the establishment of the system of self-government.*” They particularly mentioned the workers’ councils as the organs of both political and economic power at the workplace, but the general idea was valid for all the spheres of society.¹⁵²

People around Hnutí revoluční mládeže to some extent represented a return to ideology during the very late 1960s similar to the emergence of ideologically oriented small-group sectarianism on the American Left. The character of this group of Czechoslovak radicals could be labeled as Trotskyist; they issued a self-published volume *Byrokracie ne-revoluce ano* (1969) with texts by Leon Trotsky, Ernest Mandel, Jaroslav Suk, or Petr Uhl. But, as was the case of similar American groups, they received much less attention than the more issue-oriented student movement from the mid-1960s onward.¹⁵³ The radicalization, which in the West developed into violent attacks by groups like the Weathermen, could be explained, according to Philip G. Altbach, by frustrating moments like the still ongoing war in Vietnam, or the exclusion of white students from participation in the activities of Black Power.¹⁵⁴ In

¹⁵¹ “The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society”.

¹⁵² Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 117, 221-222.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 230, 240.

¹⁵⁴ Philip G. Altbach, “Studentská aktivita a akademický výzkum: akce a reakce,” in *Studenti a ideologie na Západě*, ed. Šiklová and Kubičková, 140.

Czechoslovakia, such a moment was definitely the Soviet invasion and the weak resistance to it by political elites resulting in the early onset of normalization.

In the USA, the fragmentation of radical orientations in the late 1960s, and the return from concrete practical issues to long-term analysis of the establishment and, in some cases, to dogmatic ideology was criticized by Noam Chomsky who called for efficient activism and a focus on the most acute problems, especially on ending the war. *“If the Vietnamese have to wait until we build a serious political movement against all forms of capitalist repression in the United States, then they are all going to be dead”*, said Chomsky.¹⁵⁵ However, throughout the 1960s, this was rather an unusual critique since the young people of the period were characterized by their refusal of ideology and rigid organizational forms. The reasons were various – from the misuse of ideology in the Cold War struggle, hostility to the organizational hierarchy, or the need to avoid the fruitless debates about socialist theory to the practical demands of responding flexibly to events or the desire to experiment.¹⁵⁶ In Czechoslovakia, the situation was very similar. Václav Havel mentions that the older generation approached reality *“by way of certain abstract categories”*, but *“the reality on which these categories are based has been undergoing constant flux”*. On the contrary, his generation tended *“to start from reality as it exists at the moment”*. Among the youngest people, the mistrust in ideologies was even more evident. Havel comments on their approach:

*“I myself stand accused of the same subservience to ideology, the same resentment toward the 1950s (...) that repel me in my elders. (...) Their attraction to concrete reality is far more radical than was the case before. (...) The case of one of their unjustly treated colleagues mobilized them to an infinitely greater degree than all the action programs, theses, convention, and whatever.”*¹⁵⁷

However, some authors added critical comments. Irving Howe or at that time very young Steve Kelman to some extent sympathized with the New Left, but had a few serious reservations as well. For Howe, the advantage of the old radicalism was that it

¹⁵⁵ Chomsky, “Linguistics and Politics,” 256.

¹⁵⁶ Dennis Hale, “The Problem of Ideology,” *New Politics* 4, No. 2 (Spring 1965): 92; or Martin Glaberman, “The ‘New Radicals’: An Exchange,” *New Politics* 4, No. 4 (Fall 1965): 22.

¹⁵⁷ Havel and Liehm, “Václav Havel,” 390, 392.

provided more available parties and agencies through which one could act.¹⁵⁸ Kelman stressed the temporal aspect. He pointed out that, although the New Leftists criticized the Old for being rigidly ideological and saw themselves as the opposite, working on day-by-day issues, they in fact had “*an ultimate vision of the world*”. The New Left had a plan of what to do now and how would the glorious future look like, but it just had “*little idea of what comes in-between*”. He also adds another advantage of more ideologically-oriented groups, namely that they have “*ideas for what to do once the old is gone*”.¹⁵⁹ In other words, they provide a basis for a long-term project and try to avoid the situation that, after achieving a particular goal, supporters of a movement become mainstream. Since we have defined leftist politics also by its utopian character, it is necessary for a Leftist movement to present the ideal society as still “to come”. That is why the long term and often ideological goals are so important for the Left. Jiřina Šiklová presents the New Left for Czechoslovak readers precisely by pointing out this temporal element. The student radicals refuse to describe the future society in detail because only after the removal of the present system we will understand how to build the new society.¹⁶⁰ This is exactly why Marcuse rejects the demands to state the “concrete alternative” as meaningless. The new institutions and relationship “*cannot be determined a priori; they will develop, in trial and error, as the new society develops*”.¹⁶¹

The fact that the future society is not outlined in detail relates to the point that the new radicals knew what they were “anti” rather than which positive program they supported. This is a kind of approach, which is more moral than political, and which, according to Hal Draper, had “*the function of filling the vacuum left by the absence of systematic ideas*”. In this sense, Draper paraphrased what could be a typical New Left question, that is, whether one has to be clear about Russia or the Party before he/she can “*‘do something’ about desegregation or social justice*”.¹⁶² For Marcuse, this kind of rebellion is moral rather than political also because it is directed against the society which is prosperous, functioning, and “democratic” – it targets the values, which are

¹⁵⁸ Howe, “New Styles in ‘Leftism,’” 297.

¹⁵⁹ Steve Kelman, “Time for Some Question,” *New Politics* 4, No. 2 (Spring 1965): 95-96.

¹⁶⁰ Jiřina Šiklová, “Úvod,” in *Studenti a ideologie na Západo*, ed. Šiklová and Kubičková, 8.

¹⁶¹ Marcuse, *An essay on liberation*, 86.

¹⁶² Draper, “In Defense of the ‘New Radicals,’” 7-8.

hypocritical, but supported by the majority. Therefore, and differently from other revolutions in history, the protest against false morality and false values isolates the opposition from the masses.¹⁶³ And since one's decision to rebel does not substantially depend on his/her own political or economic interests, but it is more a moral one, it includes a differentiation in personal style – speech, dress, appearance. As Irving Howe notices, it is not only a decision of “*what one shall do*” but also of “*what one shall be*”. It is an “*existential*” decision which requires “*authenticity, challenge to the self*”. But, as Howe adds critically, it could shift also to the stress on the “*moral self-regeneration*” or to the means by which the “*small elite can signify its special status*”.¹⁶⁴ As for the hippies, they moved this personal anti-doctrinal approach to the level of anti-politics which was for the New Left unacceptable, but the need for authenticity was common for both, sometimes overlapping, movements and it distinguished them from the Old Left. As John P. Diggins rightly notes, the Old Left radicals “*kept their politics separate from culture and education*” wearing “*jacket and tie required in campus dining halls*”.¹⁶⁵

Steve Kelman, in a polemic with the student radicals, would agree with the Old Left in the case of separation of politics and education. He defended the universities as good in their core and opposed their politicization and their change into battlefields of various political forces. What radicals despise as narrow professionalism is for Kelman, in fact, an important role of contemporary intellectuals. At the university, they should study the means of how to fight poverty or achieve peace, not to change it into an institution, which would enforce their own goals.¹⁶⁶ But from the radical Marcusean point of view, this could be the language of false neutrality. Students that took part, for example, in the occupation of universities would agree with Marcuse's point that the “*tolerance which enlarged the range and content of freedom was always partisan – intolerant toward the protagonists of the repressive status quo*”.¹⁶⁷ The universities in their actual form, even though they to a substantial extent provided the space for free exchange of opinion, were part of the system and inseparable from politics.

¹⁶³ Marcuse, *An essay on liberation*, 62, 51.

¹⁶⁴ Howe, “New Styles in ‘Leftism,’” 297.

¹⁶⁵ Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 247, 232.

¹⁶⁶ Steve Kelman, “Částečně skeptický pohled,” in *Studenti a ideologie na Západě*, ed. Šiklová and Kubíčková, 170-171.

¹⁶⁷ Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance”.

For Marcuse, as we have mentioned above, what should be questioned in the actual Western capitalist societies are even such guarantees of democracy like political rights. It is true that democracy with its protection of political rights still provides the most favorable ground for dissent. However, *“the mass democracy developed by monopoly capitalism has shaped the rights and liberties which it grants in its own image and interest”*. Also, it is true that *“the established democracy still provides the only legitimate framework for change”*, but since the opposition targets the social system as a whole it *“cannot change this state of affairs by the very means which protect and sustain the state of affairs”*, i.e. it cannot be legal.¹⁶⁸ According to Marcuse, the point of radicalism lies in the assumption of two different worlds, when the ends belong to the future one with completely different discourse and behavior than exist in the present one. On the other hand, the means belong and are judged by the present world.¹⁶⁹ So, this incommensurability of discourses means that the change of the system cannot be judged neutrally and that actual democracy cannot provide the means for real radical change.

Marcuse prefers to use the term *“qualitative change”* rather than *“revolution”* because historically revolution did not mean avoiding another system of servitude. What is characteristic for Marcuse’s theory is that this qualitative change targets the needs of men themselves, the needs that were in the affluent society satisfied more than ever before, but satisfied *“in line with the requirements and interests of the apparatus”*. The necessary thing for Marcuse is that *“we must get at the roots of society in the individuals themselves, the individuals who, because of social engineering, constantly reproduce the continuum of repression”*.¹⁷⁰ So, besides the impulses of radicalism that were political or moral, there is even the biological approach to radical change and to the transformation of the existing society into a free one – according to Marcuse, the approach *“hardly considered in Marxian theory”*. Marcuse’s point could resonate in the countercultural community since it did not exclude the possibilities of psychedelic search. However, Marcuse himself warned that *“its narcotic character brings temporary release not only from the reason and rationality of the established system but*

¹⁶⁸ Marcuse, *An essay on liberation*, 64, 68, 66, 71.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁷⁰ Herbert Marcuse, “Liberation from the Affluent Society,” in *The Dialectics of Liberation*, ed. Cooper, 141, 143, 145.

also from that other rationality which is to change the established system".¹⁷¹ The importance of the change in individual needs and decisions was evident also in the use of psychology and psychoanalysis in radical thought. One of the New Left supporters among psychiatrists and a pioneer of the anti-psychiatry movement, R. D. Laing, paraphrased Julian Huxley when he said that it is necessary to break the chain of obedience and not to train our children "to do practically anything if told to do it by a sufficient authority".¹⁷²

To compare the East and the West, this biologically and psychologically-oriented approach to change was not that strong in Czechoslovakia. The progressives targeted rather the institutions and the public debate, and the proposed reforms were mainly within the established system, i.e. within socialism as a framework. This is logical since the Communist Party still occupied a substantial part of the public sphere, and the interest associations were connected to the Party and the National Front. Moreover, towards and especially in 1968, there was a hope that it is possible to achieve humanist socialism, so the directly anti-system proposals were overshadowed by the reforms of socialism. Therefore, we can conclude that the "opposition" in both the East and the West was during the 1960s socialist humanist with more-or-less utopian elements. In this sense, the 1960s represent the most flourishing era for the Leftist intellectuals, comparable maybe only with the period of the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s.¹⁷³

In Czechoslovakia, even the majority of the student radicals believed in the possibility of change from within the system. They actively invited other students to join the Czechoslovak Union of Youth in order to change its structure into more independent and useful organization. Of course they opposed the leading role of the Party in its relation to students, as, for example, Jiří Müller did early in 1964 when he criticized the evil of "the guardianship by which the Party helped the conditions when the CYU ceased to be the real organization of the youth". But they did not question

¹⁷¹ Marcuse, *An essay on liberation*, 16, 37.

¹⁷² R. D. Laing, "The Obvious," in *The Dialectics of Liberation*, ed. Cooper, 23.

¹⁷³ For example a writer Lumír Čivrný remember the period of the Spanish Civil War as the climax of "the spontaneous world-wide movement of the cultural elite, which united itself not only in the negative sense of opposing fascism but also positively for socialism". Lumír Čivrný and Antonín J. Liehm, "Lumír Čivrný," in *The Politics of Culture*, ed. Liehm, 312.

socialism itself. “*There are, of course, people, who are disappointed by the form of socialism that they experienced so far, but (...) there is no other platform, no other alternative different from the socialist. It just does not exist,*” said Lubomír Holeček in 1969.¹⁷⁴ But we should add that after the occupation in August 1968 and the following shift of the Party elites towards normalization that served as a moment of frustration and disappointment, the radicalism of students strengthened. During the occupation strike against the invasion that was held in November 1968 at many Czechoslovak universities, students at some faculties organized alternative lectures or cultural programs. On the other hand, even the most radical groups within the Czechoslovak student movement did not move on to violence.¹⁷⁵

What was at stake in Czechoslovakia were especially political rights like the freedom of expression, rather than the needs of man and the correction of the consumer society challenged in the West. Even when the situation started to improve, in 1967, Antonín J. Liehm complained at the Writers’ Congress that, even though authors are within certain limits encouraged to criticize and reject, there is nearly total lack of freedom in submitting counterproposals and positive alternatives.¹⁷⁶ The freedom of expression was crucial, as Jiří Pelikán rightly says, not only as “*an intellectual’s demand*” but as “*the basic condition for the workers and peasants to take part in politics*”.¹⁷⁷ The socialist philosophical approach to the concept of freedom was different than the liberal one. Gajo Petrović summarizes it in a way that “*the question of freedom is first and above all the question of the essence of freedom*” and emphasizes its external element, “*the creative deed of enriching humaneness*”. The focus on freedom’s essence also means that “*listing various kinds or forms of freedom does not solve the question ‘What is freedom?’*”¹⁷⁸ But in any case, even for a self-defined “*convinced supporter of socialism*” as Pavel Kohout in his interview for Austrian TV in 1973 still was, socialism was “*unthinkable*” without freedom of opinion or movement.

¹⁷⁴ Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 83, 87, 111.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 124, 241.

¹⁷⁶ Liehm, “Author’s Foreword,” 62-63.

¹⁷⁷ Pelikán, “The Struggle for Socialism in Czechoslovakia,” 71.

¹⁷⁸ Gajo Petrović, “Man and Freedom,” in *Socialist Humanism*, ed. Fromm, 254, 251.

The reason of socialism for Kohout was that “*socialization of means of production under public control creates a basis for the full development*” of these freedoms.¹⁷⁹

Here, the difference between the radical demands in the East and the West was substantial and it reflects two different conditions in which the struggle against the ruling bureaucracy was waged. Hannah Arendt described it accurately: “*The dissenters and resisters in the East demand free speech and thought as the preliminary conditions for political action; the rebels in the West live under conditions where these preliminaries no longer open the channels for action, for the meaningful existence of freedom.*”¹⁸⁰ As for Marcuse, he would to some extent agree with both approaches, but especially with the Western one he shares the stress on the point that freedom of expression is not an absolute value and end in itself, as it could be if we accept the strongly subjectivist assumption that there is no objective truth. For Marcuse, there is, and we have freedom of speech in order to discover it. Therefore, the value we assign to freedom of speech cannot shift it to the extreme of pure tolerance of both sense and nonsense, when truth rides along with falsehood. The suspension of free speech and assembly was legitimized at that time because the period was “*one of clear and present danger*”, and so true pacification required “*the withdrawal of tolerance before the deed*”.¹⁸¹ Jan Patočka, on the other hand, criticized Western intellectuals for their tendency to underestimate fundamental rights and democratic principles. In the continuous existence of these rights and principles in constitutions, Western authors will see the “*internal ideological deceitfulness of the system which pretends to be something what it in fact is not in order to avoid a confrontation with dehumanized reality*”. Eastern intellectuals’ different approach consists for Patočka precisely in understanding rights as ends in themselves, not as mere means. This provides them maybe even “*wider openness to the true essence of the intelligentsia*”.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 65.

¹⁸⁰ Hannah Arendt, “On Violence,” (1970) in *Crises of the Republic*, ed. Hannah Arendt (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & company, 1972), 178.

¹⁸¹ Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance”.

¹⁸² Jan Patočka, “Inteligence a opozice,” (1968) in *Češi I*, Jan Patočka (Praha: Oikoymenth, 2006), 243-244.

2. 4 Social Structure and the Issue of Intellectual-Worker Relations

When Jiří Pelikán, as quoted above, talked about political rights as crucial for workers in order to take part in politics, he pointed out the paradoxical situation that one of the characteristic features in the state which ideologically stressed the importance of the workers was the depoliticization of the working class. Seen from a wider perspective, this was part of the general problem of the imported version of socialism. The whole country, politicized by the resistance to the Nazi occupation and the new situation after the war, was depoliticized by the impossibility to build socialism with its own hands and to make the Czechoslovak road to socialism.¹⁸³ Although it was true that some working-class cadres became directors, or that the workers' children enjoyed easier access to university education, it was later realized by the progressives, according to Pelikán, that “*this was an inadequate conception of workers' power*”.¹⁸⁴

There were various reasons for this depoliticization connected to the class structure of society, to the relationship between workers, intelligentsia, and bureaucracy, which will be the main topic of this subchapter. Vladimír V. Kusín mentions the Stalinist proclamation of the “*termination of class polarity*” which weakened the possibility of the formulation of group interests as an important politicizing factor in society. In other words, it led “*to a factual reduction of social groups to an unpolitical amorphous mass*”.¹⁸⁵ But there was one class that differed and that was according to many critics guilty for the depoliticization of the masses – the bureaucracy which replaced the bourgeoisie in performing its supremacy over the workers. Pavel Machonin, one of the leaders of the interdisciplinary scientific teams, wrote in the July 1968 about “*the guilt of those who constantly talked about the interests of the working class, of workers, and in reality kept inflicting on them by their bureaucratic stupidity*

¹⁸³ Sartre, “Introduction,” 11.

¹⁸⁴ Pelikán, “The Struggle for Socialism in Czechoslovakia,” 63.

¹⁸⁵ Kusín, *The Intellectual origins of the Prague spring*, 33. However, there were two parallel Stalinist statements that were used in the political reality at the same time, even though they do not seem logically compatible – the termination of class polarity and the aggravation of class struggle under socialism. See also Oldrich Kyn and Howard Sherman, “Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia,” *Monthly Review* 22, No. 12 (April 1971): 39.

the most terrible wounds".¹⁸⁶ Raya Dunayevskaya criticized the principle of the leading role of the Party as a manifestation of "*the dogma of 'the backwardness of the masses'*" which rationalizes the intellectuals' conviction that the masses in "*state-capitalist societies*" should be managed.¹⁸⁷ Karel Kosík agrees with the fact of replacing the workers as the political power by the bureaucracy, but he makes a rather clear distinction between bureaucracy and the intellectuals, and adds that the workers should again find in the intellectuals their natural allies in the struggle against bureaucracy.¹⁸⁸

Regarding the activity of various classes as the opposing forces to the regime, quite a few authors saw the workers as rather passive and emphasized the role of the intellectuals/writers as those who led people out of apathy.¹⁸⁹ For Petr Hrubý, who covers in his book the history of the Czechoslovak intellectuals between 1948 and 1968, the chronology is more complex. He agrees that during the 1960s, especially before and in 1968, the intellectuals and the writers, associated in the Czechoslovak Writers' Union and around journals like *Literární noviny* and later *Literární listy*, were the leading critical force. But earlier, especially during the first half of the 1950s, when the intellectuals still believed their own propaganda about the dictatorship of the proletariat, it was "*the constant refusal of workers to be fooled by one campaign after another*" which "*gradually exhausted many of the intellectuals*". As an example, Hrubý mentions that there was no intellectual leadership during the strikes like in 1953.¹⁹⁰ But it was in 1968 and even more during the short period after the invasion, when various classes started to participate in public affairs. Students became a significant political force in 1967 mainly after the Strahov strike, even though the Majáles events of 1965 had quite an important political tone as well. The workers finally began to create their own independent workers' councils in late 1968.

The workers' councils, as the units of both economic and political power and democracy, were inspiring also in the West as a real democratic alternative. Karel Kovanda, later in 1976 for the American magazine *Telos*, wrote that the issue of the councils marked the difference between the liberal-technocratic approach and the

¹⁸⁶ quoted in Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 312.

