

Eastern Europe, cont'd

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What, then, are we to make of that great passion of 1956? Or, to put it in other terms: How, really, are we to evaluate this very tumultuous movement that was mounted by workers and mounted by students and mounted by intellectuals in Poznań, and in Warsaw, and in Budapest in 1956? A movement, if you please, to try to construct another kind of socialism; a socialism which should bear the print of the hand of those very people that were making this movement; a socialism which should echo, after all, with their voices and their participation. What are we to make of this tremendous movement of 1956?

In the short term, the lessons that we draw from it are extremely sobering. In the first place, of course, that reform within the system — reform that meant, after all, a certain kind of toleration on the part of the bureaucratic regime; reform which meant a certain humanization of the Communist parties; reform which meant a certain liberalization of the institutions — that that reform within the system was not only possible, but really inevitable. It was inevitable all during the period of the 1950s, and certainly during the period of the 1960s, that the regimes would get, in a sense, more liberal and more tolerant. But the second conclusion or lesson that we draw is equally sobering. And that is that transcendence — the idea of going beyond the system; of trying to construct another kind of socialism in that Eastern space which, after all, had followed the Soviet model — that kind of transcendence which should see power devolve into the hands of those masses who were the working class masses really became well-nigh impossible. That was doomed to defeat. That's certainly the short-range interpretation.

But in the long range, let me point out something to you: that, in the long range, I remain about events of that kind, rather more tentative, and rather less willing to draw firm conclusions. If you stop to think of it, what was done in 1956 in Budapest and in Warsaw was like an echo of all kinds of movements that had gone before in the history of the working class: movements, really, for a certain kind of control by the people over their destiny. It is an echo, if you please, of the sans-culottes in their sections of 1792 and '93 in France; it is an echo of the communards of 1871 in Paris; it is an echo of the communards of Kronstadt in 1921. What I am saving is that, in the long term, in the long duration, you have to look at those events of 1956 as part of a human movement — part of a movement, after all, that has had an amazing kind of continuity. And you have to think, in the second place, that when those movements died, they are not buried once and for all. They become, if you please, like seeds beneath the snow, and in proper climate they

begin to flower again. You cannot read out of history altogether, or dismiss completely, the terms of that uprising of 1956.

But in the immediate historic present, what it meant really was that there would be slow change, calculated change, controlled change in Eastern Europe. We have seen it in Poland. And I have told you that the Poland of [Władysław] Gomułka was, after all, a Poland which tried to co-opt the very revolutionary aspects of the uprising of Warsaw of October of 1956. What you get in the immediate aftermath, under Gomułka and in his Poland, is a regime that is politically more tolerant; in which the police are really reigned in somewhat; in which there is greater freedom of speech and in which there is sudden upturn of the economy; in which the economic plan, which has been so very centralized, now goes into the hands of the great Oskar Lange. And Lange begins to decentralize the Polish economy, so that they are the enterprises themselves that begin to determine what should be invested and what the conditions of work should be within their plants. And consequently, you begin to get something that looks better.

And then it doesn't last. And it is a very short duration, this liberalization in Poland, because the economy goes badly by 1960. And the plan, which had been decentralized, wasn't working. And, consequently, it was an old Stalinist who comes once again to be the minister of production. And once again you centralize. And there are discontents as the standard of living goes down. And you know what that means. What it means is that Gomułka's Poland from 1960 on becomes increasingly more repressive, that the regime becomes more arbitrary, that there is less of that freedom that was granted immediately.

And who, then, are the victors? The victors in Poland, if you please, are all of those forces that have nothing to do with socialism. The victors were those peasants, after all, who were permitted to hold onto their individual plots and not to have to go into collective forms. That was certainly part of the co-optation of Gomułka. The victors are also those petty tradesmen who are permitted now to expand the private sector of the economy. The victors, if you please, are those Catholic prelates, the Catholic Church in Poland, that begins to make a comeback after 1956. And the victor, surely — the bureaucrats of the regime who lasted and survived, while those who made the mass movement did not.

And, you see, it is important to understand that. And I read to you from the incredibly precise and incredibly incisive document called "Open Letter to the Polish Communist Party," which was written by Jacek Kuroń and [Karol] Modzelewski in 1965, two young Communists who were put into prison for writing this open letter, who went right to the heart of the matter — who said that "we had a revolution going and somehow we couldn't carry it through. Somehow or other the new socialism that we wanted, failed."

And they put it this way: "The only chance for the development of the revolution in 1956 was for the masses to develop a wholly new socialist schema and to organize a movement around that program, to fight not only against the old Stalinist but also against the liberal or reforming bureaucrats that were bound to co-opt their agitation and their demands by promises and gifts from above. At the decisive moment, the left-wing avant-garde — the revolutionary Communists — failed to develop such a program, didn't organize a genuine revolution, but gave its support to the liberal Gomułka. In that way, the left contributed to its own death and the defeat of the revolution.

By the spring of 1957, at the 9th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish Communist Party, their defeat was already foreshadowed. For Gomułka and the Party bureaucrats launched a two-front struggle for Party unity: that is, the crushing of dissidents and against the workers' councils, now denounced by Gomułka as anarchist utopias. By the fall of 1957, the Party had crushed the tramway strike of Łódź, after which it liquidated the newspaper *Po prostu*, and then dispersed the mass demonstrations in Warsaw on the 4th to the 7th of November of 1957. By 1958, it placed the already moribund workers' councils under the direct control of the Party through the agency of the controlled trade unions. And the revolutionary gains of October were now gone. The mobilization of economic resources and the temporary upturn of real wages meant that the reform bureaucracy enjoyed a period of stability. But then, by 1960, the economy was dragging, and the crisis of Polish society could be contained only by repression." And, in a sense, Kuroń and Modzelewski put their finger right at the point.

But there is a question that they raise. And it's one that I want to throw out to you because it really goes to the heart of the question of the instrumentalities of change. Because what Kuroń and Modzelewski say in their critique is that fundamentally you have to go outside of these bureaucratic Communist parties to launch another instrumentality that really will transcend the particular structure. Now, in the first place, if you recognize what kind of a context is necessary for that to work in Eastern Europe, it means, after all, that you will have a class struggle in the Soviet Union — in other words, that you will have a movement mounted in the Soviet Union that in some manner can contain its own bureaucratic ruling class. And it means, secondly, that you will have some kind of support in Eastern Europe — that there will be an internationalization of this struggle — so that in East Germany or in Hungary or in Romania or Bulgaria there will be some kind of support for this. Because if that doesn't exist, then the fate of such an effort will surely be the fate that Hungary suffered or that Czechoslovakia will suffer in August of 1968, namely, the intervention of the Warsaw Pact. That, of course, goes without saying.

But the second point that really is raised, is that there is something very fundamental about raising the question of whether these Communist parties can be reformed, or whether they are so rooted in that conception of a bureaucratic ruling class that nothing you do will change, really,

the power of those that control the Party. And I point out to you, parenthetically, that for those in Europe especially and in the Third World, who are either Communist or who consider that option, this question is uppermost in the minds of those who are really revolutionaries. Jean Chesneaux, a professor of Chinese history in the Sorbonne, for example, was for over twenty years a member of the French Communist Party, until finally Chesneaux came to that point in 1968, in the period of the May uprising in Czechoslovakia, when he saw the Party as really a counter-revolutionary instrument. Then he did what it has been so damnably difficult to do, not only because the Party is *la grande famille*, but because they wonder if they can ever build anything to cope with the strength of that particular instrumentality. And so Chesneaux used to say all the time, "You Americans are so very lucky because you have no Party and, consequently, you can start fresh." It always seemed to me that what we had, really, was a desert; he welcomed it as a great green prairie, because you can grow anything on it and there weren't these institutional barriers or these institutional traditions. But it really does raise that question, very fundamentally, and certainly Kuroń and Modzelewski raised it in terms of the possibility of change in these East European areas. And so you get that in Poland.

In Hungary, you get the crushing of the revolution. And yet — curiously enough, although perfectly explicable — the results were actually better for the Hungarians than they were for the Poles. In Poland, the regime got increasingly conservative, increasingly apathetic. It's the Poland, parenthetically, that I know: the Poland of the 1960s, which I have visited three times; a Poland in which I have young intellectual friends, all of whom are absolute models of cynicism — all of whom are sitting there, really, dying on the line. And even in 1968, in March, they did in Gomulka because even he wasn't repressive enough. But the Hungarians came out better after the crushing of their revolution, because — back to the point I made at the beginning — the change within the structure is not only possible but inevitable, so that you don't go back to the regime of [Mátyás] Rákosi at all. Kádár, for example: János Kádár, who becomes the strong man of Hungarian communism, is no Rákosi. He, after all, had become the First Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party when Imre Nagy was the prime minister. And he had approved the movement of the 23rd of October of 1956. And it's only on the 4th of November of 1956, that he steps in and deposes Nagy and takes over the job of prime minister himself and combines it with his role of First Secretary. And the reason for that is because Kádár is a very good Communist. And, consequently, what he sees is the danger that the power may flow out of the hands of the Party.

Because, in the days before the 4th of November, it was incredible under Nagy. And you do get those workers' councils in the factories, and they do begin to oppose the planners and the bureaucrats. And you do get the multiplication of parties so that there are other socialist parties that come into the field. And finally, on the 3rd of November, you have Nagy denouncing the Warsaw Pact and saying that Hungary will be neutral in the Cold War struggle.