¹⁸⁷ Dunayevskaya, "Marx's Humanism Today," 73.

¹⁸⁸ Kosík, "Naše nynější krize," 34.

¹⁸⁹ Pelikán, "The Struggle for Socialism in Czechoslovakia," 70; Mills, "Letter to the New Left".

¹⁹⁰ Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, p. 72, 134, 177.

radical democratic one. The supporters of the councils represented the latter approach by “*introducing democracy into industry, an arena hitherto removed from political struggles*”. For Kovanda, the difference between these two branches of the pre-invasion reformist camp was strengthened after the invasion. At that time, the revolutionary alternative seemed necessary: “*in the wake of the invasion, liberal and technocratic reformers were an anachronism.*”¹⁹¹ The anti-Stalinist Left in the West admired the councils as spontaneous organs and saw in them the Gramscian idea of factory councils. The support of the Left usually increased even more when there was an intellectual-worker alliance, for example in the French events of 1968 where, according to Diggins in “*the real Gramscian moment*”, the factory workers were joined by the revolutionary vanguard of, as Antonio Gramsci coined the term, “*organic intellectuals*”.¹⁹² But, on the other hand, as Sartre mentions, the French workers had little understanding for the demands of the freedom of expression and the end of censorship claimed by their colleagues in the East. They were told that there still exists the dictatorship of the proletariat, so it is of no value when someone is allowed to “*poison the air*” with bourgeois lies only in the name of abstract principles.¹⁹³

But the student-intellectual-worker alliance was unusual in the West, with a quite short exception of France, and it was one of the most inspiring features of the Czechoslovak reform movement, and especially of the resistance to the invasion. The main reason of the success of the student movement in Czechoslovakia was, according to Liehm, simply “*that it acted in harmony with the thinking of the majority of citizens and that its emergence coincided with a major crisis within the country*”.¹⁹⁴ This was not the case in the USA. Even though we take the Vietnam War as the major crisis, it was not something able to politicize directly the American workers since many of them profited economically from the wartime economy. As Noam Chomsky remembers, for example “*the workers in the laboratories (...) are terrified of the idea that war research*

¹⁹¹ Karel Kovanda, “Czechoslovak Workers’ Councils (1968-1969),” *Telos*, No. 28 (Summer 1976): 37, 47. As Kovanda notes, at the peak of their existence, in June 1969, there were around 300 council and 150 preparatory committees, many of the largest Czechoslovak plants like Škoda, Slovnaft or ironworks in Ostrava included. But a year later, after a period of forced decline, the councils were banner altogether. *Ibid.*, 49, 54.

¹⁹² Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 344.

¹⁹³ Sartre, “Introduction,” 34.

¹⁹⁴ Liehm, “Author’s Foreword,” 46.

might stop. In fact, when we started picketing, the union there, whose members are mostly machinists and so forth, entered a suit to prevent MIT from dropping war research."¹⁹⁵ The relative affluence of the American working class made it conservative and not very interested in traditional Left wing topics like poverty. Many workers belonged to the owning class, and not only in the sense of personal property like houses, but also by reason of capitalist share of stocks.¹⁹⁶

Here, one can pose the question why then the students protested against the Vietnam War stronger than the workers, when for example their parents' income could be based on the military economy as well, so they could profit from it indirectly in this way. Also the majority of soldiers drafted for the war came from the working-class families. One part of the answer could be generational. The generation that reached its maturity in the 1960 refused to follow the moral leadership by the elders since "*not even the liberal and socialist preachments of the past seem adequate to the forms of the present*".¹⁹⁷ Among students, this move away from their parents' opinions was even strengthened by their long-term stay at the university. Also, the young radicals started to be more suspicious of the anti-Communist propaganda. Growing up during the Cold War, they did not know Communists except as portrayed enemies or the victims of the anti-Communist campaigns.¹⁹⁸ Taking these two aspects together, many students questioned the necessity of the containment of Communism presented by the elders.

Besides the reasons for Leftism of the young generation mentioned above, we could add also one interesting psychological aspect mentioned in the reminiscences of various intellectuals – and not only those who were students in the 1960s. Many intellectuals felt ashamed of the fact that even though they fought for the working class, they were not workers themselves. In other words, they lacked authenticity in their own thought. Liehm, for example, talks about "*the vague but paralyzing sense of guilt which many of us felt as a result of our bourgeois background*".¹⁹⁹ Also Václav Havel describes in detail how his socialist leaning originated in his early childhood when he tried to make friends with village children, "*to gain the natural sense of belonging*", so

¹⁹⁵ Chomsky, "Linguistics and Politics," 260.

¹⁹⁶ Norman Thomas, "Humanistic socialism and the future," in *Socialist Humanism*, ed. Fromm, 324.

¹⁹⁷ "The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society".

¹⁹⁸ Draper, "In Defense of the 'New Radicals,'" 21.

¹⁹⁹ Liehm, "Author's Foreword," 58.

he cried when he was given a new privilege. “*As a result of all these privileges I actually felt inferior*”, Havel remembers.²⁰⁰ We can mention also George Orwell who, according to Kingsley Amis, used various tricks to cover his middle-class origin, such as voluntary spelling as a down-and-out or sucking his tea noisily. On the success of such tricks, Amis thinks that “*changing one’s class downwards is more difficult than changing one’s sex*”.²⁰¹

A potential danger of this kind of thinking was expressed by Josef Škvorecký who states critically about many intellectuals that when they arrive at a dilemma between the proclaimed truth and their own experience, they would rather ask: “*Are not my doubts just the remnants of intellectualization, or some other individualistic anachronism, which I must negate?*”²⁰² This could be connected to an ability of an intellectual to unmask and analyze himself/herself. For Milan Kundera, the intellectuals are the only segment in society capable of doing this. On the other hand, they are also “*only too eager to agree with the very people who deprive them of their liberty*”.²⁰³ However, for anti-totalitarian radical democratic movements intellectuals were always needed rather as critically thinking persons. Therefore, Antonín J. Liehm recommends them going through double liberation in their relation to the working class. The first easier one consisting of a rejection of one’s class origin should be accompanied by the second one which “*means freeing oneself from an inferiority complex and a sense of guilt*”.²⁰⁴

So, how should the mutual relationship between workers and intellectuals look like, according to the 1960s thinkers? Hugh Seton-Watson in his book *Nationalism and Communism* (1964) wrote: “*The appeal of Communism to the intelligentsia is understandably powerful. It appeals both to their desire to serve the people and to their desire to dominate it.*”²⁰⁵ Karel Kosík would agree with that since he rejects both coming “*to instruct an uneducated, inert mass*” and trying to adapt to the workers and

²⁰⁰ Havel and Liehm, “Václav Havel,” 378, 380.

²⁰¹ Amis, *Socialism and the Intellectuals*, 8.

²⁰² Quoted in Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 35 from Škvorecký’s book *All the Bright Young Men and Women: A Personal History of the Czech Cinema* (1971).

²⁰³ Kundera and Liehm, “Milan Kundera,” 137.

²⁰⁴ Liehm, “Author’s Foreword,” 59.

²⁰⁵ Quoted in Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 135.

playing “*at being the workers’ ‘pal’*”. Also, the hands-brains analogy is an inadequate concept which could contribute to class prejudice. So, Kosík concludes, a “*revolutionary political union between workers and the intelligentsia should be founded on mutual dialogue and mutual give-and-take*”.²⁰⁶ Finally, however, Kosík still adheres to the traditional Marxist view of the working class as the most important power in society. For him, the result of our present crisis depends on the ability of the working class to see the contradiction between ideological illusions and its factual political position and then to draw the consequences.²⁰⁷

But other authors began to question the assumption that the active participation of the working class in the necessary condition for the revolution. Hrubý compares the philosophical Marxist position of Ivan Sviták, in this case even clearer than the above mentioned Kosík’s one, focusing on the workers’ need to emancipate themselves, with the writings of the scientific teams around Radovan Richta and Pavel Machonin that, for Hrubý, “*came closer to the reality of an extremely heterogeneous social stratum*”.²⁰⁸ But this position of looking for some alternatives to the primacy of the working class was more frequent in the West. For example in Mills’ *Letter to the New Left*, we can see a shift to the focus on the superstructure, in Marx’s terminology. For Mills, the historical evidence is against the necessity of treating labor as The Necessary Lever. He rather studied the cultural apparatus “*as a possible, immediate, radical agency of change*”.²⁰⁹ Marcuse saw organizing the intellectuals themselves, even on the international level, as one of the most important tasks of the period. It was necessary to use their potentiality to be the catalysts of the revolution. Looking back to history, Marcuse asked whether the “*prejudice against the intellectuals, and the inferiority complex of the intellectuals resulting from it, was not an essential factor in the development of the capitalist as well as the socialist societies: in the development and weakening of the opposition*”.²¹⁰

The other option, besides the organization of the intellectuals themselves, appeared in finding a “new working class” when American workers did not react to the

²⁰⁶ Kosík and Liehm, “Karel Kosík,” 411-412.

²⁰⁷ Kosík, “Naše nynější krize,” 34.

²⁰⁸ Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 435-436.

²⁰⁹ Mills, “Letter to the New Left”.

²¹⁰ Marcuse, “Liberation from the Affluent Society,” 149.

revolutionary rhetoric. Some internal ideological disputes with dogmatic Marxists within the New Left towards the end of the 1960s caused that the appeal to the increasingly frustrated technological intelligentsia failed as well, so who remained were the poor and the oppressed minorities.²¹¹ But there were some problems with these groups as well. We have already mentioned the radicalization of some African American organizations and their shift towards Black Nationalism. This caused disputes not only with Black integrationists, but also within the Left in general. For example Irving Howe criticized those intellectuals who did not “*want the Negro poor integrated into a ‘rotten middle class society’ and thereby end up with two cars, barbecue pits and ulcers*” as snobbish, and stressed everyone’s right to be a consumer against highlighting specific cultural demands in the manner of Black Power activists.²¹² Regarding the poor, we can mention Hal Draper’s doubts. He thought that the poor were not as organizable as other social groups because they do not have “*a positive social relationship in common (...) they have only a lack in common*”. Also, the slum “*does not provide a framework for socializing resentments and aspirations such as is provided by the integrating life of the factory; it atomizes*”.²¹³ However, as we will see in the next subchapter, despite these difficulties, the poor and minorities were important groups in the critique of capitalism from a global standpoint.

2. 5 The Importance of the Third World for the 1960s Left

The global perspective was important in the 1960s not only because of the possibility of nuclear catastrophe, but also because of the rapid progress in the ending of the colonial era. Since 1945, there were successful anti-colonial liberation movements in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The anti-imperialist cause mobilized many, especially young, people who criticized both the policies of former colonial powers and also the new imperialism of the USA. Many young people saw in the Third World the real revolutionary enthusiasm not affected by the bureaucratic ideologies of both Cold War blocs. Jiří Pelikán remembers that it was in the International Union of Students, even though the organization was supported by the Soviets in the Cold War context,

²¹¹ Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 265.

²¹² Howe, “New Styles in ‘Leftism,’” 311.

²¹³ Draper, “In Defense of the ‘New Radicals,’” 17.

where he “*found again the genuinely revolutionary, extremely free atmosphere of the student movement*”.²¹⁴ Besides the student movement, there were also some influential intellectuals and revolutionaries from the Third World countries themselves like Frantz Fanon or Che Guevara, or those who later moved from the West to the Third World like Régis Debray or Stokely Carmichael.

The anti-imperialist thinkers criticized also the hypocrisy of the great powers. Carmichael targeted for example the phrase that Western countries “gave independence” to former colonies: “*You can never give anyone their independence. All men are born free. (...) Who the hell is England to give me my independence? All they can do is stop oppressing me, get off my back.*” In a similar way, he criticized the British discourse of constitutionality in domestic politics while the country was, at the same time, “*suppressing all of Africa*”.²¹⁵ Other authors tried to delegitimize the U.S. military presence in Vietnam and its rationalization by stopping the Communist threat to the West. R. D. Laing gives a typical example:

*“Suppose the Chinese had 600,000 troops in Southern Mexico engaged in slaughtering the local inhabitants, devastating the ecology and dropping more bombs on Northern Mexico each month than were dropped on the whole of Germany during the whole of World War II (...) for no other purpose than directly to put down a threat to the Chinese people by the people of the U.S.A.”*²¹⁶

What was pointed out ever more often was the difference of the Third World from the two Cold War blocs and a hope that there can be created a qualitatively different democracy and socialism. The Soviet bloc was no longer able to achieve it and Khrushchev’s policy of “peaceful coexistence” contributed to this pessimistic view since it highlighted what the East and the West had in common, specifically the emphasis on material conditions. As Marcuse says: “*the formula ‘to catch up with, and to overtake the productivity level of the advanced capitalist countries’ (...) denies the*

²¹⁴ Pelikán, “The Struggle for Socialism in Czechoslovakia,” 65. Pelikán was the General Secretary and the President of the IUS between 1953 and 1963.

²¹⁵ Stokely Carmichael, “Black Power,” in *The Dialectics of Liberation*, ed. Cooper, 126.

²¹⁶ Laing, “The Obvious,” 19.

alternative, the qualitative difference".²¹⁷ Market relations were strengthened by this policy. The portrait of the Soviet Union as freer than before was, according to Jules Henry, valid only if we accept the American definition of a free country, i.e. a country where there is a possibility of American investment. Henry in this context mentions the Italian factory Fiat, supplied by American heavy machinery, and its installation in the Soviet Union.²¹⁸

The similarity of the two Cold War systems was criticized by radical democrats also in Czechoslovakia. For Karel Kosík, the conflict between socialism and capitalism covers the powers that act behind them. The present crisis is a crisis of the common roots of both systems, i.e. of a "*boundless development of the productive forces as the goal*". Humanity became a mere object of the system based on production and consumption which is now independent of the people as subject.²¹⁹ Kosík, however, focuses on Czechoslovakia itself. He writes about "*the historical subject in Central Europe between the East and the West*" and appeals to the understanding of the Czech question as a world question. He does not mention the Third World as an inspiration for Czechoslovak development.²²⁰ Unlike Kosík, Marcuse explicitly mentions Cuba and Vietnam where there "*is a morality, a humanity, a will, and a faith which can resist and deter the gigantic technical and economic force of capitalist expansion*".²²¹

But inspiration is no longer found in the Soviet Union. Irving Howe, however, argues rather critically that the New Left began to find the Russian model unsatisfactory precisely when the Soviet Union turned away from the extreme version of totalitarianism. We can discuss whether this turn was the cause, but Howe is quite right when he adds that some American leftists saw the Russian model as "*too Victorian, even 'bourgeois'*".²²² Failing to see, according to Howe, that totalitarianism can set in even before the modernization of society, a noticeable part of the New Left was inspired in its rhetoric and program by figures like Patrice Lumumba, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and, above all, Fidel Castro. They represented "*the possibility of a politics not yet*

²¹⁷ Marcuse, *An essay on liberation*, 87.

²¹⁸ Henry, "Social and Psychological Preparation for War," 56.

²¹⁹ Kosík, "Naše nynější krize," 50, 54.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

²²¹ Marcuse, *An essay on liberation*, 81.

²²² Howe, "New Styles in 'Leftism,'" 315.

bureaucratized and rationalized”, and “*spontaneity and anarchic freedom*” contrary to the “*mania for industrial production*” common to the USA and the Soviet Union.²²³ As for Fidel Castro, he was a kind of mythical hero or, as Diggins notes, “*John Wayne of the Left*”. James Higgins tried to find what qualities made him such a personality: “*He seems extraordinary and ordinary at the same time, he seems both historical and current, both what is and what might be.*”²²⁴ However, we should add that Castro’s critics on the Left emphasized his shift to rather Stalinist positions, mentioning his attacks on Trotskyists, siding more with the Soviets during the Sino-Soviet split, or the abandonment of the pan-American rhetoric in favor of building socialism in one country.²²⁵

But, in any case, at least according to Marcuse, Third World radicalism, “*this violent solidarity in defense, this elemental socialism in action has given form and substance to the radicalism of the New Left*” even more than the “*‘socialist humanism’ of the early Marx.*”. To a substantial extent “*the external revolution has become an essential part of the opposition within the capitalist metropolises*”.²²⁶ Here, the term Third World itself could be questioned since it brings about the illusion of the three separate worlds. Paul M. Sweezy emphasizes precisely the need to analyze capitalism in the advanced countries from the perspective of the center-periphery relations because capitalism “*does not exist in a passive or unreactive environment*”. Capitalism advanced from its beginning by exploiting its environment and re-shaping it into dependent satellites with wealth transferred from the periphery to the metropolis.²²⁷ Stokely Carmichael adds that there is also racism as a hardly separate part of capitalism. “*Italy is a white country. Over one third of its population is communist. Why doesn’t the US invade Italy? Tito is an acknowledged communist. The US gives him aid,*” states Carmichael in his critique of the legitimization of the Vietnam War by a need to protect democracy from communism.²²⁸ Finally, the connection of the capitalist world to its environment and the importance of events in the periphery for the potential of change in the center manifest themselves also within the capitalist countries and societies. Sweezy

²²³ Ibid., 315-316.

²²⁴ Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 237.

²²⁵ Irving Louis Horowitz, “The Stalinization of Fidel Castro,” *New Politics* 4, No. 4 (Fall 1965): 65-67.

²²⁶ Marcuse, *An essay on liberation*, 82.

²²⁷ Paul M. Sweezy, “The Future of Capitalism,” in *The Dialectics of Liberation*, ed. Cooper, 78, 80.

points out “*a case of extreme wealth and extreme poverty sitting by each other*” when describing the neighborhood of Harlem and Park Avenue in the New York City.²²⁹ Carmichael puts it bluntly: the black people “*do not control the land, the houses or the stores. These are all owned by whites who live outside the community. These are very real colonies, in the sense that there is cheap labour exploited by those who live outside the cities.*” And he also adds that those who make and enforce the laws are white people.²³⁰

However, many Leftist authors called for distinguishing the critique of capitalism and its failures or oppressive features from the support for the authoritarian regimes. Julius Jacobson for example, in his article from the mid-1970s wrote that it is one thing when a consistent opponent of war demands a “*withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam even if it meant the victory of the Communist armies*”, but it is another thing when someone directly supports the victory of the North Vietnam. Also, there is nothing “egalitarian” in forcibly sending hundreds of thousands of young people to distant areas to “re-educate” them by manual work.²³¹ Jacobson’s colleague, Hal Draper, warned against the tendency among radicals to become apologists for authoritarian regimes, like those of Nasser or Sukarno, just because they are considered non-capitalists.²³² A comment by Hannah Arendt on the Western radicals’ dangerous inspiration by the violent outbreaks in the Third World was made from the classical Marxist point of view. The role of violence in history is only secondary for Marx since “*not violence but the contradictions inherent in the old society brought about its end. The emergence of a new society was preceded, but not caused, by violent outbreaks*”, writes Arendt.²³³

Especially these older socialist non-communist authors wondered why many young people on the Left chose as their heroes Third World rulers, even though the North Vietnamese regime supported the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian revolution

²²⁸ Carmichael, “Black Power,” 132.

²²⁹ Sweezy, “The Future of Capitalism,” 84.

²³⁰ Carmichael, “Black Power,” 127.

²³¹ Julius Jacobson, “Neo-Stalinism: The Achilles Heel of the Peace Movement and the American Left,” *New Politics* XI, No. 3 (Winter 1976): 51, 56.

²³² Hal Draper, “The Two Souls of Socialism,” *New Politics* 5, No. 1 (Winter 1966): 83.