No, no. Kádár steps in. But, when he steps in on the 4th of November, after all, he steps in with a speech which indicates that you will not go all the way back. He does not disavow what he calls the "mass movement" unleashed on the 23rd of October, but he speaks of "the noble ends of remedying the crimes committed by Rákosi and his henchmen and of defending the independence of the country." And so, when he tells why he is calling in the Soviet army, why he is calling in Soviet tanks on the 4th of November, he explains it as a good Communist. He called in the Soviet army, he said, in the name of the Warsaw Pact, "to crush the sinister, reactionary forces which have appeared." In other words, those forces which Kádár was afraid might really catapult Hungary back into the old regime or into the arms of the West.

There was a certain danger, but that's not the whole truth at all. Because once the Soviet army did its job — once it had ten days of repression and simply subdued that revolution — at that point, you see, Kádár is still repressive against those forces that show another vision of socialism. Because it is on the 14th of November of 1956 that there is founded in Budapest the Central Workers' Council of Grand Budapest. And that is a central council, combining delegates of all of the workers' councils that have gone up spontaneously in the factories. And you see what it wants. It wants a chance for the workers to run the plants. And more than that, it wants to be very much another fulcrum of power. It wants to be like the Petrograd Soviet in 1917; it wants to be a lower house of the parliament — in other words, it wants power to devolve to the people who work. And Kádár fights it. And by the beginning of December of 1956, he has had it with those people. And the heads of that Council of Budapest are arrested, and the literally thousands of young students and militants and workers who were put into prison in December of '56 and January of '57 had nothing to do with counter-revolution; they had to do with another vision of socialism. And the police came back. And the freedom that had been won in October was suddenly vanishing.

And then things got better for the Hungarians. Within the system, they got better. And Kádár stabilized his regime. And he stabilized it in three very interesting ways because his is much more successful than Gomulka, and Hungary is a much more reasonable place in which to live than Poland. And he stabilized it, in the first place, because the economy got better in Hungary. It got better in part because of Soviet credits, in part because of a sharp drop in the military budget, so that not nearly so much was expended for that. And by 1960, the per capita income of the Hungarian population is 30% higher than it had been in 1956.

And I make a parenthesis here. And I tell you something that is really on my mind. Because, quite obviously, in these East European countries (and that includes the Soviet Union), you cannot gainsay the material gains. Nor is the question whether, for the regimes that were established and that evolved, whether those regimes were to be preferred, for example, to the old

regime. No question that they were better social and economic orders. They began to get these countries beyond the barrier of underdevelopment; they made them average industrial states, after all, with a certain potentiality for economic expansion. Or is there the question of whether it would have been better for those Eastern states to be within the ambit of Western imperialism. We know what that means for the Third World: we know that there is never any kind of adequate development. The question is not there. These regimes stand, certainly in comparison, very well. The question is other: it is the quality of socialism. It is the question of what kind of socialist life is built within the framework of this particular model.

It is this economic stabilization which gives Kádár a chance to liberalize the regime. Secondly, it is the accommodation to the regime of the Hungarian intelligentsia, an intelligentsia which in the 1960s knew damn well that the best it could get was a liberal Kádár regime and began to collaborate with it. And, in the third place, a certain co-optation of the reactionary forces that remained in Hungary — by permitting, for example, the children of the old bourgeoisie to go into the universities which they had been forbidden to do, or permitting the kulaks who had been ousted from their land to enter the collective farms (and they had not been permitted to do that). And little by little those groups that had been so hostile began to accommodate to the regime. And it isn't so hot in Hungary, but it's better than it was. And it changes that way, slowly. And maybe that's what life is about. (Hopefully not.)

And it changes even more slowly in Czechoslovakia. Oh, well, Czechoslovakia! That, after all, is [Antonín] Novotný. And Novotný is the president, Novotný is the First Secretary. We don't like Novotný. And he was a Stalinist and very tyrannical. And there was practically no change in Czechoslovakia in '56 or '57 or '58. In other words, things really moved very slowly or didn't move at all.

And finally they began to move, and within the system again. And they began to move in 1963, and that because of an economic crisis in Czechoslovakia. And note that point — it's rather a curious one — and it is that, in Hungary, the stabilization and the liberalization came because the economy got better. In Czechoslovakia, the changes came because the economy got worse. And a crisis really built in, and the Novotný dictatorial regime really had to begin to make concessions. And this is the problem: in 1960, the rate of economic growth in Czechoslovakia is of the order of 12%. By the time you get to 1962, it is of the order of 6%. By the time you get to 1963, it is less than 5%. You see what the problem is: the problem is that the Czech economy is grinding down into a stagnation.

Now, the explanation for that is twofold. It is, in the first place, the particular advantage that the Czech economy had right on the morrow of the Second World War — you had the only advanced industrial country, really, in the Eastern bloc — and, consequently, it rested on its

laurels, very much like Great Britain within the Commonwealth bloc or the sterling bloc. So you get the Czech selling their industrial goods to Russia and to the other Eastern countries and getting raw materials and food that they need very easily. But, you see, by about 1960, a turn comes. They can no longer live on their legacy. They haven't used their advantage to modernize their plant; they have used it, really, to improve their productivity. By about 1960, the Russians are producing what they need industrially. In the other Eastern countries there are industrial plants, and these countries prefer to buy better and cheaper goods from the West than to buy from Czechoslovakia. What you have, by 1963, is a decline in the rate of growth; you have a decline in real wages; you have shortages of food and raw materials. They have an economic crisis and a generalized malaise.

And it's within that framework that the Czech intellectuals begin to speak. And when they speak, they really speak magnificently. They speak like desperados: like men and women who, after all, had believed in 1945, and now really have to speak out about what they have endured. And so in March of 1963, there is a meeting of the Czech Writers' Union. And at that Czech Writers' Union, there is a resolution passed which says, "The writers are the living conscience of the nation." And so the writers will speak out. And at that very Congress you have Milan Kundera. And Kundera was a magnificent writer, really someone who should be much more known in the United States, someone who has really something to say about the evolution of Communist societies. And Kundera says at that Writers Congress, "In the name of realism, they have prevented us from depicting reality. In the name of the cult of youth, they have prevented us from being young. In the name of socialist joy, they have repressed joyousness." What else can you say about a system!

But what is interesting with this literary attack: there is also an attack by the technical intelligentsia. And note that well. Because if you ask the question, "What is the class struggle in Eastern Europe? Is there a class struggle? What are the sources of it?" — then you must pose, after all, the bureaucratic class as a class. You must pose it as detaining power in its hands. And against that ruling class are only three possibilities. And only by a unity of those three foci will there ever be any kind of an effective movement. And it's precisely that unity that you got in Czechoslovakia in 1968. It is the literary intelligentsia: those who demand, after all, a freer society. It is the technical intelligentsia: those who are the technocrats and who see how the bureaucrats, really, are messing up the economic and social development of the country; they're the people, in other words, with a scientific criteria. And then there are the workers. And it's only when there are these three interests that come into combination that you really can have an effective struggle mounted against what constitutes, really, the detainer of the political and the social power within the framework of these Eastern countries.

And so you get the technical intelligentsia beginning to speak up in the person of the economists.

The economists who say that the plan is lousy in Czechoslovakia, it is too centralized. And so it is Ota Šik. And Ota Šik becomes the chief of the Economic Institute of the Academy of Sciences in Czechoslovakia. And Ota Šik makes a new model for the economy: says that it must be decentralized, that you cannot make all decisions at the center; says furthermore that you must begin to have some relationship to the market; must know what the needs and the wants of people are; must let the law of supply and demand somewhat play; must pay your technicians better. Call that market liberalism, but the point is the Ota Šik was trying to make that economy work, to break through its particular bottlenecks.

And so the regime had to begin to respond. And Novotný responded as little as he could. And he made a few desultory measures, hoping he could contain the criticism. But, you see, once the criticism began, it was very difficult to contain it. And the crisis in Czechoslovakia comes in 1967 and '68.

And it comes in '67. If you look at it really carefully, it comes in '67 as the legacy of two things: as the result of the fact that Czechs have been making contact with the outside world. They've had an easier time in traveling, in seeing other parts of Europe. And, consequently, they begin to criticize their own society: to say, "If we are socialists, why are we lagging so far behind these capitalist societies?" And it is that kind of comparison which becomes a point of critique. But it is something else: it is the effort on the part of the Novotný regime, again, to make cultural repression in 1967. Now, you must remember something, and that is that Khrushchev fell from power in the Soviet Union in October of 1964, and the present leadership of [Leonid] Brezhnev and [Alexei] Kosygin replaced him. And in the ambit of that replacing of Khrushchev, there is a hardening of the line against the intelligentsia in Russia. The one thing the Russians really try to avoid is a kind of criticism from the intelligentsia...

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... so that Novotný in 1967 appoints a real tough, Havlíček, as the minister of culture [*Goldberg is likely referring here to Karel Hoffmann*], who begins to censor and oppress the works of art, which productivity had become freer, and the writers now are beside themselves. And they are real desperados in 1967.

And so they hold their famous meeting on the 29th of June of 1967, their Writers' Congress. And at that Writers' Congress, they demand a frontal attack upon the bureaucratic ruling class, upon those who are the detainers of power. And that's when you get the magnificent intervention of [Ludvík] Vaculík. Now, Vaculík becomes important in this whole story because Vaculík, again, is a novelist and really a very, very brave man. And Vaculík, expelled from the Party as a matter of fact, for the intervention that he make in June of '67. And in that speech he said, in part, "The

greatest crime of the system," and note this well, "is to have turned a nation of sentient citizens into a herd of sheep, frightened, and without the slightest personality." And so the writers say they will not accept, they will not agree to this repression.