²³³ Arendt, “On Violence,” 113.

in 1956 and even though Ho Chi Minh “*was rivalled only by Castro in the speed with which he congratulated the Kremlin for sending its armored divisions to crush the revolution in Czechoslovakia in 1968*”.²³⁴ They wondered why they identified with the more violent segments of the Communist world when, at the same time, many intellectuals in Eastern Europe emphasized the importance of democratic elements in socialist reconstruction.²³⁵ Ralf Dahrendorf wrote quite clearly in retrospect that the name “*Dubček would suit the demonstrators proclaiming freedom as a motto better than the names of the sowers of death from the Far East or Latin America*”.²³⁶

In Czechoslovakia, Third World problems were not thought over in detail and the population was not mobilized, compared to the West, to a substantial extent by events like the Vietnam War. It is quite understandable since Czechoslovakia did not have the past of a colonial power, and since it was trying to find its own original way to socialism at the end of the 1960s. Regarding the Vietnam War, the fact also was that a potential popular initiative was absorbed by the State. Pelikán remembers that when the IUS and some local students initiated the collection of money for Vietnam, the Party came against it.²³⁷ But also when the French radical Hubert Krivine visited Prague in April 1968, he complained that the Czechoslovak students tended to advocate nearly anti-communist positions. For example they did not strongly emphasize the aspect of national liberation in their interpretation of the Vietnam War; they rather saw it as the struggle between the American and Soviet imperialists.²³⁸

And as for a possible inspiration by the tactics of the Third World resistance movements, some Czechoslovak intellectuals warned against their transferability into a completely different environment. Miluše Kubíčková notes that it would be extremely difficult to prevent the dangers of mass society and of the suppression of individuality in it using the tactics borrowed from societies where the individual is still merged in the

²³⁴ Jacobson, “Neo-Stalinism,” 51.

²³⁵ Howe, “New Styles in ‘Leftism,’” 319. As better options for an inspiration, Howe mentions the “revisionists” in Poland, Milovan Djilas or even Josip Broz Tito from Yugoslavia.

²³⁶ Ralf Dahrendorf, *Pokoušení nesvobody: Intelektuálové v časech zkoušek* (Praha: H&H Vyšehradská, 2008), 185.

²³⁷ Pelikán, “The Struggle for Socialism in Czechoslovakia,” 77.

²³⁸ Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 164-165.

collectivity and where there is no tradition of democracy.²³⁹ Liehm even called the search for the answers to the problems of developed countries in Cuba or Latin America as “*extremely foolish, unhistorical and unrealistic*”.²⁴⁰ But, regarding the position of Czechoslovak intellectuals towards Cuba, it was changing throughout the 1960s. At the beginning of the decade, Liehm writes about a great interest in Cuba among the Czechoslovak population; Adolf Hoffmeister reports in his book *Mrakodrapy v pralese* with admiration about the large rallies of people where “*Fidel Castro consults the troubles of the governments with tens of thousands manifesting people.*”²⁴¹ However, the Cuban regime centralized power and the illusions began to disappear. In the second half of the 1960s, Liehm remembers that he lost an interest in Cuba²⁴², which is a position compatible with his later statement quoted above.

²³⁹ Miluše Kubičková, “Dovětek k problematice studentského hnutí,” in *Studenti a ideologie na Západě*, ed. Šiklová and Kubičková, 215.

²⁴⁰ Liehm, “Author’s Foreword,” 76.

²⁴¹ Jaroslav Fiala, *Jak se zbavit Castra: Kuba, Spojené státy a Československo ve studené válce* (Praha: Rybka publishers, 2016), 190-192.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 197.

3. The Transfer of Ideas across the Iron Curtain

3. 1 Cultural Impact of Famous Visitors

Having analyzed the character of the Left in the 1960s from a comparative perspective, with a focus on the USA and Czechoslovakia, we would like to deal with more direct encounters between the American and Czechoslovak Left of this period in the following chapters. The final one will analyze especially the reactions to the Czechoslovak reform movement in various branches of the American socialist press, among American leftist intellectuals, and in the reports by Czechoslovak citizens or émigrés accessible to the American reader. We will proceed according to main topics – economic reform, political changes, and the Soviet invasion. But in this chapter, we will mention some cleavages and disputes that arose between the intellectuals from the two sides of the Iron Curtain. In order to describe these cleavages properly, we could at first focus on the context and impact of the visits of few famous American intellectuals and artists, all of whom were in different ways associated with the Left, to Czechoslovakia.

One of the crucial issues in the struggle between the Americans and the Soviet bloc was the one of race. The unequal position of African Americans within the U.S. society was an issue which the Soviets could use in their propaganda, especially in order to influence the people in the Third World countries where decolonization was in progress. And from the perspective of African American leaders, it was logical to use the international arena when it was difficult to achieve substantial changes in the USA. As Mary Dudziak writes, the American authorities differentiated between those African Americans who presented the status quo from the perspective of the government and more progressive or even radical voices. The first group could have their travels financed by the State Department, but individuals in the second one were silenced and, especially in the early 1950s, had their passports confiscated. This was the case of Paul Robeson, a singer, actor, and Communist sympathizer, who stated at the Congress of World Partisans for Peace in Paris in 1949 that U.S. government policy was “*similar to Hitler and Goebbels*” and that it was unthinkable that African Americans would fight against the Soviet Union in a war.²⁴³ American officials knew that especially the racial

²⁴³ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 61-62.

policies of their Southern states had a negative impact on their foreign policy. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles wrote in a letter to Attorney General Herbert Brownell during the Little Rock desegregation crisis of 1957 that the effect of this situation “*in Asia and Africa will be worse for us than Hungary was for the Russians*”.²⁴⁴ This was a typical parallel that was used to emphasize the similarity of the two superpowers and we could see this kind of comparison also in 1968 when the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia was compared to the American war in Vietnam.

But, after the period of the strictest anti-communism in the USA, some leading African American socialists were given their passports back. One of them was W. E. B. Du Bois, one of the most important American public intellectuals of the 20th century, a co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and in his final years also a peace activist and Communist. After it had become possible, he started to travel around the world again and visited Czechoslovakia in 1958 on the occasion of receiving a degree of doctor honoris causa at Charles University in Prague. In a letter to his daughter, he mentions a warm welcome, “*a hotel suite, car, and chauffeur and the most gorgeous honors ever bestowed on me*” and writes that he was “*the first American so honored in a century*”.²⁴⁵ The speech presented at the university by the 90-year-old Du Bois was called “The American Negro and Communism” and besides the acknowledgement of the achievements of the Russian revolution and the criticism of the fact that “*the American Negro is today developing a distinct bourgeoisie bound to and aping American acquisitive society*”, he described his personal ideological development. While in his young age, he thought that “*Negroes were folk like other folk*” and wanted “*to secure opportunity for black folk, despite color and poverty*”, so it was “*not until after the Russian revolution*” that his “*main interest began to center in economic change as fundamental to the rise of American Negroes*”.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 131.

²⁴⁵ W. E. B. Du Bois to Yolande Du Bois Williams, letter, Moscow, December 10, 1958, accessed April 20, 2017, <http://www.nathanielturner.com/duboisoyolande1958.htm>.

²⁴⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, “The American Negro and Communism,” (Speech at Charles University, Prague, October 23, 1958), accessed April 20, 2017, <http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b206-i015>.

Du Bois' last years were connected especially with activities in internationalist circles. He attended the Congress of World Partisans for Peace as well as Robeson, promoted the idea of Pan-Africanism, and spent his last few years in Ghana. He received an admiration also from Jiří Pelikán, at that time a functionary of the IUS, who requested that Du Bois send a message to the 7th Congress of the IUS in Leningrad, 1962, and emphasized Du Bois' "*substantial contribution to the strengthening of friendship and understanding among the peoples of the whole world*".²⁴⁷ However, looking at his visit from the perspective of the period, Du Bois' ideas, even though important for the people of color around the world, did not contribute to potential changes in Czechoslovakia. As we have mentioned in the chapter about the developments after 1956, the end of the 1950s was still a period of strict neo-Stalinism in Czechoslovakia, so we chose Du Bois as an example of a rather "safe" Western/American visitor. Comparatively, the 1960s offered more provocative visitors, especially in the field of literature, some of whom had a real impact on other events in the Czechoslovak culture and politics.

One of the intellectuals with substantial influence in both the West and the East in the 1960s was Jean-Paul Sartre. We mention him in order to use one Western European example for the comparison with the Americans since French leftist intellectuals did not have such a strong geopolitically determined stigma as the Americans. Even clearer examples were Roger Garaudy and an Austrian, Ernst Fischer, both being in the high positions of the Communist Parties in their countries. Sartre, Garaudy, and Fischer made important contributions to the revival of Franz Kafka as a popular author in Czechoslovakia and contributed therefore to the initiation of changes in Czechoslovak society, at least according to East German's Communist paper *Neues Deutschland*. "*An important milestone in the spread of revisionist and bourgeois ideology was the Kafka conference in May, 1963*", says the article entitled "*The Spiritual Forerunners of Counter-Revolution*".²⁴⁸

Kafka could be interpreted as an author who accurately describes human alienation, not in traditionally Marxist economic terms, but in existential ones, and thus could target the bureaucratic system of the Communist regimes. Therefore, he was not

²⁴⁷ Jiří Pelikán to W. E. B. Du Bois, letter, Prague, July 13, 1962, accessed April 20, 2017, <http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b155-i175>.

accepted by Communist cultural policy. This point was important in Sartre's speech at the Moscow Congress for Peace and Disarmament in 1962, which we can understand as a precursor to the Kafka Conference in Liblice, 1963. Sartre critically described the role of alienation in the anti-Communist interpretation of Kafka. "*They identified Kafka as an author who derided and exposed bureaucrats. After such an introduction, all they needed to do was to ship him off to the Russians, in hopes that now everybody would recognize their own country when they'd read The Trial*", said Sartre, but he added a question for the Communists: "*why haven't you yourselves written a critical Marxist study on Kafka and gotten him on your side? You'd probably win your point, because your methods for interpreting an author and his works are more advanced than the methods of Western critics.*" Finally, however, Sartre concluded that the fight about which side Kafka was on was not right since those who claimed that culture should be politically defended were, in fact, defending war: "*Culture doesn't have to be protected. All it asks of us intellectuals—and this is our duty—is to demilitarize it...*"²⁴⁹ Here we could read a well-balanced speech, which cautiously, because of the audience, criticized the Western interpretation of Kafka, but which words, at the same time, led to his rehabilitation as an author. And, as we will see, even if there is no politically backed interpretation, the readers' independent one could be followed by a change in the public political thinking.

Sartre's speech was brought to Prague by Adolf Hoffmeister, who was a member of the Czechoslovak delegation at the Congress, and it became one of the impulses for the preparations of the Kafka Conference in Liblice. The final shape of the conference was determined when Garaudy and Fischer expressed interest in participating. The importance of the conference was in the intellectual union of Czechoslovak delegates with the Western Marxists against the more dogmatic East Germans, but the final papers did not reach a wider public. The situation changed when, at that time, the widely read magazine *Literární noviny* published not only an article by Alfred Kurella from East Germany, typical for its vulgar Marxism, but especially the replies by Garaudy, Fischer, and Pavel Reiman.²⁵⁰ Ernst Fischer showed the spirit of Liblice very clearly, writing that in our epoch "*we want to reach the sincere 'East-West' dialogue in every field. And*

²⁴⁸ Antonin J. Liehm, "Franz Kafka in Eastern Europe," *Telos*, No. 23 (Spring 1975): 77-78.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 57-58, 72.

the issue of Franz Kafka, a great revolting writer whom we, Marxists, left to the bourgeois world for so long, is part of such a dialogue.”²⁵¹ All these presentations and remarks resulted in Franz Kafka becoming one of the most popular authors among the Czechoslovak population that had known very little about him previously. They became aware of their alienation also through the help of a literary work and, as Liehm concludes, they could “*cast up their eyes and confide in a whisper to the first stranger they met, ‘This is just like Kafka!’*”²⁵²

As Kafka’s sympathizers raised awareness of the term “alienation”, the other person, whom we will mention, emphasized creating a community of hope by another cultural instrument – a song. Pete Seeger, a legend of the American folk music and a pioneer of its revival, was another example of a Western left-wing artist who had an interesting and unexpected Czechoslovak experience. But, before dealing with his Czechoslovak visit, it is useful to analyze the question of what kind of political person he was. As for his affiliation to the Communist Party, he was a member for a few years in the 1940s, but then he left it, even though he remained sympathetic to its causes and issues. However, his primary task was to spread the power of the song. In his early career, he focused on labor union choruses, and then on civil rights and anti-war songs, many of which became famous anthems like “If I Had a Hammer” or “Where Have All the Flowers Gone”. As Allan M. Winkler writes in Seeger’s biography, he “*was more concerned with using his talents to communicate with ordinary people than with clinging to doctrinaire political positions*”.²⁵³ This description of Seeger would place him into the category of genuine native-born radicalism that especially the revisionist historians of American Communism emphasize contrary to the image of Party leaders obedient to Kremlin. In the words of Maurice Isserman, these more independent native radicals “*brought to the movement expectations, traditions, patterns of behavior, and thought that had little to do with the decisions made in the Kremlin or on the 9th floor of Communist Party headquarters in New York.*”²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Ernst Fischer, “Franz Kafka a náš svět,” *Literární noviny*, June 8, 1963.

²⁵² Liehm, “Franz Kafka in Eastern Europe,” 73.

²⁵³ Allan M. Winkler, *To everything there is a season: Pete Seeger and the power of song* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 53, 44.

²⁵⁴ Maurice Isserman, “Three Generations: Historians View American Communism,” *Labor History* 26, No. 4 (1985): 540.

But even Seeger was tried by the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) at the end of the 1950s. He did not invoke the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution which could give him the right not to speak as a witness against himself, but still he refused to answer any question as to his political or religious belief and associations. During the interrogation, he told the Committee: *“I have sung for Americans of every political persuasion, and I am proud that I never refuse to sing to an audience, no matter what religion or color of their skin, or situation in life. (...) That is the only answer I can give along that line.”*²⁵⁵ This statement includes both a necessarily evasive answer regarding his sympathies for Communism, and his idea of the primary importance of the song itself. We can thus label Seeger rather as an independent leftist idealist not participating in any intentionally subversive activities against his country, as we can see in his following quote:

*“In general, I can’t help thinking of the famous quote from H. L. Mencken: ‘The only thing wrong with communism is the Communists, just as the only thing wrong with Christianity is the Christians.’ (...) My guess is that there is a lot that Russia and China can learn from the U.S.A., and a lot that the U.S.A. can learn from Russia and China. And all of us can learn from Africa.”*²⁵⁶

When he mentions Africa, he does not do it in the New Left style of praising the Third World revolutionary movements since Seeger is connected more with the Old Left. In this statement, we can find rather quite naïve nostalgia for the community life of tribal societies. *“If I had to accept any kind of label, I’d call myself some kind of Naturalist. (...) I guess I’m about as Communist as the average American Indian was,”* he added.²⁵⁷ Also, in a remark about Ho Chi Minh, he liked especially his modest look: *“He didn’t go around with the uniform on like Mao Zedong did or Stalin did or other great leaders are supposed to. What a guy.”*²⁵⁸ So, having roughly described Seeger’s

²⁵⁵ Testimony of Pete Seeger before the House Un-American Activities Committee, August 18, 1955, accessed April 21, 2017, http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2014/01/28/pete_seeger_huac_transcript_full_text_of_anti_communist_hearing_courtesy.html.

²⁵⁶ Pete Seeger and Jo Metcalf Schwartz (ed.), *The Incomplete Folksinger* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 478.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 479.

²⁵⁸ Winkler, *To everything there is a season*, 137.

place within the realm of socialist thought, we can now analyze Seeger's crossing the Iron Curtain.

Seeger visited Czechoslovakia in 1964 during a year-long world tour with his family. Two people were especially helpful for Seeger during his visit – Zbyněk Mácha, who worked for the local Ministry of Culture and managed the permissions for Seeger to play in Czechoslovakia, and Gene Deitch, an American director of cartoons who had already lived in Czechoslovakia for four years before Seeger's arrival and who recorded his concert in Prague on his own stereo equipment. Deitch remembers that *“there was no radio or TV coverage of his visit”* and that the authorities *“cautiously limited him to low-key venues”*, only later Supraphon issued an LP with Deitch's recordings. The reason for this caution of the Czechoslovak Communists was, according to Deitch, in the fact that *“the ‘Marxist-Leninist’ Czechoslovak government was more suspicious of free-thinking ‘communists’ who were not strict followers of the ever-shifting Soviet line, than they were of ‘capitalists,’ who were their more clearly defined antagonists”*. Therefore, Seeger could be a dangerous person with his songs about freedom since, Deitch continues, his *“dream of a better America and better world, was not based on Communist jargon, but was manifested in song, songs coming from the roots of America”*.²⁵⁹

Seeger's concerts in Czechoslovakia were hugely successful and his performance and banjo playing influenced a revival of folk music especially among young people. His concerts got favorable reviews in Czechoslovak media. Jiří Černý emphasized Seeger's perfect work with both his instruments and his voice, but especially his favorite discipline – *“a contact with an audience”*.²⁶⁰ Arnošt Košťál compared the spontaneity of the American folk music popularization with the officially proclaimed *“folksiness and purity”* of traditional music in Czechoslovakia which, while being promoted by the cultural authorities, *“was slowly ceasing to be alive”*.²⁶¹ But despite an undeniable success, an area of dispute appeared between Seeger and his audience. While the folk traditionals and songs with the message of freedom were

²⁵⁹ Gene Deitch, “22. Pete Seeger,” accessed April 21, 2017, <https://genedeitchcredits.com/roll-the-credits/22-pete-seeger/>.

²⁶⁰ Jiří Černý, “Dlouhatánský Pete Seeger,” (1964) in *...na bílém: hudební publicistika 1952-1969*, ed. Jiří Černý (Praha: Galén, 2014), 48. Originally, the review was published in *Mladý svět*, 1964, Vol. 6, No. 14.

²⁶¹ Arnošt Košťál, “K Petru Seegerovi: Poznámky téměř kacířské,” *Melodie* 2, No. 5 (1964): 71.

applauded, those more proletarian-oriented were not as acceptable for the audience as Seeger thought. Josef Škvorecký was inspired by Seeger's concert in his book *Mirákl* where he describes a Prague performance of an American called Bert Singer who was so enthused by the hearty atmosphere of the first half of the concert that he then let the presenter translate the lyrics of a song called "Working Class Unite". But while Singer started singing this song "*the temperature in the hall fell, it was falling head-first down, until the cold came into a singer as well and he blundered two times in the final part of the song.*"²⁶²

To conclude the evaluation of Seeger's Eastern bloc experience, we can see the combination of the honest approach to spreading universal values like freedom and community-building and a sort of blindness to some negative facts of the life on the other side of the Iron Curtain. This was present also in his Soviet experience of 1964, which followed his Czechoslovak one. Seeger for example visited Dzhankoy collective farm, which he popularized in his version of the Yiddish song "Hey Zhankoye". He describes how the staff of the farm laughed when Seeger told them that some American critics pointed out Soviet anti-Semitism and told him the song was a lie. Seeger seemed quite satisfied with the staff's answer that "*the assistant manager of Rossiya (farm) is Jewish, and the woman who is the head agronomist is also Jewish*" and did not continue by problematizing some controversial issues.²⁶³

A year after Seeger, Czechoslovakia witnessed the visit of another artist which could be called independent leftist, but in a different way than Seeger was. Allen Ginsberg was a poet who belonged to the "beat generation" of authors who substantially influenced the countercultural movement of the 1960s. By his critique of the state of industrial civilization which he called Moloch: "*Moloch the stunned governments! Moloch whose mind is pure machinery! Moloch whose blood is running money! Moloch whose fingers are ten armies!*"²⁶⁴, and by his unconventional behavior, he provoked the American authorities. But not only them since, as we will see, his critique targeted the things that both Cold War blocs had in common. This could be proved by the fact that Ginsberg got to Czechoslovakia after being expelled from Cuba, where Castro's regime

²⁶² Josef Škvorecký, *Mirákl: politická detektivka* (Praha: Ivo Železný, 1997), 423.

²⁶³ Seeger and Schwartz, *The Incomplete Folksinger*, 517.

²⁶⁴ Allen Ginsberg, "Howl," (1955) accessed April 23, 2017, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/49303>.

was strengthening its bureaucratic character, also because of his “*complaining about Castro's policy on gays and also complaining about the one-party press*”.²⁶⁵

However, Ginsberg was evaluated positively at the beginning of his Czechoslovak visit – even in the Communist Party daily *Rudé právo* where the author of an article published in March 3, 1965, mentioned Ginsberg's remark that he would like to get acquainted with the facts of the life in Czechoslovakia and then he would continue to Moscow.²⁶⁶ Ginsberg was not an unknown figure in Czechoslovakia before his arrival, especially because of the work of his translator Jan Zábřana who, together with Josef Škvorecký, specialized in Anglo-American literature. We can mention their work as the editors of the magazine *Světová literatura* or the anthology of American radical left-wing poetry called *Pátá roční doba* which, according to Justin Quinn, “*kept hardline Stalinists happy, and yet opened up a tiny space for a discourse of dissent in Czech poetry*”.²⁶⁷ Because of the success of his poems, Ginsberg could spend longer time in Czechoslovakia since he also had money waiting for him: “*quite a bit of money, from publications, and there was a poetry cafe called Vinarna Viola which for many years before had had once-a-week poetry readings.*”²⁶⁸

During his stay in Prague, Ginsberg met not only Zábřana, Škvorecký, or Andrew Lass, who was the son of an American Communist who got a political asylum in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s²⁶⁹, but also many young people, especially writers and students, and became really popular among them. After his return from a trip to Moscow, Ginsberg was asked to represent the Czech Technical University as a candidate for the King of the student May parade called *Majáles*. The students in the *Majáles* parade carried a large banner on which was written: “*Ginsberg, the King of Majáles – the manifestation of the proletarian internationalism*”. Ginsberg's candidate speech then consisted of repeating one Buddhist mantra, since he did not speak Czech.

²⁶⁵ Allen Ginsberg and Andrew Lass, “The King of May: A Conversation between Allen Ginsberg and Andrew Lass, March 23, 1986,” *The Massachusetts Review* 39, No. 2 (1998): 170.

²⁶⁶ Petr Blažek, “Vyhoštění krále Majálesu: Allen Ginsberg a Státní bezpečnost,” *Paměť a dějiny* 4, No. 2 (2011): 31-32.

²⁶⁷ Quinn, *Between Two Fires*, 53.

²⁶⁸ Ginsberg and Lass, “The King of May,” 170.

²⁶⁹ Blažek, “Vyhoštění krále Majálesu,” 30.

Finally, before the huge audience, Ginsberg was elected the King of Majáles.²⁷⁰ This title, even though originally a product of a student tradition, had also a political undertone. Therefore, the authorities and the secret police began to focus on Ginsberg more and more.

There was an agent also at the small meeting between Ginsberg and the students at the Hlávka student dormitory. On his report, the agent complained that Ginsberg, surrounded especially by the editors of the magazine *Buchar* and the members of the Student Academic Board, “*badmouthed the Soviet Union and disparaged the leadership of our state. He did not hide his anti-Communism and antipathy towards Marxist philosophy in front of the students*”.²⁷¹ For example, Ginsberg said that “*Marxism and its consequences in the political sphere mean only a cruel spiritual terror that limits people...*”²⁷² Police provocations and the information found in Ginsberg’s stolen notebook regarding his political opinions and sexual experience during the visit finally led to his deportation from Czechoslovakia and to a radical change of his image in the official media. Shortly after his deportation, there was an article in *Mladá Fronta* which said, as Ginsberg remembers, “*that I was an alcoholic, notorious homosexual, a junky, a dope fiend, and badly behaved. That I caused immense complaints among the parents of the youth of Prague*”. The fact that the article was translated and archived in Ginsberg’s FBI file led him to the conclusion “*that the police bureaucracies in the Eastern Europe and in the United States had exactly the same mentality, loved each other, used each other's material and were inseparable in mentality*”.²⁷³

So, we can say that Ginsberg’s time spent in Czechoslovakia was formative for both some groups in Czechoslovak society and Ginsberg himself. As for the former, he inspired especially young cultural circles in the East when he talked about “*the greater values, the sense of new consciousness (...) the sexual revolution (...) the abhorrence of ideology*” etc.²⁷⁴ Justin Quinn explains that the movement across the Iron Curtain

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 36-37.

²⁷¹ Karel Vodrážka, “Final Report on the Activities of the American Poet Allen Ginsberg and His Deportation from Czechoslovakia,” *The Massachusetts Review* 39, No. 2 (1998): 189.

²⁷² Blažek, “Vyhoštění krále Majálesu,” 38.

²⁷³ Ginsberg and Lass, “The King of May,” 184.

²⁷⁴ Richard Kostelanetz, “Ginsberg Makes the World Scene,” *The New York Times*, July 11, 1965, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/01/04/08/specials/ginsberg-scene.html>.

needed a specific kind of poet in order to be successful. For example “*the sophisticated cocktail of irony and nuanced landscape*” in Elizabeth Bishop’s poems would not have been the right recipe since Czechoslovakia in 1965 “*needed Allen standing naked on a barricade shouting truth to power*”.²⁷⁵ Regarding Ginsberg himself, after his deportation from Czechoslovakia, he ceased to have any illusions about communist regimes. “*As things are going now, it seems to me that dogmatic cold-war types in the U.S. and the Socialist countries are mirror images of each other...*”, he explains.²⁷⁶ This critique of similarities of the two Cold War blocs is best expressed in Ginsberg’s poem “Kral Majales” written in a plane from Prague to London:

*“And the Communists have nothing to offer but fat cheeks and eyeglasses and lying policemen / and the Capitalists proffer Napalm and money in green suitcases to the Naked, / and the Communists create heavy industry but the heart is also heavy / and the beautiful engineers are all dead, the secret technicians conspire for their own glamour / in the Future, in the Future, but now drink vodka and lament the Security Forces, / and the Capitalists drink gin and whiskey on airplanes but let Indian brown millions starve / and when Communist and Capitalist assholes tangle the Just man is arrested or robbed or has his head cut off...”*²⁷⁷

Ginsberg’s 1960s travels not only to Cuba and Czechoslovakia, but also to Vietnam and Cambodia in 1963 gave him an ability to speak with authority about the global Cold War conflict. As Quinn characterizes him, Ginsberg’s role was “*similar to that of a reporter, visiting various flashpoints along the Iron Curtain*”, who could prove that “*walking, breathing, fucking, and travelling between the two superpowers could be a major poetic theme*”.²⁷⁸ However, even in Ginsberg’s reception among Czechoslovak readers, we could see a similar problem as the one which Škvorecký described in a scene inspired by Seeger’s concert. The position of Ginsberg as a reporter was not really accepted by some of his Eastern followers, since they eventually moved to a position of vigorous anticommunism. Quinn argues that these writers rather quickly forgave the

²⁷⁵ Quinn, *Between Two Fires*, 12.

²⁷⁶ Richard Kostelanetz, “Ginsberg Makes the World Scene”.

²⁷⁷ Allen Ginsberg, “Kral Majales (King of May),” accessed April 24, 2017, https://www.pf.jcu.cz/stru/katedry/aj/doc/sukdolova/Ginsberg_Kral_Majales.pdf.

²⁷⁸ Quinn, *Between Two Fires*, 166.

excesses of the U.S. authorities such as McCarthyism, the CIA involvement in Latin America, or the support for right-wing authoritarian regimes. For example Jan Zábřana noted in his diary in 1977, when he saw Ginsberg on a photograph “*celebrating on the wreck of a plane that had been sent to liberate Cuba from Fidel Castro’s regime*”, that there was “*a poet exulting with that particular type of American pacifistic idiocy, a poet whooping happily precisely because a totalitarian and repressive regime will survive, a poet at the stupidest hour of his life*”.²⁷⁹ Ginsberg, contrary to some of these Eastern dissident or émigré writers seems to be more independent in the context of the Cold War struggle, emphasizing especially the typical countercultural values. As Quinn describes his position, Ginsberg “*places his body in this no man’s land between the two powers, and then writes about what happens*”.²⁸⁰

Having described the visits of a few important travelling public intellectuals to Czechoslovakia and their context, we could distinguish between the period of the late 1950s when mainly vetted leftist intellectuals could come and the 1960s when the visits of more controversial figures had more substantial impact. But what was necessary for these visits to achieve the audience was the cooperation of the widely read Czechoslovak cultural magazines, as we could see in the example of *Literární noviny* during the debates about Kafka or *Světová literatura* with its translations of “beat generation” poets. However, we showed also some disagreements between even the independent 1960s leftists and some parts of their Czechoslovak audience with a rather clear anticommunist leaning. In the short stories of disagreement, it became evident that individuals who disagreed with the system within the two sides of the Iron Curtain did not agree with their counterparts automatically, only because of their common critical position within their countries. Each group was trying to solve its own problems and sometimes there was a lack of common ground.

3. 2 The Clash of Discourses

One argument which contributed to the tension between Eastern and Western intellectuals and activists was about whose conditions were worse in the 1950s and

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 163.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 164.

1960s. From the Czech authors we can mention particularly some remarks by Josef Škvorecký who emphasized that the suppressions of the protests in America cannot be compared to those within the Communist regimes. In *Mirákl*, Škvorecký's alter ego Danny Smiřický spends a time in the late 1960s at an American university and ironically describes the atmosphere in which the campus newspaper's title says that the prison in Connington is indistinguishable from Dachau, and where the students are demonstrating while being dressed like some vagrants and holding banners with dumb signs. In a rather comic situation, a policeman is trying to hit a cameraman with his truncheon, but, when he realizes that he is from a press agency he steps back and unintentionally hit himself instead. Despite this, Danny's American colleague shouts: "Yes, this is how it looks in a police state!"²⁸¹ We can draw the conclusion that this is an ironic reaction to the allegedly exaggerated descriptions of the suffering of American leftists because Škvorecký later talked about their interpretation of McCarthyism in a similar manner:

*"I think it somewhat audacious to compare twenty years of the genocide of Czech culture under the auspices of comrades like Ivan Skála with the ineffective activities of an ambitious senator. In twentieth-century American history the McCarthy era is the single, brief period when democratic principles were violated. To this day, leftist liberals and their friends among the émigrés live off that historical moment."*²⁸²

On the other hand, we can mention a recollection of George S. Wheeler, an American economist who lived in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 1960s, who mentions a short remark made by one American tourist who, during the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968, saw the burned-out houses and the bullet-riddled National Museum and said just: "Hell! One good riot produces more damage back home." As Wheeler adds, he missed the point since the main damage was "in the crushing of the highest of human aspirations".²⁸³ So, in the views of Škvorecký and this American tourist, we could see, to some extent, blindness to the problems of the people on the other side of the Iron Curtain. On the side of some Czechoslovak intellectuals, there was a portrayal

²⁸¹ Škvorecký, *Mirákl*, 240-241.

²⁸² quoted in Quinn, *Between Two Fires*, 167.

²⁸³ George S. Wheeler, *The Human Face of Socialism: The Political Economy of Change in Czechoslovakia* (Westport : Lawrence Hill, 1973), 162.

of the American radicals as unrealistic romantics, but, at the same time, in some cases more violent. In *Mirákl*, Škvorecký depicted a meeting of young American Maoists of which Danny Smiřický was kicked out because of his questions about the horrors of Stalinism. The chairman of the meeting was shouting the Maoist slogans about violent takeover and told Smiřický that Czechoslovakia was heading towards capitalism under Dubček and that the invasion was an imperialist intervention of the more powerful revisionist against the weaker one. In this description of the meeting, Škvorecký also depicted one important difference on the American Left. The rather formal dress code of the Maoists contrasted with the one of a hippie who, while emphasizing love and saying that “*Bullets won't work in America!*”, was kicked out of the meeting together with Smiřický.²⁸⁴

In an interview which was published in a Marxist humanist magazine *News and Letters*, edited by Raya Dunayevskaya who showed a deep interest in Czechoslovak events, one Czech student compared the approaches of the Czechoslovak and American anti-Stalinist Left:

*“Our heroes, our gurus, if you like, are different from those in the West. Older people who influence students here tend to be theoreticians, not romantic revolutionaries. To some new left students it might all sound very conservative. Maybe someday we'll have our Cohn-Bendits here, but not for a while. Still, you know, when I talk to American kids I wonder whether they have really decided which is more important, revolutionary looks or revolutionary ideas.”*²⁸⁵

This distinction could explain what Dick Greeman complained about, also in *News and Letters*. He wrote that “*so few of the kids around SDS and the other radical youth organizations seem to identify with the struggles of the workers and students in Czechoslovakia*”.²⁸⁶ But this did not mean that they supported the invasion; many of them protested against it and Brezhnev had practically no support on the New Left. However, for Greeman, “*very few see the positive content of the Spring movement and the continuing worker – student protests in Czechoslovakia*”.²⁸⁷ We could connect this

²⁸⁴ Škvorecký, *Mirákl*, 417-419, 424-428.

²⁸⁵ “Czech Students Strike; ‘Spirit of Fight Is Alive,’” *News and Letters*, January 1969.

²⁸⁶ Dick Greeman, “Czechoslovakia: High Stage of Struggle,” *News and Letters*, February 1969.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

with an accusation of the Czechoslovak reform movement of moving towards capitalism. The students in Czechoslovakia demanded mainly those freedoms that already existed in the USA, so the American radicals could think that they support the Western status quo they themselves opposed. This was also why the Czechoslovak students were skeptical towards the discourse of the Western New Left. As Jaroslav Pažout writes, Czechoslovak progressives were right in stating that there were more freedoms in the West. However, they were not able to fully recognize “*the specific negative experience that the Western left-wing radicals had with their establishment*” and many of them began to understand this critique after 1989.²⁸⁸ Stanislav Holubec in this sense mentions the work of Immanuel Wallerstein who writes about the same essence of all the anti-systemic movements in 1968. This idea could, according to Holubec, challenge the notion that the Prague Spring was a genuine fight for freedom and democracy, whereas the Western revolts were just mischief of the youth full of illusions about communism.²⁸⁹

However, even though we agree with the statement that revolts on both sides of the Iron Curtain had legitimate reasons, we should not underestimate the philosophical differences between various movements. We could say that Czechoslovak activists did not emphasize the radical qualitative change of the Marcusean style as their American and Western European counterparts did. Unlike the representatives of the New Left, Czechoslovak intellectuals called either for a return to original Marxism or for an inclusion of existentialist philosophy. Even those individuals who were quite interested in the New Left thought, like Petr Uhl, saw themselves rather as Trotskyists, that is, on the Old Marxist Left.²⁹⁰ Ivan Sviták writes in this context that Marcuse’s concept of revolution is substantially different from that of Marx “*because the working class has been replaced by the national liberation movement, the economically developed countries by the developing countries, the international global ambitions by the*

²⁸⁸ Jaroslav Pažout, “Studentské hnutí v západní Evropě v roce 1968 a jeho reflexe v Československu,” in *Mladí, levice a rok 68*, ed. Martin Franc and Stanislav Holubec (Praha: Společnost pro evropský dialog, 2009), 37.

²⁸⁹ Stanislav Holubec, “Světová revoluce 1968 podle Immanuela Wallersteina,” in *Mladí, levice a rok 68*, ed. Franc and Holubec, 79.

²⁹⁰ Jiřina Šiklová and Linda Sokačová, “Nová levice v Československu: Rozhovor s Jiřinou Šiklovou,” accessed April 25, 2017, <http://genderstudies.cz/jirina/akontra.html>. Originally published in *A-kontra* magazine, 2005, No. 1.

tripartite division of the world". Western New Left, Sviták continues, "steps beyond the bounds laid down by Marx" and calls for "a total transformation of values, goals and human needs".²⁹¹ Stephen Spender, an English poet and essayist, adds that "Czechoslovak students are not revolutionaries in a sense of the American or German SDS, or the French Movement of 22 March" since they had not radically departed from the older generation and did not have a tendency to destroy the universities.²⁹²

An important trend in Czechoslovakia was to mix Marxism and existentialism rather than to depart from Marxism in direction of the Marcusean New Left. Zdeněk Pinc remembers a colloquium on Marxism and existentialism in Heidelberg, 1966, where West German students supported Marxist positions while the members of a Czechoslovak delegation (Pinc, Šiklová, or Václav Bělohradský) were on the side of existentialism.²⁹³ Even Erich Fromm noticed this existentialist influence when he lectured in Czechoslovakia in the mid-1960s, as he writes in his letter to Dunayevskaya from October 1966. Fromm also writes how he experienced misunderstanding similar to that of other Western leftists in Czechoslovakia. First, he worried over the increase of material incentives in socialist societies, and when he connected constantly increasing consumption with capitalism, a "stony silence" ensued.²⁹⁴ Jiřina Šiklová confirms the popularity of existentialism while talking about Sartre's visit in Prague in 1963. She remembers a full auditorium listening to a great existentialist's lecture translated by Antonín J. Liehm. However, when Sartre introduced Simone de Beauvoir as one of the important feminist writers, a substantial part of the auditorium was empty. Šiklová explains this example of the clash of intellectual interests by the fact that Czechoslovak women did nearly all the professions as men, so de Beauvoir's book was not as provocative as in the West.²⁹⁵ But, finally, we should add that this existentialist trend was not without opponents. Ivan Sviták wrote later in the 1970s for the American magazine *Telos* that Marxism would hardly maintain its essence when open to other

²⁹¹ Ivan Sviták, "On Revolution and the Prague Spring," *New Politics* 10, No. 4 (Fall 1973): 72.

²⁹² Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 208.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 163.

²⁹⁴ "Erich Fromm to Raya Dunayevskaya, letter, October 29, 1966," in *The Dunayevskaya-Marcuse-Fromm Correspondence, 1954-1978: Dialogues on Hegel, Marx, and Critical Theory*, ed. Kevin B. Anderson and Russell Rockwell (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012), 153.

²⁹⁵ Pavel Kovář, "Simone de Beauvoirová," *Reflex*, March 5, 2009, accessed April 25, 2017, <http://www.reflex.cz/clanek/causy/73642/simone-de-beauvoirova.html>.

various philosophical schools. Even though ex post, i.e. after the invasion, he called open Marxism an “*eclectic illusion*” and “*a simple-minded attempt to transplant Sartre's existentialized Marxism to Eastern Europe*”.²⁹⁶

What was important in the potential clashes of the student groups from both Cold War blocs was the impossibility, under given circumstances, to interpret some symbols or symbolic acts in the same way. Stanislav Holubec gives an example that while the Western radicals called themselves “comrades”, the whole audience of Czechoslovak students started to laugh when one of the reform leaders, Josef Smrkovský, jokingly greeted the audience of students in this way.²⁹⁷ Another example is raising a red flag. Jiřina Šiklová, however, points out that such an act was not necessarily an act of identification with a particular political program, but rather an attempt to refuse old authorities or to destroy the taboos in society.²⁹⁸ But misunderstandings existed. Quite an interesting story happened when, during an anti-war demonstration in Prague, some Vietnamese students tore down an American flag from the building of the U.S. embassy. The reaction of the group of Czechoslovak students was that they returned the flag to the embassy staff. Liehm argues that “*the meaning that this gesture had in our country is different from what it probably would have been almost anywhere in the world*”.²⁹⁹ He was quite right since for example the CPUSA’s chairman Gus Hall was outraged by this act. “*How else could we explain the disgraceful fact*” of returning the flag to Americans, asks Hall, than by insufficient building of “*a reservoir of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist ideology*”?³⁰⁰

There was also certain mistrust between students and their counterparts from the other side of the Iron Curtain. We have mentioned the French Trotskyist Hubert Krivine who criticized the allegedly anticommunist positions of Czechoslovak students, especially because of their interpretation of the Vietnam War as the struggle between American and Soviet imperialists. But Czechoslovak students also refused to participate in an international solidarity event against the Vietnam War. They were asked by Bettina Aptheker, an American Communist and student activist who met with Miluše

²⁹⁶ Ivan Sviták, “Illusions of Czech Socialist Democracy,” *Telos*, No. 22 (Winter 1974/1975): 123.