But the leadership has the idea of simply censoring them to death. It is Novotný's idea to deny them, for example, newsprint, to deny them funds to publish their papers and their magazines. And then comes the crucial turning point because it's in the Central Committee in Czechoslovakia that Novotný begins to get very real opposition. And that opposition begins to center around the head of the Slovak Communist Party, a man named Alexander Dubček. And Dubček begins to lead, in the Central Committee meetings, an attack upon this Stalinist repression of Novotný. And the October 30th to 31st Central Committee meeting in '67, it becomes almost a showdown: Will Novotný be able to continue as the First Secretary of the Party? And it is all put over to the Central Committee meeting of the 3rd of January of 1968. And I tell you that both factions organized, and they organized like hell. And Novotný went to the workers, and he said, "You see these writers and intellectuals? What they want is to turn Czechoslovakia over to the Americans, over to the bourgeoisie." And he appealed to the Russians. And the Russians began to make demands and overtures to certain Czech generals who, after all, might march upon Prague. And so there was organization, but it didn't work.

And the 3rd of January of 1968, an historic date in contemporary Czech history: a stormy meeting of the Central Committee, and the result is that Novotný is placed in the minority. And Dubček replaces him as First Secretary of the Czech Communist Party. And it is the same Dubček who had said in the *Pravda* of Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, on the 31st of December of 1967, "We have arrived at a historical turning point when the problem is to create qualitatively a new socialism." And the same Dubček who was to say in a radio speech, after his investiture in February of 1968, "The Party exists for the working people. It must never live over their heads; it must never dominate above society; it must mix in and be a part of society and nothing else."

And for the supporters of Novotný who were still in the Central Committee, they warned. They warned that, at the end of March of 1968, that the regime would collapse. And there was a Novotný supporter who said at that last Central Committee meeting in March of '68, and he said, "Terrible things are happening. Workers are throwing their managers out of the plant, and they are spitting at bureaucrats, and the system will collapse." (Yay!)

And that wasn't the danger. The danger, of course: the Russians and the Warsaw Pact. And the Russians had tried to intervene in December to save Novotný, and hadn't been able to. And the Warsaw Pact did meet, on the 6th of March of 1968, in the city of Sofia in Bulgaria. And there they were the East Germans, in particular [Walter] Ulbricht, who said, "Terrible things are

happening in Czechoslovakia because at this very moment; the Federal Republic of Germany, West Germany, is planning an attack on the East. And will the Warsaw Pact remain intact? Or will Czechoslovakia fall away?" And, on the 23rd of March of 1968, that Warsaw Pact met again in Dresden. And this time Dubček was told categorically to stop the procedure toward democratization in Czechoslovakia and to permit the Warsaw Pact to maintain troops on Czech soil to show his good will. And the 12th of April of 1968, in the *Pravda*, the Russians said that the people around Dubček are anti-socialist. There is where the danger was.

So we stop momentarily to ask two questions, and two questions really that begin to dig into what it is that the reality of this East European space is. We ask the first question about what kind of socialism developed within the framework of the system. What kind of socialism developed outside of a revolution within a revolution, within this slow change? And we ask the second question of whether there have been viable alternatives to that?

And the first question we cannot really respond to in great detail, but let me note several things to you. Within the framework of the reform of the system, the police regime has become lighter. The politics have become more liberal. But, mainly, the material achievement has been very real. If you take, for example, the per capita income of the Eastern bloc in 1964, it was \$900 — in comparison, to be sure, to the \$1,400 per capita income in the nine countries of Western Europe. But think of the levels at which they had started. And consider, in the second place, that the plan really had changed in every one of the Eastern countries; that you had moved, as we say, from the stage of quantitative growth to the stage of qualitative growth. In the stage of quantitative growth — when you simply had to plant the infrastructure, when you simply had to plant the heavy industries — the centralized plan, with all its mistakes, worked.

But when you got within the whole circuit of the international economy, when you had really to improve your technology to be able to compete on the world market, you needed a more sophisticated plan. And that begins to develop from about 1963 on in all of these countries. Listen to what István Friss, who is a distinguished Hungarian economist, says in 1963: "The activities of all economic units of a country cannot be controlled by a central organization. Economic decisions can be made only on the basis of precise knowledge of local conditions and of the resources in technology and skills." And so you began to get a decentralization, you begin to get market factors — in a sense, incentive factors — beginning to build into the economic program. And the economy really begins to work better. All of that certainly must be said.