²⁹⁷ Holubec, “Světová revoluce 1968 podle Immanuela Wallersteina,” 83.

²⁹⁸ Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 32.

²⁹⁹ Liehm, “Author’s Foreword,” 89.

³⁰⁰ Gus Hall, *Czechoslovakia at the Crossroads* (New York: New Outlook Publishers, 1968), 11.

Kubíčková during her stay in the USA. The reason for the refusal was that the call for an expression of solidarity with the protesting American students was politically imposed from above, and this fact could have misused especially young high school students who were not well-informed, as it is written in a letter by the presidium of the Academic Council of Prague's Faculty of Arts to the Ministry of Education.³⁰¹ Finally, interesting differences were quite evident also when the students from socialist countries met their Western counterparts in more informal atmosphere. Jiřina Šiklová remembers one visit of a West German club, where Czechoslovak students went fashionably dressed, but their German colleagues wore just ragged clothes. Then the members of the Czechoslovak group tried to be progressive and started to sing "Gaudeamus Igitur". It was quite embarrassing, as Šiklová says, since for the Western youth it was an elitist song. Then, the German boys started to criticize the modern clothing of the Czechoslovak girls and Šiklová remembers how she was arguing with them.³⁰²

Here, we touch the question of who went further in their protests. In the context of the above mentioned story, Jiřina Šiklová says that, at the end of the 1960s, people in Czechoslovakia had been already through the period when the ostentatious ignoring of customs was understood as revolutionary act.³⁰³ But this is not only a question of appearance. Raya Dunayevskaya points out the ideological importance of the Czechoslovak reforms and protests: "*In raising the fundamental question of philosophy and revolution, the party and spontaneity, the unity of worker and intellectual, they have indeed laid the foundation of a new relationship of theory to practice. Thereby they have gone far beyond anything raised by the New Left in 'the West'.*"³⁰⁴ On the other hand, Jiřina Šiklová acknowledged that the Western student movement was further in its demands in some respects; that the students in the West wanted to change something that people in Czechoslovakia had not achieved yet – capitalism.³⁰⁵

³⁰¹ Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 164-167.

³⁰² Šiklová and Sokačová, "Nová levice v Československu".

³⁰³ Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 178.

³⁰⁴ Raya Dunayevskaya, "All Eyes on Czechoslovakia, All Hands Off!" *News and Letters*, August/September 1968.

³⁰⁵ Šiklová and Sokačová, "Nová levice v Československu".

However, despite the differences and arguments and even though the primary interest of students and intellectuals was in domestic affairs or in the criticism of foreign policies of their own countries, there were many contacts and influences that went across the Iron Curtain and which were very useful. Even though it seemed that Czechoslovak people were quite indifferent to the Vietnam War, or that they interpreted it in a different way than the Western leftist radicals, on a more official level Czechoslovakia could provide a space for interesting encounters. For example quite a large group of SDS members led by Tom Hayden came to Bratislava in 1967 in order to meet a delegation of the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) and other North Vietnamese officials at a summit-like conference. According to Sol Stern, Bratislava witnessed “*a motley combination*” of hippies, anti-war organizers, and New Left intellectuals who contrasted with “*older, hardened revolutionaries, dressed in almost identical black pants and jackets*”.³⁰⁶ As for the Czechoslovak intellectual presence in the Vietnam War, we can mention Ladislav Mňačko who worked for a while as a war correspondent in Vietnam and then was asked by Bertrand Russell to speak before a special committee that investigated American crimes in Vietnam³⁰⁷, the so-called Russell Tribunal.

Even more important were translations of important political, activist, or philosophical works, and articles in Czechoslovak cultural magazines which focused on the authors who inspired the New Left like Fromm, Antonio Gramsci, or György Lukács. Jaroslav Pažout, in his book *Mocným navzdory*, makes a list of articles in this field. He mentions translations of Isaac Deutscher’s work in *Literární listy* and *Student* made by Karel Kovanda, articles by Lubomír Sochor (*Literární listy*, 13/1968) and Jiřina Šiklová (*Dějiny a současnost* 9/1968) about Herbert Marcuse. Quite a rich collection of articles appeared in a magazine *Echo bratislavských vysokoškolákov*, for example, about protest song folk singers, or the “anti-university” in London. Ján Čarnogurský wrote about preparations of the protest events against the visit of Hubert Humphrey to West Berlin, Olga Bednářová about the attempted assassination of Rudi Dutschke.³⁰⁸ Regarding larger works, there was a series on the contemporary Western

³⁰⁶ Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 77.

³⁰⁷ Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 76.

³⁰⁸ Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 147-150.

philosophy in five volumes edited by Milena Tlustá. One volume dealt with Marcuse, but it was rather a collection of excerpts from Marcuse's work for students without any interpretative introduction.³⁰⁹ There was a volume edited by Jiřina Šiklová and Miluše Kubíčková which we have already quoted from, called *Studenti a ideologie na Západě: Dokumenty*, or Šiklová's dissertation *Stoupenci proměn - Studenti a ideologie na Západě*, which was prepared for publication but finally could not be published in 1969.³¹⁰ But the interest was mutual. German publishing house Konkret published a volume *Praha a levice* with texts by authors like Erich Kuby or Ulrike Meinhof; in France, Roger Garaudy edited an anthology with texts written by Dubček, Husák, or Goldstücker.³¹¹ American authors paid attention to the development of Czechoslovakia as well, so we will talk about it in the following chapter. To be clear, we will divide the American reactions according to the topics – economy, political development, especially during the Prague Spring, and the Warsaw Pact invasion and the post-invasion situation.

³⁰⁹ Herbert Marcuse and Milena Tlustá (ed.), *Antologie textů soudobé západní filosofie. [Sv.] 5., [Výběr z díla Herberta Marcuse]* (Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1969).

³¹⁰ Šiklová and Sokačová, "Nová levice v Československu".

³¹¹ Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 189, 203.

4. American Reactions to the Czechoslovak Reform Movement

4.1 Economic Reform

The period of de-Stalinization in Czechoslovakia, despite some not very strong attempts in 1956, started fully in the 1960s. And one of the main reasons was economic. The dogmatic political leadership of Antonín Novotný survived the 1956 turmoil in Poland and Hungary and controlled all the means of power, the media, the armed forces, the economic levers. As George S. Wheeler, an American economist and a member of Economic Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science, living in Czechoslovakia since 1947, notes, such a regime must have a visible failure in order to be discredited. According to Wheeler, we can take the failure of the economic plan from 1962 to 1963 as an example which opened “*the eyes of ordinary people to other shortcomings*”.³¹² At the Party level, however, we should understand de-Stalinization as a replacement of the tyranny of one dictator by collective leadership rather than as a suspension of the intention to rule and reshape the society since the Party hegemony was not disrupted.³¹³ This approach was evident, for example, in the conclusion of the plenary session of the Central Committee of the CPC from September 1963 that emphasized the necessity of struggle against both revisionist tendencies and dogmatic relapses, and also against all the attempts to reconcile socialism with bourgeois ideology.³¹⁴ But the economic problems were serious, and it was necessary to solve them. Finally, economic theory appeared as a field where the monolithic approach could be changed.³¹⁵

The leading figure of the Czechoslovak economic reform was Ota Šik, who came with the idea that the model of central planning, as it was known in the 1950s, was

³¹² Wheeler, *The Human Face of Socialism*, 126.

³¹³ Jiří Suk, “Od stalinské ‘metafyziky’ k obrysům ‘třetí cesty’”. Vědecký a politický přerod ekonoma Oty Šika,” in “*O nový československý model socialismu*”: čtyři interdisciplinární vědecké týmy při ČSAV a UK v 60. letech, ed. Jiří Hoppe et al. (Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2015), 15.

³¹⁴ Jiří Hoppe, “Radovan Richta a mezioborový tým pro výzkum společenských a lidských souvislostí vědeckotechnické revoluce: Proč a jak vznikla Civilizace na rozcestí,” in “*O nový československý model socialismu*”, ed. Hoppe et al., 59.

³¹⁵ Suk, “Od stalinské ‘metafyziky’ k obrysům ‘třetí cesty,’” 19.

not sustainable. More and more complex production and social processes could not be directed from the center, so Šik supported greater liberty for individual state enterprises and at the same time proposed that conflicts of interest should be at least partially solved by market mechanisms.³¹⁶ The fact on which most of the authors agreed, even those who did not agree with the concrete form of Šik's reform, was the unsuitability of the highly centralized planning for the economy which was becoming more complex because it was not possible for the planners to process such amounts of information. This consequently resulted in increasing waste.³¹⁷ Even though the authors, discussing the Czechoslovak reform in American periodicals like the *Monthly Review*, acknowledged the initial accomplishments of centralized planning like the rising national income, free medical care or no unemployment, they critically mentioned the weak responsiveness to consumer demands, the inability to adopt new materials and technology, and the excessive focus on heavy industry.³¹⁸ Those who described the benefits of the reform were mainly the authors working in Czechoslovakia itself. Wheeler, Šik himself, or Oldřich Kýn, all of them leaving Czechoslovakia after the invasion, criticized the rigid centralized planning also for the pressure to show quantitative results which had been done "by illegal means or at the expense of quality".³¹⁹ Success, Wheeler argues, could not be measured by tons of materials produced since there was a tendency to produce heavier pieces of goods that were not saleable, especially on the international market.³²⁰ In his book called *The Human Face of Socialism: The Political Economy of Change in Czechoslovakia*, Wheeler summarizes quite well the origins of, reasons for, and the results of the economic reform.

The socialist reform thought of Šik and also of Evsei Liberman in the Soviet Union raised a question of the role of the market under socialism and its relation to central planning, as the English title of the important Šik's book *Plan and Market under Socialism* (1967) tells us. The attempt to increase the production in socialist countries by inventing a new theoretical base for the socialist economy was quite inspiring,

³¹⁶ Ibid., 21-22.

³¹⁷ Charles Bettelheim, "Socialism and the Market," *Monthly Review* 17, No. 4 (September 1965): 36.

³¹⁸ George S. Wheeler, "Economic Reform in Czechoslovakia," *Monthly Review* 17, No. 8 (January 1966): 42-44.

³¹⁹ Kyn and Sherman, "Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia," 36.

especially for the group of Marxist economists around the *Monthly Review*, so the debate was lively in this magazine. And even in general, it seemed that economic reform was the main topic that resonated among the Western leftist public before 1968. Šik's theory tried mainly to revive the weight of material incentives like profitability as an economic stimulus. But his rhetoric remained within the socialist framework, so his typical point stressed that the inclusion of some market principles is not incompatible with socialism since there are still crucial differences from capitalism like public ownership and no private profit-making, i.e. "*no private person can appropriate the income and make a profit on the exploitation of the labour of other.*"³²¹ In other words, Šik wanted to present a different kind of market: "*Our production differs from capitalism, not in that it should not meet the requirements of the market, but that it is a different kind of production catering for a different kind of market,*" writes Šik.³²² This greater reliance on the market was connected with decentralization, which emphasized initiative at the enterprise level. But although the central planning agency was to be concerned mainly with the general orientation of economy, the prices which were determined only by market forces and not set by central authority were only those of quite unimportant items.³²³ Oldřich Křyn and Howard Sherman correct some statements by Šik's critics like Benjamin B. Page by saying that "*Šik favors use of the market mechanism only within the context and the goals of the social plan*" and that "*the major spheres of social need*", like health or also culture, "*must be governed by nationwide political decisions, not individual consumer preferences*".³²⁴

But what the American Marxist critics of Šik's reform highlighted the most was the notion of economic democracy, which was, in their view, rather weak in Šik's approach. Leo Huberman, who co-edited *Monthly Review* with Paul M. Sweezy until his death at the end of 1968, argued in a traditionally Marxist way that, since the poor do not have the right to elect those who make economic decisions, they could become free only when there are commonly-owned productive forces which should also increase

³²⁰ Wheeler, *The Human Face of Socialism*, 52-53.

³²¹ quoted in Benjamin B. Page, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement, 1963-1968: A Study in the Theory of Socialism* (Amsterdam: B.R. Gruner, B.V., 1973), 22.

³²² quoted in Maurice Dobb, "Socialism and the Market," *Monthly Review* 17, No. 4 (September 1965): 35-36.

³²³ Wheeler, "Economic Reform in Czechoslovakia," 48.

³²⁴ Křyn and Sherman, "Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia," 34.

production. But at the same time he adds that “*economic success is only part of the socialist dream*”.³²⁵ The emphasis on democracy and workers’ control seems to be a common feature of the Western critique of the Czechoslovak reform movement. Benjamin B. Page argues that even though we could not talk about Czechoslovakia as about explicitly capitalist country, since there was no private capital, the reform proposals placed “*labor in a subservient position*”. Class antagonism did not for Page depend on the ownership of the means of production, but on the ability of a particular class “*to pump out the surplus labor of others*”. Technocratic managers of state enterprises constituted such a class in Czechoslovakia and they were, according to Page, even more powerful than in capitalist countries “*for there is no class of capital owners whose interests the managers and technocrats must contend with*”.³²⁶ Charles Bettelheim follows a similar argument and stresses the political factor in his definition of socialism more than the economic one. Those who take market factor as a primary one put emphasis on a surface phenomenon. For Bettelheim, “*what characterizes socialism as opposed to capitalism is not the (non)existence of market relationships, money, and prices, but the existence of the domination of the proletariat*”. In the context of reforms in the Soviet bloc, however, “*it is impossible to explain the invasion and the reforms unless it is recognized that the proletariat is no longer in power*”.³²⁷

The mention of a surface phenomenon was Bettelheim’s reaction to an article by Paul M. Sweezy, both part of a general theoretical debate launched because of the developments in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. Sweezy in his following reply argued that we should study also the market relations because what is important is “*the direction in which the system is moving*”. And here he sees a danger for the survival of socialism in Czechoslovakia. Sweezy, as the majority of other authors, refuses the rigid bureaucratic planning, but criticizes also the turn to capitalist techniques in order to solve the problems. As an example of the successful attempt of the masses to unseat the bureaucratic leaders he mentions the Chinese Cultural Revolution.³²⁸ For Sweezy, the Cultural Revolution increased the responsibility of producers in China and elevated “*the*

³²⁵ Leo Huberman, “Freedom under Capitalism and Socialism,” *Monthly Review* 17, No. 5 (October 1965): 16, 27.

³²⁶ Page, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement, 1963-1968*, 101, 95, 26.

³²⁷ Charles Bettelheim, “On the Transition between Capitalism and Socialism,” *Monthly Review* 20, No. 10 (March 1969): 2-5.

general level of political consciousness". However, given the history and the circumstances, Sweezy does not see any group capable of choosing the Chinese way in the Soviet bloc.³²⁹ Allen Solganick took even more openly Maoist position in this debate while targeting especially the material incentives in order to increase production. He quotes Chinese *People's Daily* that wrote: "*if we do not let politics take command but rather material incentives, if we induce people to pursue fame, position, and physical enjoyment, if we let bourgeois thought run rampant, then our society will come to a halt...*" Solganick here rather leaves the field of economy and focuses, with Che Guevara whom he also quotes in this sense, on moral incentives and on making the new man. As for the question of decentralization, Solganick does not refuse it, but uses the Chinese example again while saying that decentralization could be administrative.³³⁰ Lynn Turgeon disagrees and replies that the Chinese position "*attempts to create a virtue out of necessity*" because the Chinese had already "*inherited a lot of small-scale firms from the Nationalist Chinese regime*".³³¹ Also Wheeler saw the Maoist arguments as inapplicable in Eastern Europe and argued that "*at this stage of development it is folly to expect that moral incentives will prevail over economic counterincentives to efficiency*".³³² This was proved also in the statement of an economist Valtr Komárek in which he reacted to the revolutionary asceticism of Che Guevara emphasizing the necessity of only basic material goods. The notion of good material conditions of the people "*went much further than Che assumed...*," Komárek argues.³³³

In these articles, we could see the connection of economic and political arguments in Marxist political economy. Therefore, we could move to the analysis of the political events of the Prague Spring by American left-wing journalists. Since there are issues that go across the fields of politics and economy, for example the one of economic democracy and workers' councils. The nonexistence of the workers' councils before summer 1968 was a target of not only American critics. One of the strictest critiques of a bureaucratic character of the Prague Spring was made by Ivan Sviták who

³²⁸ Paul M. Sweezy, "Reply," *Monthly Review* 20, No. 10 (March 1969): 12-13, 17.

³²⁹ Paul M. Sweezy, "Czechoslovakia, Capitalism, and Socialism," *Monthly Review* 20, No. 5 (October 1968): 11.

³³⁰ Allen Solganick, "The Peril of Material Incentives," *Monthly Review* 18, No. 8 (January 1967): 21-22.

³³¹ Lynn Turgeon, "How Important Are the Reforms?" *Monthly Review* 18, No. 8 (January 1967): 33.

³³² Wheeler, *The Human Face of Socialism*, 168.

³³³ Fiala, *Jak se zbavit Castra*, 216-217.

said that the economic reform was inspired by the Yugoslav examples, but only in “*concessions to economic cooperation with the West*” while the Yugoslav form of the workers’ councils was somewhere lost.³³⁴ Zbyněk Fišer, better known by his pen name Egon Bondy, specifies Sviták’s support for workers’ council in a more Trotskyist way while pointing out that “*for Marx the principle of workers’ self-management could only be effective once the entire political system of the society was in the hands of the workers*” or their representatives from the “*truly revolutionary party*”. In Yugoslavia, however, Fišer continues, plant managers fired many workers in order to increase labor productivity.³³⁵ Even this issue shows us that the interpretations of the Prague Spring, as we will see in the following subchapter, were various, included both supportive and critical voices, and were able to distinguish between the reformist strand of the CPC led by Dubček and non-party intellectual voices that gained strength before the invasion and in the few months after it. So, after briefly summarizing the context, we will describe some discourses typical for the debate about the Prague Spring on the American Left.

4. 2 Political Development and the Prague Spring

Since we understand de-Stalinization as a global phenomenon with Marxism as a *lingua franca* of the socialists, we could see the transformation of the global Left after 1956. In Eastern Europe, the rise of an intellectual opposition was not the case only of Czechoslovakia. In Poland, we can mention *An Open Letter to the Party*, a long analysis of Polish socialism by Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski, in the USA first published in the *New Politics*, which begins by a rejection of a formal definition of socialism based on a legal meaning of ownership, “*an element fundamentally alien to Marxist theory*”.³³⁶ In the Soviet Union, except for Liberman’s economic reform, there was especially a question of trials with underground writers like Andrei D. Sinyavsky and Yuli M. Daniel which provoked disagreement also among more liberal writers in the

³³⁴ Sviták, “Illusions of Czech Socialist Democracy,” 121.

³³⁵ Zbynek Fiser, “How to build workers democracy: Debate in Czechoslovak press,” *The Militant*, August 2, 1968.

³³⁶ Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski, “An Open Letter to the Party,” *New Politics* 5, No. 2 (Spring 1966): 6.

Soviet Writers Union like Andrei Voznesensky and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.³³⁷ This formed a base of what later became the Russian dissent, which was, in the 1970s, characterized by its moral discourse. In the words of Petr Hrubý, “*when Russian dissidents are looking for a philosophy of life, they often fall back on religious and moral postulates*”.³³⁸ Finally the Czechoslovak situation, as we have mentioned, was, to some extent, determined by a lack of an attempt to substantially revise the regime in 1956, so there was a space for a complex reform in the 1960s.

The breakdown of Stalinist ideology was crucial in Czechoslovakia as well. As the “*faith in the revolutionary, liberating mission of the Communist Party*” declined, the “*gap between dogma and reality*” appeared in its entirety since it “*can be bridged only by faith*”.³³⁹ So, what collapsed first was the Stalinist mythology, but it was followed, as Sviták later argues, by changes in the Party machine, by “*a degenerative transformation of revolutionists into bureaucrats*”. For Sviták, the Prague Spring, beginning with the replacement of Antonín Novotný as the General Secretary of the CPC by Alexander Dubček in January 1968, “*was the result of the above degenerative process and not a roaring of the suddenly awakened Czech lion dozing under the Czech table until now*”.³⁴⁰ As we have mentioned above that the old system of centralized planning had practically no support both internally and internationally, that even the CPUSA leader Gus Hall wrote that “*more than any other country Czechoslovakia needed economic reforms*”³⁴¹, the same counted for Novotný’s political leadership. Jiří Veltruský, under the pen name Paul Barton³⁴², explains it in his article for the *New Politics*: “*Novotny was reduced to such a tiny minority in the Party leadership that not even Brezhnev could help him*”.³⁴³ So, before the Communist regimes started to use the

³³⁷ Albert Fried, “Intellectual Ferment in Russia,” *New Politics* 6, No. 3 (Summer 1967): 60, 69-70.

³³⁸ Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 31.

³³⁹ Ivan Sviták, “The Genius and the Apparatus,” *New Politics* 6, No. 4 (Fall 1967): 9.

³⁴⁰ Ivan Sviták, “The Czech Bureaucratic Collectivist Class,” *New Politics* 11, No. 2 (Spring 1974): 86-87.

³⁴¹ Hall, *Czechoslovakia at the Crossroads*, 5.

³⁴² Veltruský left Czechoslovakia in March 1948. Originally an aesthetician and teatrologist, he later worked as an activist in the international labor union movement. “Jiří Veltruský,” accessed April 28, 2017 <http://www.slovníkceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=1191>.

³⁴³ Paul Barton, “Revolution in Czechoslovakia,” *New Politics* 6, No. 3 (Summer 1967): 91.

rhetoric of the consumers' society and, especially in Russia, nationalism³⁴⁴, there had been probably the last time for an attempt to fill the vacuum with an Eastern European socialist experiment.

However, authors who commented on the Prague Spring were usually aware about the limitations of the reform movement that finally did not become a full-scale experiment. Štěpán Steiger, in his anonymously written report from Prague for the *News and Letters* magazine³⁴⁵, quotes Dubček's speech from February 1, 1968, which is quite illustrative in this sense: "*We do not change the general line, neither of the domestic nor in foreign policy. The starting base of a more rapid socialist development lies in the field of politics. In the development of socialist democracy (...) we have to make more room for the activities of all social groups...*"³⁴⁶ Here, we can see an ambiguous statement quite typical for Dubček's leadership. On the one hand, the base for development lies in politics, on the other hand, the general policy line remains intact. But even though the reform leaders themselves stayed within these limits, this kind of policy "*permitted 'liberals', particularly in the various branches of the press, to open the doors of public discussion*". So, although Page continues by arguing that "*the forces that brought down Novotny's sterile leadership (...) were rather forces of economic, managerial, and technological reform within the Party and the Academy*", not those of political reform as such,³⁴⁷ the open space they had created was used by the intellectuals and later to some extent by the masses to expand their demands.

This openness represented a basis on which a new kind of socialism could be built in various ways. That is why the end of censorship and the newly achieved freedom of speech were stressed as the major accomplishments of the Prague Spring on the anti-Stalinist Left. An important fact was, as Steiger's Prague report mentions, that newspapers like *Svobodné Slovo* or *Lidová demokracie*, and especially student magazines *Student* or *Echo* pointed out "*the guilt of the Communist Party, not only that*

³⁴⁴ Jiří Pelikán, "Socialist Opposition in East Europe and the International Left," *New Politics* 11, No. 1 (Winter 1974): 78.

³⁴⁵ Raya Dunayevskaya to Erich Fromm, August 10, 1968, in *The Dunayevskaya-Marcuse-Fromm Correspondence, 1954-1978*, ed. Anderson and Rockwell, 159.

³⁴⁶ "At the Crossroads of Two Worlds," *News and Letters*, August/September 1968.

³⁴⁷ Page, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement, 1963-1968*, vii-viii.

of its individual members”³⁴⁸, so there could appear a consistent critique of the regime as such. The American magazines, of course, differed in the reasons for their support for freedom of speech in Eastern Europe. While *Dissent* or the *New Leader* promoted rather the existence of freedom itself, representing “the lingering democratic socialist sentiments of the Old Left”³⁴⁹, the Trotskyist newspapers highlighted especially the publications that were considered truly revolutionary. Gerry Foley, writing for *The Militant*, mentions the publication of *Informační materiály* in June 24, 1968, connected with the group of far-left Czechoslovak activists. The issue which includes the excerpts from the Fourth International manifesto “For a Government of Workers Councils in Czechoslovakia”, a translation of an interview with Rudi Dutschke, Zbyněk Fišer’s article, or Mao’s “16 Points on the Cultural Revolution”, was called a landmark of de-Stalinization in Czechoslovakia.³⁵⁰ *The Militant* republished also the information about the formation of a Left Communist group in Prague with the address of Julie Nováková, Fišer’s partner, included.³⁵¹ Others remark that it was mainly the emerging freedom of speech and association that caused the pressure from Moscow and then the invasion. “For the power-hungry bureaucrats in the Kremlin and their boot-licking stooges on the staff of the World, such an elementary democratic demand must be transformed into a movement in order to ‘overthrow socialism’”, states Harry Ring, criticizing the position of the CPUSA’s *Daily World*.³⁵² Raya Dunayevskaya sees this in a different approach of Moscow to Czechoslovakia and to Romania that also deviated from the Soviet rules, especially in foreign policy, but remained totalitarian and the masses had no freedoms compared to Czechoslovakia.³⁵³

Those who had critical remarks to the newly established freedom of speech followed two kinds of arguments. The first was more dogmatic and conspirative and said that freedom of speech would lead to anti-Party views, some of which could be even financed by U.S. imperialism. In this context, Gus Hall quotes Lenin who argued that complete freedom of speech must be accompanied by complete freedom of association, i.e. that “every voluntary association (including a Party) is free to expel

³⁴⁸ “At the Crossroads of Two Worlds.”

³⁴⁹ Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 282.

³⁵⁰ Gerry Foley, “Czech magazine publishes Trotskyist manifesto,” *The Militant*, August 2, 1968.

³⁵¹ “Left Communist group forms in Czechoslovakia,” *The Militant*, August 2, 1968.

³⁵² Harry Ring, “Case of the vanishing Czech plot,” *The Militant*, August 16, 1968.

members who use the name of the Party to advocate anti-Party views".³⁵⁴ The second argument claimed that freedoms brought by the democratization process do not change the basic structure of the system because, according to pseudonymous author Vítězslav Pravda, writing directly from Prague, "*there has been no fundamental change in the life or role of the producers – the working class*".³⁵⁵ Page puts it in a similar way, mentioning the comparison with the West where "*freedoms would in principle be available to all, but they are not equally relevant to the needs of all*".³⁵⁶ Kýn and Sherman would not have agreed since for them the notion that "*most ordinary workers will continue to have low incomes, no time for politics*" could fit maybe to Nigeria. But Czechoslovakia is a developed country where "*income differences are not a reason for declaring democratic freedoms irrelevant to the ordinary worker*" because they allows him to "*assert himself*".³⁵⁷ And these criticisms, which we could call dogmatic and radical, do not count only for freedom of speech, but they appeared in the commentaries on the Czechoslovak events as two types of important discourses.

So first, we will deal with those American criticisms that interpret Prague Spring as clearly anticommunist, thus leading Czechoslovakia towards capitalism and imperialism. This group includes both pro-Moscow and anti-Moscow thinkers, mainly Trotskyists or Maoists. The pro-Moscow group argued that some reforms were necessary – logically, since even the Soviet leadership tried to implement some, especially economic, reform mechanisms – but that the Czechoslovak form exceeded the limits and "*opened up the flood gates for a tide that created anarchy – a tide that swept in with it the forces of counter-revolution*".³⁵⁸ Dorothy Healey remembers "*a servile role*" of the CPUSA "*in promoting every lie spread by the Soviets*" in comparison to many other Communist Parties around the world who were able to resist the Soviet propaganda. In this context, she points out quite praiseworthy role of George S. Wheeler in Czechoslovakia who wrote frequently especially to the *Daily World*,

³⁵³ Dunayevskaya, "All Eyes on Czechoslovakia, All Hands Off!" p. 8.

³⁵⁴ Hall, *Czechoslovakia at the Crossroads*, 29.

³⁵⁵ Vitezslav Pravda, "The Czechoslovak Revolution: Background, Forces and Objectives," *New Politics* 7, No. 1 (Winter 1968): 39.

³⁵⁶ Benjamin B. Page, "Ota Sik and Czechoslovak Socialism," *Monthly Review* 21, No. 5 (October 1969): 46.

³⁵⁷ Kyn and Sherman, "Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia," 40-41.

³⁵⁸ Hall, *Czechoslovakia at the Crossroads*, 8.

“trying to correct some of the most ridiculous misconceptions” of its “journalistic onslaught”.³⁵⁹ To this group we can add also Fidel Castro who showed his pro-Soviet side in his speech confirming the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Castro talked about “liberal hysteria” and the development of anti-Marxist and anti-Leninist ideas, particularly the idea that the Party should cease to exercise “the role of guide, reviewer, and the like – above all, a sort of spiritual director”.³⁶⁰ For these Communists, the leading role of the Party seemed to be a necessary condition for socialism as such.

Then, there are also representatives of the anti-Soviet, anti-bureaucratic kind of communism who had no illusions about the Prague Spring and condemned it as well. For example Sam Marcy, a leader of the Workers World Party (WWP), wrote a series of articles for the *Workers World*, later reprinted as a pamphlet called *Czechoslovakia 1968: The Class Character of the Events*. Marcy targeted both Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union as countries with a revisionist leadership, but since Czechoslovakia went beyond the limits, Marcy supported the invasion. But even during the Spring of 1968, he attacks the developments in Czechoslovakia as “counter-revolutionary, anti-socialist and not very democratic, except insofar as right-wing critics of the regime are getting more and more freedom” in order to “deride Marxism”, “cozy up to the neo-Nazi regime of West Germany”, or “to rehabilitate the symbols of old capitalist Czechoslovakia: Masaryk, Benes & Co.”³⁶¹ He describes the confusion of the Czechoslovak workers who could “accept the ‘new nationalism’ as a genuine form of socialist autonomy, rather than the neo-capitalist restorationism it really is”. It follows from Marcy’s conclusions that two dangers for the true revolution in Czechoslovakia are history and the West, in other words “remnants of the older ruling class” and “strong economic and social connections with the Western bourgeoisie”.³⁶²

The location of Czechoslovakia in the neighborhood of the capitalist West Germany and its historical connections with the Western countries made the danger of

³⁵⁹ Dorothy Ray Healey and Maurice Isserman, *California Red: A Life in the American Communist Party* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 229.

³⁶⁰ Fidel Castro, “Castro comments on Czechoslovak crisis,” accessed April 29, 2017, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1968/19680824.html>.

³⁶¹ Sam Marcy, “Czechoslovakia 1968: The Class Character of the Events,” (Chapter “Czech leaders open door to counter-revolution”), accessed April 29, 2017, <http://www.workers.org/marcy/cd/samczech/>.

³⁶² Ibid. (Chapter “Before the Warsaw Pact intervention”).

imperialism and capitalist restoration an important discursive point among the Marxist-Leninist critics of the Prague Spring. Castro compared the situation when the West increased the economic cooperation with Eastern Europe with the economic persecution policy applied against Cuba. Why such a difference, asks Castro. *“They know that they have not the slightest possibility of penetrating our country with such maneuvers,”* sounds the answer. Regarding the values, he adds the experience reported by Cuban visitors to Czechoslovakia that the youth there *“are highly influenced by all the ideas and by all tastes of the Western European countries”*, not by the ideals of communism and internationalism.³⁶³ Commentators in the *Bulletin*, bi-weekly of the Workers League, share this mood. According to Dennis O’Casey, *“the gain in productivity is to accrue not to the working class”* but in a reactionary capitalist way to the bureaucracy in the form of luxury consumer goods.³⁶⁴ In this case, Tim Wohlforth quotes and criticizes the position of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) presented in *The Militant* that *“the Czechoslovak counterrevolution is extremely weak and the international situation is hardly favorable to it”*. Wohlforth disagrees and thinks to the contrary that capitalist tendencies have taken extreme character in Czechoslovakia.³⁶⁵ We should add that the two groups we have mentioned, Marcy’s WWP and the Workers League, were created after the split with the SWP in 1959 and 1964³⁶⁶ which proves disunity among American Trotskyists. The SWP remained finally as quite moderate among the revolutionary Marxist parties. Here we can quote Julius Jacobson’s evaluation of the SWP compared to other groups, written in the 1970s: *“It supported the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian revolutions and it does point to the undemocratic nature of Communist regimes. And for all its sectarianism, it is at least among the sane.”*³⁶⁷

The second type of criticism does not criticize the Prague Spring for moving towards capitalism. Rather, it points out that the democratization process, which was represented by the Action Program of the CPC adopted in April 1968 and which culminated by the end of censorship, was not sufficient. Trotskyists stressed the need of *“the fighting alliance between the workers and the youth”* and *“the construction of a*

³⁶³ Castro, “Castro comments on Czechoslovak crisis”.

³⁶⁴ Dennis O’Casey, “Czech Regime Moves Towards Capitalism,” *Bulletin*, July 10, 1968.

³⁶⁵ Tim Wohlforth, “SWP and the nature of Stalinism,” *Bulletin*, July 22, 1968.

³⁶⁶ Robert J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism, 1929-1985: A Documented Analysis of the Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 911, 923.

section of the Fourth International on Czechoslovakian soil”³⁶⁸; authors inspired by the Chinese Cultural Revolution used a collocation “*motivated masses of people*” even though they acknowledge the non-transferability of the Chinese model into Eastern Europe.³⁶⁹ But the criticism we will deal with in greater detail was a democratic socialist one made especially by Ivan Sviták whose voice was presented in the American leftist press even before his emigration to the USA where he later held an academic position. Especially in his ex post analyses from the 1970s, he showed the limits and paradoxes of the Czechoslovak reform movement led by Party bureaucrats. What characterized the Prague Spring of 1968, according to Sviták, was that while the elites thought they follow authentic Marx, they in fact tried only to “*eliminate the Stalinist deformations through a combination of Leninism and Masaryk's tenets*”. But since these ideologies proved to be incompatible, the “*rational program of reforms became an absolute impossibility (...) an attempt to square a circle*”. The Communist reformers failed in a complete abandonment of the post-Stalinist ideology, they merely modified it.³⁷⁰

According to Sviták, an alternative existed and it consisted in a truly socialist perspective which was in fact “*no naive dreaming, chiliastic romanticism, revolutionary enthusiasm, but the tradition which is most deeply rooted in the Czech people, in the nation, in the working class movement*”. The crucial thing for Sviták was that “*authentic socialism (Marxism) cannot betray the interests of the working class*”, but this was what happened in Czechoslovakia.³⁷¹ Even the reformist Party elites feared the people, Sviták argues, so they prevented, at least until the invasion, the existence of an alliance between the workers and intellectuals which could challenge the very existence of the leading role of the Party. But when “*the liberal intellectuals put forward a program which reflected only their particular group demands, with emphasis on civil liberties*”, the Communist Party presented it as “*the more general one,*

³⁶⁷ Jacobson, “Neo-Stalinism,” 54.

³⁶⁸ O’Casey, “Czech Regime Moves Towards Capitalism”.

³⁶⁹ Bernard Edwin Gallitz, “No Revolutionary Legitimacy,” *Monthly Review* 20, No. 8 (January 1969): 57.

³⁷⁰ Sviták, “Illusions of Czech Socialist Democracy,” 123, 119.

³⁷¹ Ivan Sviták, “Marginal Notes on Prague Spring 1968,” *Telos*, No. 17 (Fall 1973): 166-167.

embracing the whole nation".³⁷² This Party approach could be accepted by people like Kým whom we quoted above and who stressed the importance of civil liberties for the workers. But for Sviták this was not sufficient. In fact, he was clearly within the framework of Marxist-humanist discourse while saying that "*the ideology of 'reason and conscience' or 'socialism with a human face' never and nowhere admitted that the political conflicts in 1968-69 were in fact class conflicts*".³⁷³ This emphasis on the conflicting interests of the Party technocrats and the workers that were covert by the Party discourse of national unity was present also in a letter signed D. G. sent to the editors of *News and Letters*. "*This lack of sharp class analysis even affects the reporting of the Czech resistance*", writes the author and adds that even after the invasion it is necessary "*not to allow any illusions about the nature of the Dubcek group or any illusions about 'national unity,' but to concentrate on the working class, which 'has not yet had its say'*".³⁷⁴

But Sviták's view could be criticized as well. We have already mentioned Petr Hrubý's note that Sviták placed an excessive emphasis on the working class, ignoring the heterogeneous social stratum in Czechoslovakia. According to Hrubý, Sviták on the one hand stated that "*workers must liberate themselves alone*" and not "*through revolutionary intellectuals*", but, on the other hand, played the role of such an intellectual in 1968 when he "*was trying to enhance their class consciousness and resembled Lenin in more than one way*".³⁷⁵ We can also show the differences between Sviták and the Party reformists in the case of two important documents of the Prague Spring – the CPC's Action Program and the "Two Thousand Words" manifesto representing the independent intellectuals. In one article published in the *New Politics* quite shortly after the invasion, Sviták writes that in the last months before the invasion the "*idea of socialist democracy and Marxist humanism came nearer to victory (...) than ever*" with "Two Thousand Words" as the manifesto of "*the particular group interests of the intelligentsia together with the general national and popular*

³⁷² Ivan Sviták, "Intellectuals and Workers In Czechoslovak Democratization," *New Politics* 7, No. 2 (Spring 1969): 52-53.

³⁷³ Sviták, "Marginal Notes on Prague Spring 1968," 160.

³⁷⁴ D. G., "Readers' Views," *News and Letters*, November 1968.

³⁷⁵ Hrubý, *Czechoslovakia between East and West*, 435-436.

interests...".³⁷⁶ The Action Program was, on the contrary, as Sviták writes in a letter to Benjamin B. Page, "a dead born child". "Everybody understood this, with the exception of Western journalists fascinated by the peripheral aspects of the whole political process," complains Sviták to Page.³⁷⁷ On the other hand, George S. Wheeler, whom we could count as a reform Communist at that time, criticized "Two Thousand Words" which "were not only untimely, they were unfair to the new leadership" since it came "at the time when (...) fundamental progress was being made in correcting the errors and illegalities about which the signers were complaining". Wheeler supported the approach of Dubček's leadership and wrote that it was Josef Smrkovský's article in *Rudé právo* in February 9, 1968, what characterized the spirit of the period rather than "Two Thousand Words" "or any antisocialist comment by individuals".³⁷⁸ However, we should add that also Sviták later took quite critical stand on "Two Thousand Words", even though from the different perspective than Wheeler, and labeled the document "a morally motivated outcry of desperation over a twenty-year-old dictatorship". The manifesto, Sviták continues, "did not pose nor solve any theoretical issues – perhaps because a pragmatic statement had more weight than a general theory at the time".³⁷⁹

To conclude, we can say that Sviták's radical democratic socialist ideas, presented both during the Prague Spring period and, later in American exile, are based on two main arguments. First says "that the radical political program originated outside the Communist Party, independently of its policy and in opposition to it". Even in literature he recognizes non-Communist writers like Havel, Škvorecký, or Jiří Kolář as the true intellectual leaders of the period, even though he respects also Kundera, Liehm, or Vaculík as important reformist communists.³⁸⁰ But he also complains that the "Writers' Union was incapable of formulating any politically relevant program and left all the decisive political initiative to the Communist Party" which he proves by the fact that *Literární listy* refused to print his lecture called "Hlavou proti zdi" and some other

³⁷⁶ Sviták, "Intellectuals and Workers in Czechoslovak Democratization," 54.

³⁷⁷ quoted in Page, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement, 1963-1968*, 15.

³⁷⁸ Wheeler, *The Human Face of Socialism*, 136, 138.

³⁷⁹ Sviták, "Marginal Notes on Prague Spring 1968," 164.