But then the problems. And the problem is: Is it socialism? Or what is socialism? The problem is, after all, that you do have — if you define it in terms of the holding of power — you do have a ruling class in those particular countries: what [Milovan] Djilas, in a celebrated book called *The New Class*, was talking about the bureaucratic holders of power. You do have what

[Edward] Osóbka, the ideologue in Poland, was to call "a power elite that benefited from a privileged political and social position." And, consequently, you don't have an equalitarian society or a society in which people really relate to each other in their social and political relationships in any way that conforms to a socialist definition. Or consider, in the second place, that you get an expansion of the private sector of the economy. Something that really becomes increasingly conspicuous in these economic models in the East. I'm talking, in part, about two countries like Yugoslavia and Poland where you still have the small peasant proprietor, where they really predominate in agriculture. I'm talking about the rebirth of artisans and very small shopkeepers in order to provide certain services which really had broken down. But I'm talking about something more than that. I'm talking about the growth of a tertiary sector, about people who are in transport, people who are in hotel keeping, people who are in tourism. What I'm talking about is the fact that something happens to a socialist ethos when you have the possibility of going into small business for yourself and making much more of a killing when you have even the possibility of employing labor. And all of that, you see, comes to exist. And it reaches its point of culmination even with foreign investment — a foreign investment which becomes a reality from 1967 on in a country like Yugoslavia.

So, in the final analysis, what I am talking about when I talk about this model is ideology — or, I suppose, the end of ideology. And I've been on this quest for quite some time. And I've asked all kinds of East Europeans, you know, playing a little bit the devil's advocate: "Aren't you creating new socialist men and women? Is it going to be just the same: that the state owns things, or that maybe a group of workers in a given factory owns that, but the whole objective of living becomes the same acquisitive objective, or the same material objective? Is that really what it's all about?" The question that I have asked over and over again is the question that was put extraordinarily well by someone who was to bemoan the course of events in Yugoslavia, [Marjan] Rožanc, the writer, who said, "It is now clear that Communists don't sacrifice themselves for a collective future, but that they work for themselves, for their own interests. And that beautiful unity in the struggle of our war of liberation is gone. In this Communist paradise, men and women stand alone like dogs." Well, that's an awful thing to say. It's an awful thing to say when you have gone through a revolution, when you understand that you have a moment to live and you should live it for something else than just, really, that material standard.

And I asked that question in the Soviet Union, for example. I went to the Soviet Union for the second time in 1965, and met a young Soviet guy, kind of a charming guy, who was my interpreter. He became a good friend. And the reason I was sort of interested in him is because he's the only Soviet guy I met who spoke very good English but with a total American accent, and not with any of this Oxford stuff and so forth and so on, and also who spoke with this absolutely incredible slang — I mean, which really, in a sense, was a little bit disturbing at the beginning. I remember the first day I was with him, you know, he had me for a tourist — and so

the first day we were walking around and he said, "What do you want to do?" And I said, "Maybe I'd like to go to see that permanent exhibition of industrial and agricultural arts" — which was one of Stalin's fantasies, anyway, but it's all these buildings that really come out of all the republics of the Soviet Union. I said, "What do you think? Do you think I ought to go?" And he looked at me and he said, "Piss on it!" [*laughter*]. I said, "Well, you know... you know, that's not polite [*laughter*]... where did you learn that language?" I thought, What kind of an interpreter do I have here? [*laughter*]. And it turned out that for the six months before he had interpreted for me, he had interpreted for the Harlem Globetrotters [*laughter, applause*].

So I said to him, I said, "Well, Yuri" — I said, now, when we were sitting one day, I said, "What are your objectives? You're a young Soviet man. Do you want to go out to the virgin lands and help to build and so forth and so on?" And so he looked at me as though I was out of my mind. And he said, "What do I want? I want an apartment, I want a decent job!" And I said, "But that's not very ideological." And he said, "No, it isn't. But that's the way that one survives." And then, as it turned out, we became very, very good friends because I had a hotel room in the Yunost Hotel and I was never there. And he kept saying he had no place to study, and could I lend him the key to the room? Well, it took me several days to discover that I was running a brothel in that hotel room! [*laughter*]. And all his friends were up there. But, basically, it was simply that sort of thing.

Well, the same thing happened here in Madison a few years ago, which is a story that really confirms this particular insight. I was lecturing a nineteenth-century course. And we have a friend, a Hungarian friend on campus who some of you know, Lajos Bíró, and he called me one day and he said, "You know, there's a very distinguished Hungarian economist who is in town now, and do you mind if I bring him to your class tomorrow?" And I said, "No, not at all." He said, "He is the editor of the leading economic journal of Budapest." And so it just so happened that I was lecturing on Marx — Marx in the 1840s, in that period between '43 and '45 — so I gave this lecture, a fairly long lecture. And the next two days I continued to lecture on Marx, and he came each day. And at the end of the third day I had lunch with him and with Lajos, and he said he found this fascinating, as he put it. I said, "Well, it shouldn't be so fascinating to you; I mean, after all, it's just old hat," it's these three lectures on Marx. He said, "I cannot tell you" — mind you, this the editor of the leading economics journal of Budapest — he said, "It has been years since I have heard a lecture on Marx."