³⁸⁰ Sviták, "Illusions of Czech Socialist Democracy," 126.

articles that finally appeared in the *Student* magazine.³⁸¹ The second argument states that the Prague Spring showed that a totalitarian regime “*can be uprooted and replaced by a democratic — and not merely democratized — political system*”.³⁸² In fact, the mere democratization of a totalitarian system finally seemed to be the utopian squaring of a circle. For Sviták, one of the illusions of the Prague Spring was the “*conviction that the power monopoly of the totalitarian dictatorship could be democratized at all*”.³⁸³ So, we could say that Sviták’s analysis of the Prague Spring is a good example of a position taken by an important figure of the Czechoslovak events. Moreover, Sviták, as an exile in the USA, helped to improve a status of the interpretation of the Prague Spring in the American left-wing press. Now, having analyzed the situation before August 1968, we will move on to an analysis of the American Marxist reactions to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia since there is a question whether all the critics of the Prague Spring would also support the invasion, or not.

4. 3 Debates about the Invasion

On August 21, 1968, Warsaw Pact troops led by the Soviet army invaded Czechoslovakia in order to stop the post-January development under the pretense of saving socialism in that country. After the events in Hungary, 1956, by description of which we have started this work, this was another situation which was crucial for global socialism. Despite various criticisms we have presented in the previous subchapter, the Czechoslovak reform experiment evoked in many people a notion of a possible new way of building socialism, so its suppression had a substantial impact. The reactions to the invasion and the subsequent Czechoslovak resistance were various, so before analyzing the main discourses we should briefly outline a list of positions of Marxist parties around the world in this context. The condemnations were made by China, by the Romanian leader Nicolae Ceaușescu or the Yugoslav Josip Broz Tito in Eastern Europe, and by the great majority of the Western European Communist Parties, notably by those from Italy, France, Great Britain, Sweden, or Belgium. As for the approvals,

³⁸¹ Sviták, “Intellectuals and Workers in Czechoslovak Democratization,” 51.

³⁸² Sviták, “The Czech Bureaucratic Collectivist Class,” 90.

³⁸³ Sviták, “Illusions of Czech Socialist Democracy,” 122.

they came from several Arab states and North Vietnam.³⁸⁴ We have already written about the approvals made by Fidel Castro, the CPUSA, and the WWP in the USA.

The reactions of some countries require some clarification before we focus primarily on the American context. Especially that of North Vietnam could be surprising since American troops were present there. There were even some attempts to present the position of North Vietnam as unclear mentioning the improbability of making a declaration before China did.³⁸⁵ In any case, however, it provoked some commentators to point out that the opposition to the Vietnam War should not go hand in hand with the support for the North Vietnam regime. Therefore, quite paradoxical situation occurred when many of the SDS students in the USA or their counterparts in Western Europe chanted “*Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh*” and at the same time resolutely condemned the Russian invasion. “*Wouldn't ‘Ivan, Ivan, Ivan Svitak’ be a more meaningful slogan (...) if SDS really means what it says?*” asks a reader of *News and Letters*.³⁸⁶ As for the Chinese leaders, their disagreement with the invasion was determined mainly by the Sino-Soviet split of that time. As Andrew Filak mentions, “*Mao may be opportunistically opposed to the Russian rulers*” but “*more significant, however, is his failure to say one word in support of the Czechoslovakian masses*”.³⁸⁷ Contrary to the Chinese one, the opposition of the Western European Communist Parties seemed more genuine, but we can discuss its importance. We have already mentioned some examples when the Western Marxist pressure influenced the situation in the Eastern bloc, but in this case, Brezhnev did not step back. As he told the Czechoslovak delegation in Moscow after the invasion: “*So what do you think will be done on your behalf? Nothing. There will be no war because of what has happened. Comrade Tito and Comrade Ceausescu will speak their minds, and so will Comrade Berlinguer. Well, and what of it? You are counting on the communist movement in Western Europe, but that won't mean anything for 50 years.*”³⁸⁸ And regarding

³⁸⁴ George Novack, “Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia: Assault on socialism,” *The Militant*, August 30, 1968.

³⁸⁵ “N. Vietnam stand unclear on Kremlin Czech attack,” *The Militant*, September 13, 1968.

³⁸⁶ “Readers’ Views,” *News and Letters*, December 1968.

³⁸⁷ Andrew Filak, “Total Czechoslovak Unity Defies Russian Invasion to Crush Marxism,” *News and Letters*, October 1968.

³⁸⁸ Zdeněk Mlynář, “From Prague to Moscow: August 1968,” *Telos*, No. 42 (Winter 1979/1980): 50.

Ceaușescu, we have already written about the totalitarian character of Romanian leadership, so his opposition was not crucial for the Soviets as well.

However, we should not focus only on the Party leaders. There were many popular protests against the invasion around the world, particularly large in France and Germany. Even in East Germany, 4000 people gathered in Eisenach, small rallies were also held in Moscow and Leningrad. After the police suppression of the demonstrations in Chicago, where the Democratic National Convention before the presidential election took place, there appeared placards with signs “Welcome to Czechago”. Similar spray-paintings were made in Berkeley.³⁸⁹ A Rutgers University student informed the *News and Letters* about a demonstration held by Columbia University SDS group and attended by hundreds of people who marched to the Russian United Nations mission.³⁹⁰ Here, we could mention also the disputes within the CPUSA whose leadership approved the invasion, but some high-ranking members took a stand against it, notably those who had personally visited Czechoslovakia like Californians Dorothy Healey and Al Richmond, the editor of the West Coast Communist newspaper *People’s World*. In this context, there was an interesting story of how Richmond was booed by the audience at the banquet to raise money for the *People’s World* because of his sympathetic position towards Czechoslovak reformers.³⁹¹ The third person in the CPUSA’s National Committee who opposed the invasion was Bettina Aptheker, the daughter of a well-known Communist, Herbert Aptheker, whom Bettina, in the case of Czechoslovakia, challenged for the first time in the Party. “*I argued privately with my father, but he remained immovable in his defense of Soviet policy*”, she remembers. As for Herbert Aptheker, we should mention his two books, *The Truth about Hungary and Czechoslovakia and Counter- Revolution*, in both of which he “*discounted firsthand accounts of the events in question*”.³⁹²

The rejection of the immediate popular opposition to the invasion was typical for the American Communists from the CPUSA since they remembered the breakdown of

³⁸⁹ George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1987), 62-64.

³⁹⁰ “Readers’ Views,” *News and Letters*, October 1968.

³⁹¹ Healey and Isserman, *California Red*, 229, 232, 234.

³⁹² Gary Murrell, “*The Most Dangerous Communist in the United States*”: *A Biography of Herbert Aptheker* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2015), 262.

the Party in 1956. That is why Gus Hall took a vanguard-style anti-popular position. “*We seek ties and close relations with masses, but there are moments when a revolutionary party must take a firm principled stand regardless of its momentary effects on its public image*”, he explains and adds that “*a revolutionary party must have the courage, if necessary, to stand up against a main current*”. He thought they were successful in the CPUSA in this effort in 1968 as he did not see any “*hysterical movement*” of the people as in 1956.³⁹³ Sam Marcy joins this argumentation while warning away from the “*heart-throbbing stories about idealistic people in Czechoslovakia, spiritually crushed by the Warsaw Pact intervention,*” told by liberal capitalists.³⁹⁴

Regarding the differences between 1956 and 1968, several commentators tended to think that there was not such a danger of the capitalist restoration during the Prague Spring as it was in Hungary 1956. It was pointed out that socialism in Czechoslovakia came to power because of the people’s decision³⁹⁵ and that, as especially the dissenting members in the CPUSA said, in 1968 the reforms were initiated by the Communist Party contrary to Hungary or Poland in 1956 where power was “*in the streets, ready to be grabbed by whoever came along*”.³⁹⁶ Also Herbert Marcuse described the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia as more serious act than that of Hungary 1956 since, compared to Hungary, reactionary elements were not present in Czechoslovakia.³⁹⁷ Even Raya Dunayevskaya wrote that, even though the Prague Spring “*may not have reached the heights of Hungarian October 1956 with its Workers' Councils*”, the Czechoslovak experiment came closer to authentic Marxism to which history is dialectically developing “*for unifying Marx's theory of liberation with its practice*”.³⁹⁸

As we can see, the invasion was rejected by a clear majority of Western Marxists, and, especially among the ranks of the student New Left, it also attracted the

³⁹³ Hall, *Czechoslovakia at the Crossroads*, 1-2.

³⁹⁴ Marcy, “Czechoslovakia 1968: The Class Character of the Events,” (Chapter “After the Warsaw Pact intervention”).

³⁹⁵ Leo Huberman, “A Disaster,” *Monthly Review* 20, No. 5 (October 1968): 1.

³⁹⁶ Healey and Isserman, *California Red*, 162, 231-232.

³⁹⁷ Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 203.

³⁹⁸ Raya Dunayevskaya and Harry McShane, “Czechoslovakia: Revolution and Counter revolution,” *News and Letters*, November 1968.

attention of those who were primarily interested in domestic or Third World struggles on Czechoslovakia.³⁹⁹ For those who supported democratization of the Communist regime, even though some of them opposed the economic reforms, the invasion was, as Leo Huberman puts it, a disaster “*from every point of view – morally, politically, ideologically*”. Huberman, in his early reaction to the events, added to a moral condemnation also the analysis of the undemocratic character of actually existing Eastern bloc regimes with their bureaucratization, violation of civil liberties, no opposition press, and “*glorification of the working class in theory, scorn and distrust in practice*”. And because people have been told so many lies, Huberman writes, they do not believe the propagandists even when they rightfully criticize the conditions in the West.⁴⁰⁰ A similarly severe condemnation, while still on socialist grounds, was made by the SWP’s presidential candidate Fred Halstead in *The Militant*. He called the invasion a “*criminal and indefensible deed*”, which “*not only damages and discredits socialism in the eyes of world opinion. It undermines the security of the Soviet Union and the other workers states by weakening the solidarity of the forces of socialism.*”⁴⁰¹

We see that the points of view of the working class and the survival of socialism were central for anti-Stalinist Marxists, especially for the Trotskyists, in their criticism of the invasion and it prevailed over the discourse of national sovereignty etc. The *Bulletin* wrote that the invasion was “*a blow aimed at the Czech working class and against the working class of all countries*” made because the Soviets feared the workers whom the government “*could no longer contain*”.⁴⁰² Similarly, *The Militant* issued a statement by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International which again emphasized the Soviet bureaucrats’ fear of the fact that “*when the workers win these rights (...), they have started down the road to workers-council democracy*”. The statement also demanded the complete withdrawal of all occupation troops and liberation of the Party leaders who were kidnapped and taken to Moscow.⁴⁰³ The *Bulletin*, however, criticized the SWP’s position saying that even though it “*correctly defends the Czech workers (...) its ‘Fourth International’ manifesto is without a word of criticism of Dubcek*”. But

³⁹⁹ Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 207.

⁴⁰⁰ Huberman, “A Disaster,” 1-3.

⁴⁰¹ Fred Halstead, “Soviet troops, go home! U.S., get out of Vietnam,” *The Militant*, August 30, 1968.

⁴⁰² “Soviet Tanks Roll on Czech Workers,” *Bulletin*, September 2, 1968.

⁴⁰³ “Fourth International Czech Manifesto,” *The Militant*, September 6, 1968.

even more sharply Wohlforth in his article targeted the CPUSA and its support for both *“the intervention and the continuation of Dubcek’s ‘liberalization’ policies (...) the combination which represents the greatest threat to the Czech workers”*.⁴⁰⁴ So, even here we can notice quite detailed differences and factional disputes among American Marxists.

In any case, what was praised in Czechoslovakia by most of the authors was the resistance of the Czech people, even though some of them warned away from reducing the question of resistance on the question of national unity without a proper class analysis. Especially the spontaneous and peaceful character of resistance, in which all segments of the population participated was emphasized, most notably by the authors who were closer to the reformists. *“The youth who were supposed to have been interested in nothing but ‘material things’ were laying their lives down for the freedom of their country. ‘The little old ladies’ who were supposed to have lived their lives, were taunting the troops,”* wrote Dunayevskaya for *News and Letters*.⁴⁰⁵ Also writings in the streets of Prague themselves represented various typical discursive figures of the period, calling for national sovereignty and true socialism, like *“Lenin, awake! Brezhnev has gone mad!”*, or *“USA in Vietnam, USSR in Czechoslovakia.”*⁴⁰⁶ The situation in the country was critical since all the main leaders were in Moscow negotiating what later became the Moscow Protocol confirming the invasion. But immediately after the invasion, there was an extraordinary Congress of the CPC at the Vysočany ČKD factory, which opposed the invasion. This was interpreted positively among American Marxists. Andrew Filak writes about *“recognition on the part of the party delegates that they would be safest with the workers — in a factory”*.⁴⁰⁷ In a statement of the International Committee of the Trotskyist Fourth International, they also highlight the resistance organized from the factories *“under the protection of the working class”* and

⁴⁰⁴ Tim Wohlforth, “Dubcek Returns to Czechoslovakia as Soviet Tanks Remain,” *Bulletin*, September 16, 1968.

⁴⁰⁵ Dunayevskaya and McShane, “Czechoslovakia: Revolution and Counter revolution”.

⁴⁰⁶ Mlynář, “From Prague to Moscow: August 1968,” 22.

⁴⁰⁷ Filak, “Total Czechoslovak Unity Defies Russian Invasion to Crush Marxism”.

see in the extraordinary Vysočany Congress “*trends which were tending towards expressing the programme of political revolution*”.⁴⁰⁸

However, the discourse of saving socialism was used also by those who supported the invasion, so we can notice the interpretative clash of the meaning of socialism itself. Rather than connecting the term to the thought of founding fathers of socialism, those who supported the invasion defined socialism geopolitically, in terms of the Cold War. Thus, Gus Hall argues that “no bloc” thinking would endanger the independence of small socialist nations. The only effect of “*doing away with ‘blocs’ in international relations*”, Hall writes, “*is to dismantle the world Socialist family of nations*”. That is why Communists never viewed the right to self-determination “*unconditionally and in all circumstances. Communists have always placed this on a class basis.*”⁴⁰⁹ Such argumentation then allowed not only pro-Soviet Hall, but also the authors like Sam Marcy to accept the invasion even though they blamed the Soviets themselves for being responsible for the alleged Czechoslovak leaning towards capitalism. Insofar as the danger of the transition from socialism to capitalism was concerned, the Soviet military “*steps were progressive and could not be opposed on revolutionary grounds*”, argues Marcy.⁴¹⁰ Also Fidel Castro used the argument of political necessity. For Castro, the Soviet act “*has absolutely no legality*” and therefore “*can be explained only from the political viewpoint*”. The question then is this: “*What are the factors which required a step unquestionably involving a violation of legal principles and of international standards, which have often served as shields for peoples against injustices and are so highly regarded in the world?*” Castro’s answer is the (un-)acceptability of “*the breakdown of a socialist country and its fall into the arms of imperialism*”.⁴¹¹ We should add, however, that Brezhnev’s rhetoric during the negotiations in Moscow after the invasion did not include the phrases about saving socialism but seemed to be a clear example of realpolitik, as Zdeněk Mlynář remembers. Brezhnev neither wasted words “*on a long official speech about the ‘counterrevolutionary forces’ or the ‘interests of socialism’*”, nor did he come up with

⁴⁰⁸ “Imperialism and the Soviet Bureaucracy in Crisis: Political Revolution in Czechoslovakia,” *Fourth International* 5, No. 3 (Winter 1968/1969): 96.

⁴⁰⁹ Hall, *Czechoslovakia at the Crossroads*, 33, 24.

⁴¹⁰ Marcy, “Czechoslovakia 1968: The Class Character of the Events,” (Chapter “Capitalist restoration in Czechoslovakia would mean imperialism in all East Europe”).

words like “sovereignty”, “national independence” or with “common cliches that officially justify the ‘mutual interests of the socialist countries’”. He just emphasized the necessity to submit someone’s opinion to the approval of others. “There was only one simple idea behind everything he said: during the war our soldiers fought their way to the Elbe, and that is where our real Western borders — the Soviet borders — are today,” Mlynář concludes.⁴¹²

We should not forget that the links to geopolitical situation in the world were crucial in the interpretation of the invasion. On the American Left, moreover, there was a frequent discursive point of comparing the Soviet invasion in Czechoslovakia with the American war in Vietnam. Even the anti-war, left-wing oriented Russell Tribunal, after it had condemned the American crimes in Vietnam, held its next conference on the issue of Czechoslovakia in Stockholm in February 1969 and some participants there directly compared the Soviet invasion with the Vietnam War.⁴¹³ Regarding the comparison of these two events, the SWP’s Fred Halstead quite clearly stressed the rejection of any ideological pretext for both invasions: “Moscow’s military intervention can no more be justified by false claims of defending the interests of socialism than Washington’s intervention in Vietnam is justified by its pretext of protecting ‘freedom’.”⁴¹⁴ Therefore, those who opposed both interventions called for a united anti-imperialist front against both the U.S. and Soviet military presence in other countries. So, *News and Letters* called for centering the attention of freedom and anti-war activists also “to the Russian, and not just American, danger”.⁴¹⁵ Such an appeal was reasonable since one reader complained in the next issue that, at the Hemispheric Conference to End the War in Vietnam held in Montreal, a group of Black Panthers did not accept a resolution condemning the Soviet invasion. The reason was that it “would be embarrassing to the Vietnamese delegations”.⁴¹⁶ But the view of the majority of democratic socialist anti-war activists could be summarized by Hal Draper’s statement that the way in which the Americans could help Czechoslovakia is to “put all American troops out of all foreign

⁴¹¹ Castro, “Castro comments on Czechoslovak crisis”.

⁴¹² Mlynář, “From Prague to Moscow: August 1968,” 48-50.

⁴¹³ Pažout, *Mocným navzdory*, 207.

⁴¹⁴ Halstead, “Soviet troops, go home! U.S., get out of Vietnam”.

⁴¹⁵ Dunayevskaya and McShane, “Czechoslovakia: Revolution and Counter revolution”.

⁴¹⁶ “Readers’ Views,” *News and Letters*, December 1968.

countries, Germany particular, and call on Russia to do likewise".⁴¹⁷ So, to conclude, we could say that geopolitical arguments were used in the interpretation of the Soviet invasion as well as ideological or moral ones, but they were not used independently to each other. Thus, geopolitical, ideological, and moral discourses often blended.

⁴¹⁷ Hal Draper, "Czechoslovakia: What Can We Do?" *Independent Socialist*, October 1968.

Conclusion

This work represents an analysis of the turbulent period between 1956 and 1968, which was characterized by substantial changes on the ideological map. Our transnational approach has been based on an assumption that this ideological map could be understood as global, with Marxism as an international language of the Left. On the other hand, however, we have supposed that, given the different character of the regimes in the West and in the East, the interpretation of the key concepts of the period was different as well. In other words, to oppose the regime, or at least try to change the ruling ideology from within, in the West was not a sufficient condition in order to make an alliance with those who played a similar role in the East, and vice versa. The specific era of post-Stalinism gave the authors the concepts and desire for change, but the question of the means was not that clear as we have tried to show especially by the comparison of the American and Czechoslovak contexts.

Our story started in the year 1956 when, after Khrushchev's revelation of Stalinist crimes and the Soviet intervention in Hungary, the Soviet type of Communism was substantially weakened by an atmosphere of disillusionment. Especially the intellectual Communist circles took off the glasses that had not allowed them to see the failures and crimes of Soviet Communism. In the USA, the Communist movement was not strong and gained publicity especially because of the anti-Communist campaigns, but maybe because of its small sectarian character, the events of 1956 damaged the CPUSA even more strongly. In Czechoslovakia, the neo-Stalinist leadership survived the turmoil in Hungary and Poland, so the regime needed another visible failure in order to launch the reforms. This came during the economic crisis around 1963. At that time, even philosophical progress started with Karel Kosík's *Dialektika konkrétního* (1963), the revival of existentialism, and new thoughts on the concept of alienation connected also to Franz Kafka's work.