So, you see, it has something to do with that. And it has something to do, basically, with what Vaculík said in 1967: "What we thought to have been done must begin again." And that brings us to the second question that I want to ask: Have there been other models? And is there some alternative, really, that has emerged within that particular framework? And so, obviously, we think of two things. We think of Yugoslavia and the whole notion of worker control in the

Yugoslavian social and economic system. And we think, secondly, of '68 in Czechoslovakia. And both of those deserve our attention momentarily.

Now, with the Yugoslavian model, that Yugoslavian model had an absolutely fantastic start in the speech of Tito, the famous one, of the 26th of June of 1950. And there is Tito going before the National Assembly. He's been thrown out of the good graces of the Soviet bloc, and he said this: "The October Revolution in the Soviet Union permitted the state to take the means of production into its hands. But after thirty years, they are still in the hands of the state. Is that socialism, where the factories belong to the workers? Obviously not! The workers haven't the slightest role in the running of the plants. That's the task of the state appointed managers. Soviet leaders haven't done what is crucial in a socialist society. They have not transferred the management of the factories into the hands of the workers." And having made that criticism, which had been made before, but never by the head of a socialist state. Tito then introduced his famous Fundamental Law on the reorganization of the Yugoslavian economy and Yugoslavian society.

And that Fundamental Law was, presumably, to turn all of the enterprises, all of the factories, and the shops, and the mines, and the transport companies, over to what were called "workers' collectives." In every enterprise that had thirty workers or less, those thirty workers should, all of them together, comprise a workers' council. In those enterprises of more than thirty workers, they should elect, by secret ballot, workers' councils of between 15 to 120 (depending on the plant) which should be the dominant agency within that plant. Those workers' councils should then themselves elect what were called "management committees," a much smaller group that should be in charge of the *gestion*, of the management and the planning of these enterprises. You see what you get, on paper at any rate: you get a devolution of that kind of economy power, that kind of economic controls into the hands of the workers.

Now, let me point out that between 1950, when this went into effect, and for fifteen years until 1965, it didn't mean very much in Yugoslavia. Because there still was the central plan, and the central plan was run by the state, and it determined where the investment should go. It determined how much productivity there should be at each plant. In other words, there was worker control but there was very little left to control within the framework of this centralized plan.

The point is that, in 1965, you came to a crossroads in the development of Yugoslavian society, and that because there is a very severe economic crisis. It is a crisis, really, that is rooted in inflation. It is that the Yugoslavs have very big loans from the outside, from the international monetary fund, from the world bank, from the United States and they have pumped those credits into the Yugoslav economy. Secondly, the amount of control that they have left to the workers

has enabled the workers to raise their wages. And, consequently, you get money pumped into the Yugoslavian economy beyond the capacity to produce goods to accommodate it. So the dinar (the basic currency of Yugoslavia) tumbles, and is finally devalued. And the state then must make a decision. Either it must go to very tight, total central planning, or it must devolve power totally into the hands of the workers to run each plant as they see best on a competitive market. And they choose the second course. On the 23rd of July of 1965, the tax that the state imposed upon each enterprise was removed. And that tax, after all, had been used to in order to build up the investment fund. And now, presumably, from 1965 on, you have worker control within the framework of the Yugoslavian economy.

And yet that is, in my judgment, tremendously delusive. And the Yugoslavian model is, again, in my judgment, not a good model — certainly not what it professes to be. Because what was done, you see, was to give workers in each enterprise the right to control their productivity. It had nothing to do with the good of the whole society. What it had to do with was the capacity of workers so to organize their production and to put goods onto the market; that they would make profit; that they would profit from themselves — in other words, that they could distribute to themselves. It separated each enterprise from the other; it destroyed anything like an overall social plan. And, consequently, it simply made of these groups of workers competitors on a free, what you would almost call capitalistic, market. In the second place, within these workers' councils, they are not the workers — not really the rank-and-file workers — who really control the councils, but are what we call cadres. They are the engineers, they are the technicians: these are the ones that dominate the councils. And the very fact that you have had from 1962 on, an increase of strikes — outlawed by law, wildcat strikes — indicates that these workers, who presumably are controlling their own plants, really resent the distribution being made to them by those who control the so-called workers' councils. What you get in Yugoslavia is a myth of worker control; what you get is a myth of devolving power down into the hands of the workers.

What is much more interesting to us is Czechoslovakia. Oh, look, look. March 22nd of 1968, and Novotný is forced to resign as president, having already resigned as First Secretary of the Party. And Dubček is now, really, in command of this great reform. And, on the 6th of April of 1968, the Central Committee of the Czech Party meets, and it draws up what is called its action program. And that action program — which is reprinted many times, especially in a paperback called *Czechoslovakia's Blueprint for Freedom* — that action program, which is subtitled *Czechoslovakia's Way to Socialism*, says some fantastic things. Now, keep this in mind: you are not so long from the death of Stalin. Now, listen — and this comes out of a Central Committee — listen to how the role of the Party is defined:

"In the past, the leading role of the Party was often conceived as a monopolistic concentration of power in the hands of Party bodies. This corresponded to the false thesis

that the Party is the instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This harmful conception weakened the initiative and the responsibility of the state, economic, and social institutions, and damaged the Party's authority. The Party's goal is not to become a universal caretaker in the society — to bind all organizations at every step taken in life by its directives. Its mission lies in arousing socialist initiative, in showing the ways and actual possibilities of Communist perspectives, and in winning over all workers for them through systematic persuasion as well as by the personal examples of Communists. This is determined by the exceptional character of Party activity. Party bodies do not deal with all problems, but should encourage activities and suggest the solution to the most important ones, and then leave initiative to below."

And then listen to the whole question of other social forces: "The main thing is to reform the whole political system so that it will permit dynamic development of socialist social relations, combine broad democracy with a scientific, highly qualified management, strengthen the social order, stabilize socialist relations and maintain socialist discipline. The basic structure of the political system must, at the same time, provide absolutely from guarantees against a return to the old methods of subjectivism and high-mindedness from a position of power."

Or consider the question of freedom of speech and freedom of relations in the press: "Socialism cannot mean only liberating the working class from domination of the exploiting class, but must make provisions for a fuller life of the personality than any bourgeois democracy. The working people who are no longer ordered about by any class of exploiters can no longer be proscribed by any arbitrary interpretation from a position of power." Well, the whole document goes on. It talks about the initiation of reforms from other socialist parties; it talks about initiation from ad hoc groups; in other words, it really talks about an accommodation to people's power.

Now, all of this didn't mean that Dubček and the Central Committee wanted to end the role of the Communist Party; far from it. The whole problem, you see, of the Czech revolution is that the forces that made it really went beyond what either Dubček or anybody else could control. You had the makings of a real revolution within a revolution, because you had those three foci of attack really developing: you had it in literary intelligentsia, in the scientific or technical intelligentsia, and you had it in the working class. The two things that got out of hand were, first of all, speech — in other words, people found their voices. Do you know what that means? Have you ever really seen it? Some of you remember it from your own 1960s, when suddenly everybody was able to talk; when suddenly all the secrets were out. Well, you know, it was magnificent in France in May of '68 for that reason: suddenly, all kinds of people who had been pushed around told the people who were pushing them what, precisely, they were doing. You get medical students telling their deans off, journalists telling off their editors — in other words, all of the secrets in society come out.

And that's what you had in Czechoslovakia, and it was even more so. It was more so because the people began to go to the streets. And they surrounded their ministers and they put out handbills. And the newspapers encouraged them, and they told them things that had been the state secrets in that society: who had really run these trials, who had been responsible, who the guilty people were. All the secrets began to come out. And how could you ever return to anything else?

I have talked to people who were there in the Prague Spring, and they said that it was incredible; that, in that flash, you saw what it really was like. You had people shoulder to shoulder, talking to each other without ever having been introduced — knowing, after all, that they were working together for something else. And the workers got into the act, and they got into big, by way of workers' councils. And they began them in the end of March of 1968. By June they were everywhere in the factories. And they were beginning to dominate production, beginning to talk about these councils as the very basis for political power.

And then, of course, the Russians had to intervene. And the Russians, you see, intervened for very good reason. When they sent their tanks in on the 21st of August of 1968 — when they crushed this revolution in Czechoslovakia — they did it for two very, very obvious reasons. One, because they were afraid that Czechoslovakia might go out of the Warsaw Pact; that is evident. But, secondly, because the Russians are no fools, and they understood that the one thing that they could not permit was the conjuncture of these three forces of opposition. One is alright. If intellectuals yap, that's alright. But you must co-opt at least two of these three forces at any time of your system is in danger. And what happened in Czechoslovakia might spread. And they went in, and they crushed.

And the result was the result that [Jean-Paul] Sartre noted in that essay "The Socialism That Comes in from the Cold": "After August of '68," says Sartre, "we must abandon moral pieties and reformist illusions. We will not repair the machine; the people must take it in hand and smash it to the ground." It's a hard lesson to learn. The Czechs learned it in 1968; the French learned it in the May of that year. And I presume it is still to be learned in the more backward parts of the advanced world [*applause*].