But the fact that the Soviet Communism ceased to be ideologically inspiring and that there emerged an empty ideological space on the Left does not mean that the Left was dead. On the contrary, there was a possibility to revive the Left in the atmosphere of the ideological uncertainty, which allowed the communists to discuss the foundations of their thought. Typical in this sense was the position of E. P. Thompson who left the British Communist Party but remained on the communist side, still looking for

realization of its positive humanist ideals. Here we could see a common discourse on the global Left with a focus on Man and humanity that was clear of dogmas and connected to a search for authenticity. The young generation of the 1960s rejected the notion of “the end of ideologies” and ideological thinking at the same time. This seemingly contradictory approach could be reconciled in a way that young people were led by their ideals, but also wanted to solve the acute problems of the period without depending on any complex ideological system.

This anti-ideological position in some sense contributed to the flourishing of leftist thought in the 1960s. But it was not only the notion of the post-Stalinist epoch in the sphere of ideology which provided a common space for the thinkers from both the East and the West. There were other problems that went beyond the main ideological differences, like the danger of nuclear war or alienation that existed alongside the scientific-technical progress. Also the rediscovery of young Marx gave a weapon to the critics of both capitalism and the actually existing Communist regimes. In Czechoslovakia, Marx at the same time helped the authors as a legitimizing figure and provided the means of critique. So, they tried to combine him with other philosophical schools, notably existentialism, or to show the link between social turning points based on Marxist humanism and techno-scientific ones, since science was understood as a potentially neutral field. In the West, leftist critical theory sometimes went beyond Marxist assumptions since it worked more with the specific context of affluent society and did not see technical progress as something neutral, but rather as controllable by the ruling political and economic powers. Especially for Marcuse, advanced industrial societies had two features in this sense: “*a trend toward consummation of technological rationality, and intensive efforts to contain this trend within the established institutions*”.⁴¹⁸

Even in Czechoslovakia, however, in the late 1960s finally appeared radical democratic critiques of the regime, present in works of authors like Karel Kosík or, even more strongly, Ivan Sviták. Their essays argued that the focus on science and technocratic solutions was inadequate and targeted it as still bureaucratic, not really democratic. This was, of course, a critique which was shared by Western leftists, either

⁴¹⁸ Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, accessed May 5, 2017, <http://www.marcuse.org/herbert/pubs/64onedim/odmcontents.html> part 1.1.

by the student New Left and the Trotskyists and other anti-Stalinists. But we can say that this Czechoslovak critique came too late to exert influence on the Western Left. In the early 1960s, when the New Left appeared, Western activists did not look for inspiration in bureaucratic neo-Stalinist Czechoslovakia, so they focused rather on the Third World where the developments were more dynamic at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s. And then, in 1968, the New Left was already on the decline and the period of openness in Czechoslovakia too short to be of a substantial influence.

But we can argue that the critique of bureaucracy and the search for authentic socialism based on various forms of participatory democracy where one is not alienated was a common feature of the global 1960s Left. But, as we have mentioned above, the Soviet bloc was not any more inspiring and Khrushchev's policy of "peaceful coexistence" only contributed to the notion that the two superpowers are in their bureaucratic core rather similar than different. So, the leftist activists had two choices to avoid this: to revive local national traditions, or to look to the Third World for inspiration. Of course that there were also critics of the applicability of the Third World's revolutionary enthusiasm to Western conditions, but we can conclude that the American activists referred to the Third World more frequently than the Czechoslovak ones. In the case of Cuba, for example, the inspiration was generally weakening during the 1960s, but lasted longer for those intellectuals who saw in Cuba not only a possible model for non-bureaucratic socialism, but also a part of the anti-imperialist, post-colonial struggle of the Third World. Such intellectuals were more numerous in the West since Czechoslovakia did not have colonial past, and because Czechoslovak intellectuals concentrated on their own socialist experiment in the late 1960s. This experiment combined socialism also with the appeal on national unity and cultural heritage, so the emphasis was rather on the Czechoslovak place in Europe. But also the American New Left adopted the methods of traditional American radicalism while rejecting the democratic centralism of the Old Left.

In any case, the point of view of Three Worlds was present also in some interpretations of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. American leftist commentators on the one hand pointed out that the Soviet Union demonstrated its position as an imperialist power, but, on the other hand, they mentioned that the invasion should be criticized together with the rejection of the American war in Vietnam. Geopolitical arguments even prevailed among the few supporters of the invasion. The CPUSA's Gus

Hall criticized “no bloc” thinking as being dangerous for small socialist nations. Together with Marcy or Castro, they feared that the location of Czechoslovakia next to West Germany could make counterrevolution more probable and bring the country into the imperialist camp.

As we have noted, the existence of similarities among the two superpowers resulted in sharing common issues on the global progressive Left. However, the means to achieve change differed. One of the main differences was over whether to use systemic methods to oppose the regime or whether the change should be radical and qualitative, not merely quantitative. This is connected for example to the question of political rights. However, we should add that these conclusions are necessarily generalized since, as we could see in previous parts of our work, the American and Czechoslovak Left were not homogenous entities, but rather groups with important ideological or generational differences. But we could register that Czechoslovak authors stressed more strongly the importance of political rights like freedom of speech for socialism, and not only for the intellectuals, but also for the workers. It was logical because it was the very lack of these freedoms that people in Czechoslovakia experienced. But maybe it was that they valued such rights as ends in themselves, as Patočka writes, regardless of their actual presence in the legal system. In the USA, on the contrary, some authors felt that people had no political power even when they exercised these rights. That is why philosophers like Marcuse emphasized the notion of the real alternative to repressive consumer society. Such an opposition was moral rather than political when it targeted also the functioning democratic elements of Western societies. This could lead to the impression among people from the East that the Western activists were romantics for whom the revolutionary look is more important than revolutionary ideas. But we should mention that even if they could be skeptical of their own exercise of political rights, the majority of American leftists saw the end of censorship as a major accomplishment of the Prague Spring. Only some of them, however, supported freedom of speech as a value in itself. Especially Trotskyists stressed its particular use for the improvement of the conditions of the working class.

Both Communist and radical critiques of the Prague Spring incorporated the argument that the reforms were not favorable for the Czechoslovak working class. The first one stated that the reforms led Czechoslovakia directly towards capitalism, which, as a system, lacked economic democracy; the second one, formulated for example also

by Ivan Sviták, pointed out that the post-Stalinist ideology was not completely abandoned, so the reformers prevented the Prague Spring from becoming a full-scale experiment. This kind of critique mentions the subservient position of labor in reform proposals and warned about the excessive emphasis on national unity which could overshadow the class character of events. The democratic freedoms for these radical authors did not target the basic structure of the system, i.e. the position of the producing class within it. We can conclude that the interpretation of Czechoslovak events by many leftist authors, particularly the Trotskyists, was determined by their opinion on the impact the events had on the working class. As for the Trotskyists, we can say that this was caused by the fact that they had never really ruled. So, their thought could not degenerate into a bureaucratic one and, therefore, they kept their primary principle about the self-rule of the working class. However, they were not united in their interpretation of the Prague Spring because of their fragmentation and former faction struggles in the USA.

But what was praised in the American leftist press was usually the participation of the working class in resistance, both in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. For example, the fact that the extraordinary Congress of the CPC after the invasion was held in a factory in Vysočany was significant. One of the main goals whose success in Czechoslovakia was highlighted by the Western Left was the formation of the intellectual-worker alliance. But we should add that the context of this formation in Czechoslovakia in 1968 was mainly that of a major crisis which was not the case in the United States where the working class was relatively affluent and, to some extent, had profited from the wartime economy. This situation in the USA even led some New Left thinkers to understand the oppressed minorities or the urban poor, not the workers, as the new proletariat.

However, there is a question to which extent the worker-oriented Western support could really be helpful for the Czechoslovak people because they heard the official slogans about the rule of the workers every day. In Škvorecký's novel *Mirákl*, we could see the failure of Bert Singer's attempt to play worker's songs, a story inspired by Pete Seeger's otherwise successful concerts in Czechoslovakia. The naïve discourse about the working class was less inspiring for the young Czechs and Slovaks than, for example, more counterculture-oriented statements made by Allen Ginsberg during his stay in Czechoslovakia. The point here is that the symbolic meaning of the acts like

raising the red flag was, under the given circumstances, very different in the East and the West. What was a revolutionary act on one side of the Iron Curtain could be a typical act of the regime on the other side. The expression of one's opinion within the other bloc required sensitivity to the local conditions in order not to be understood as a kind of blindness to the problems of others. The progressive or opposition groups, as we have seen, did not agree with their counterparts on the other side of the Iron Curtain automatically, only because of their positions within the regime.

There were also questions like who suffered more or in which bloc the progressive groups went further in their demands. Especially later, those with more clearly anti-Communist views in Czechoslovakia did not accept going beyond "bloc" thinking if it should mean the acknowledgment that the Western democracies had the same repressive core as Eastern regimes. In some sense, however, they did not recognize the specific experiences that the Western leftists had had with their officials and society. Regarding the second question, it seemed that the fact that the Western radicals criticized capitalism that people in Czechoslovakia had not yet achieved would mean that people in the West were further along in their demands. However, other authors, for example Raya Dunayevskaya, argued that the Czechoslovak connection of the theory and practice, of the intellectuals and the workers was something completely new and that it went further than the demands of the Western Left. But finally, we should say that the 1960s, despite all the disagreements we have mentioned, was a period of increased intellectual East-West contacts, which was demonstrated by the quotations from many cultural and analytical periodicals.

Souhrn

Práce se zabývala obdobím mezi lety 1956 a 1968, charakteristickým pro výrazné změny na světové ideologické mapě, především na levici. V naší analýze teoretických i publicistických textů americké a československé levice jsme se zabývali především marxistickou levicí, vzhledem k chápání marxismu jako globálního jazyka, což umožnilo transnacionální přístup k tématu. Hlavní otázkou bylo, zda na základě existence společných problémů a výzev doby v 60. letech 20. století byly důležité ideologické koncepty interpretovány podobně levicí jak na Východě, tak na Západě. Vzhledem k zaměření práce především na anti-stalinistickou levici, která v 60. letech oponovala zároveň rigidnímu komunismu východního bloku i konzumnímu kapitalismu na Západě, nás zajímalo, zda zaměření kritiky na podobná celosvětově rezonující témata znamenalo též podobná řešení problémů. Nebo byly důležitější spíše rozdíly mezi režimy, které levice 60. let kritizovala, a které znamenaly rozdíly v jejím diskurzu na Východě a na Západě?

V našem zkoumání post-stalinské epochy jsme začali v roce 1956 Chruščovovým odhalením stalinských zločinů na 20. sjezdu Komunistické strany Sovětského svazu a sovětským potlačením maďarského povstání v témže roce. Tyto události vytvořily na levici celého světa atmosféru deziluze. Komunistická strana USA (CPUSA), která byla výrazně napojena na Moskvu, ztratila mnoho členů a intelektuální podpora sovětského komunismu výrazně oslabil. V Československu, kde se komunistické vedení v roce 1956 udrželo, přišly reformy i výraznější intelektuální oživení až v 60. letech. Především šlo o propojení marxismu s jinými filozofickými proudy, zvláště existencialismem, či vnesení tržních prvků do rigidního systému plánovaného hospodářství. Každopádně však po roce 1956 Sovětský svaz definitivně přestal ve světě být důležitou ideologickou inspirací.

To však neznamenalo útlum levicového myšlení jako takového. Naopak, začaly se znovu promýšlet jeho základy a možnosti dosažení humanistických ideálů. Společnými tématy globální intelektuální levice se staly přístup k člověku a lidstvu očištěný od ideologických dogmat a hledání autenticity. Odmítnuto bylo jak zkostratělé ideologické myšlení, ale zároveň i depolitizující myšlenka „konce ideologií“, což znamenalo stálou důležitost levicových ideálů, ale zároveň možnost řešit akutní problémy doby bez lpění na komplexním ideologickém systému. Témata jako nebezpečí

nukleární války nebo odcizení existující i přes výrazný technický pokrok šla za rámec rozdílů mezi studenoválečnými režimy. Důležité v tomto ohledu bylo například znovuobjevení spisů mladého Marxe, který v Československu posloužil jako vhodný prostředek kritiky režimu, jelikož byl Marx zároveň režimem uznáván jako zakladatel komunismu. Na Západě autoři jako Herbert Marcuse sice vycházeli z marxistických základů, ovšem překonali je v tom, že pracovali se specifickým kontextem společnosti dostatku a nechápali tak ani vědecko-technický pokrok jako něco neutrálního, jako tomu bylo do určité míry mezi československými reformními technokraty, ale naopak ovládaného politickými a ekonomickými silami.

I v Československu se ale autoři jako Karel Kosík a především Ivan Sviták začali přiklánět k radikálně demokratickému socialismu a posun od ideologie stalinismu k vědecky zaměřeným technokratickým řešením chápali jako přetrvávající nadvládu byrokracie. V tomto typu kritiky se shodovali ze západní Novou levicí, případně s trockisty. Mohli jsme pozorovat podobnosti kritiky všeobecné manipulovatelnosti a všeobecné obchodovatelnosti, jak označuje trendy v obou studenoválečných blocích Karel Kosík. Nicméně v Československu se toto myšlení prosadilo až na konci 60. let, tedy vcelku pozdě na to, aby západní levici výrazněji inspirovalo. Experiment Pražského jara byl zase příliš brzy přerušen invazí vojsk Varšavské smlouvy. V roce 1968 navíc také západní Nová levice přestávala být jednotná a začínal její úpadek. Během většiny 60. let se však západní levice, chápajíc země východního bloku jako byrokratické a neinspirativní, poohlížela po vzorech spíše buď v tradicích domácího radikalismu, nebo ve Třetím světě. I když například kubánská revoluce na samotném začátku 60. let zajímala i československé autory, můžeme inspiraci Třetím světem vidět spíše u západních autorů, jelikož Československo nemělo koloniální minulost a později se soustředilo na svou vlastní cestu k socialismu. Hledisko dělení na tři studenoválečné světy bylo přítomné i v některých amerických interpretacích invaze vojsk Varšavské smlouvy do Československa v srpnu 1968, kdy například američtí komentátoři často srovnávali invazi s americkou válkou ve Vietnamu. I argumenty amerických zastánců sovětské invaze byly především geopolitického charakteru udržení jednotnosti socialistického tábora.

Jak jsme však už naznačili, rozdílný charakter vlád na Západě a ve východním bloku vedl také k rozdílům mezi západními a východními kritiky studenoválečných režimů. Odlišnosti jsme mohli spatřit v tom, zda má kritika být systémová či

antisystémová či v důrazu na důležitost politických práv, byť samozřejmě nemůžeme o americké či československé levici hovořit jako o jednolitéch skupinách. V každém případě však anti-stalinská levice v Československu zdůrazňovala politická práva více, vzhledem k jejich reálné absenci v československé společnosti. Na americké levici jsme mohli být naopak svědky skepse z toho, že ani aktivní využívání politických práv nevedlo ke zdatelné společenské změně. Proto západní autoři více promýšleli i takové formy kritiky, které zpochybňovaly i standardní demokratické prostředky. Takováto kritika se stávala v určitém smyslu spíše morální než politickou, jelikož cílila i na fungující prvky západních demokracií. Zároveň, zvláště v Marcuseho podání, cílila spíše na potřeby člověka samotné než na institucionální rámec jejich uspokojování. To občas mezi lidmi z Východu vyvolávalo dojem, že západním radikálům jde spíše o revoluční vzhled než o revoluční ideje. Na druhé straně však musíme zmínit, že, byť skeptická k vlastnímu uplatňování politických práv, většina západní levice chápala například zrušení cenzury jako jeden z hlavních úspěchů Pražského jara. Otázkou však bylo, zda šlo o chápání svobody slova jako svébytného cíle nebo jako prostředku ke zlepšení situace dělnické třídy, jak to viděli například trockisté.

Důležitým levicovým hlediskem v hodnocení československých reforem byl jejich dopad na dělnickou třídu. V tomto ohledu byly reformy Dubčekova stranického vedení kritizovány jak komunistickými dogmatiky, tak radikálními socialistickými demokraty. Zatímco ti první viděli v reformách směřování Československa ke kapitalismu, ti druzí kritizovali nedostatečnou demokratizaci a přetrvávání byrokratického vládnutí a post-stalinské ideologie. V Československu tuto druhou pozici zastával Ivan Sviták, jeden z nejvýznamnějších opozičních hlasů roku 1968. Reformy podle radikálů neměnily základní systémové struktury a postavení výrobních tříd v systému, přičemž představa národní jednoty jen zakrývala třídní charakter událostí. Toto byl také trockistický pohled, který na prvním místě zdůrazňoval princip dělnické samosprávy, což mohlo být dáno i tím, že trockisté nikde na světě opravdu nevládli, takže jejich myšlení nebylo ovlivněno reálným ustavením byrokratické třídy. Ovšem ani američtí trockisté nebyli jednotní ve výkladu československých událostí, což ukazuje na jejich frakční roztržitost. Co však bylo obecně vyzdvihováno, byl odpor pracující třídy proti okupačním vojskům či fakt, že mimořádný sjezd Komunistické strany Československa se konal ve vysočanské továrně ČKD, tedy na dělnické půdě. Podobně bylo Československo roku 1968 inspirací pro úspěšné vytvoření spojení

dělníků a intelektuálů, což bylo sice posíleno krizovou situací po invazi, nicméně oproti americkému kontextu s konzervativní dělnickou třídou to byl pro levici pokrok. V USA naproti tomu zvláště Nová levice cílila na menšiny či městskou chudinu, což bylo dáno i zmíněným morálním charakterem protestu, jelikož dělnická třída byla se svými materiálními podmínkami do značné míry spokojená.

Na druhé straně však vyvstává otázka, nakolik byla tato na dělníky cílená rétorika západní levice inspirativní pro Československo, jelikož lidé zde dennodenně slychávali oficiální režimní slogany o důležitosti dělnické třídy. Naivní dělnicky orientovaný diskurz, představený například v *Mirácku* Josefa Škvoreckého ve scéně popisující koncert Berta Singera, inspirované jedním z československých koncertů Peta Seegera v roce 1964, se zvláště mezi mladými příliš neujal. Jiné Seegerovy písně, zvláště ty o svobodě, však ano, stejně jako vystoupení představitelů kontrakultury jako byl třeba Allen Ginsberg. Podobně můžeme poukázat na symbolický význam aktů, jako bylo například vyvěšení rudé vlajky, jejichž vyznění mohlo být na Západě revoluční, avšak na Východě šlo o režimní kolorit. Cestování přes Železnou oponu a vyjadřování se na její druhé straně tedy vyžadovalo značnou citlivost k místním podmínkám, což platilo na obou stranách. Kritické hlasy na Východě a na Západě spolu nemusely najít společnou řeč ani tehdy, pokud poukazovaly na v jádru podobný charakter obou supervelmocí.

Vyvstávala zde také otázka o míře utlačivosti toho kterého režimu, kdy například autoři, kteří začali zastávat přísněji antikomunistické pozice, odmítli akceptovat, že by západní demokracie byly v jádru podobně represivní jako komunistické režimy. Specifickou zkušenost západní levice a její kritiku kapitalistických společností tak uznávali spíše obtížně. Konečně pak zaznělo i hodnocení toho, kde byla levice ve svých požadavcích dále. Zatímco z jednoho pohledu mohla být kritika západního kapitalismu kritikou něčeho, čeho v Československu ještě nedosáhli, někteří představitelé marxistického humanismu, jakou byla například Raya Dunayevskaya, naopak vyzdvihli jako významný nový prvek československé propojení teorie a praxe či právě spolupráci dělníků s intelektuály. Nicméně i přes všechny zmíněné rozdílnosti a neshody se 60. léta ukázala jako období rozkvětu intelektuálního setkávání a proudění myšlenek přes Železnou oponu, a to oběma směry, jak jsme dokázali množstvím citací z různých knih, periodik či vzpomínek.

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