SOCIALISM WITH A MELANCHOLY HEART:

THE RED-COLLARS AND THE MAKING OF REFORM SOCIALISM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA (1945-1968)

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the emergence and transformation of a new socialist intelligentsia in post-war Czechoslovakia, a group united by their shared social and emotional experiences in the two decades after the communist revolution in 1948. Their socio-emotional identifications and commitments led this group, whom I call the red-collars, to become the primary impetus behind the Czechoslovak socialist reform movement of the 1960s. Combining the methodologies of social and emotional histories, this dissertation argues that Czechoslovak reform socialism reflected the collective "melancholic" emotions and social discontent of the young intelligentsia that came of age as communists during or shortly after the Second World War. Many of them participated enthusiastically in the communist revolution of 1948 and the subsequent Stalinist crackdown on "class enemies" in the name of the revolution. The Communist Party regarded these young revolutionaries as the backbone of the new socialist intelligentsia and recruited them to universities and influential white-collar positions in various institutions across the country. However, following Khrushchev's "secret speech" in 1956, many red-collars came to oppose the Party's ruling logic, and they played an essential role in formulating and popularizing the democratic socialist program during the Prague Spring in 1968.

My dissertation argues that reform socialism in Czechoslovakia was rooted in a dual rupture that the Party went through shortly after the revolution in 1948. The first dimension of the rupture was social. Although post-revolutionary class restructuring policies ultimately succeeded in creating a new socialist educated class, it did not secure their long-term loyalty to the official party line. Instead, many members of the newly educated class came to resent their relatively low level of income, social status, and political capital vis-à-vis the older party elites, many of whom occupied top political and administrative positions despite their lack of formal

education. The second dimension of the rupture was emotional. After 1956, there emerged a collective sense of betrayal and guilt among many members of the country's new intelligentsia. Throughout the 1960s, shared feelings of "melancholic political emotions" fueled the desire for reforming the system and reclaiming what they considered the humanistic core of socialism.

Lay Summary

The sixties in Czechoslovakia witnessed a remarkable political movement to foster what was then called "socialism with a human face" by merging the egalitarian-distributive vision of socialism with quasi-Western democratic values. This dissertation investigates the social and emotional origins of Czechoslovak reformism and argues that the movement was rooted in the intersection between social class discontent and the collective emotional pain of a revolutionary intelligentsia that I call the "red-collars." In doing this, the dissertation explores how the post-revolutionary class structure and shared "melancholic" feelings of the red-collars (a mix of discontent with their material circumstances, guilt for their part in Stalinist revolutionary excesses, and angst over the ideological exhaustion among youth) shaped the Czechoslovak Communist Party's ideological transformation from Stalinism to democratic socialism between 1945 and 1968.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Baris Ahmet Yorumez.

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List of Abbreviations

AÚPN	*Archiv Ústav pamäti národa*, Archive of the Institute of National Memory
AMU	*Akademie múzických umění v Praze*, Academy of Performing Arts in Prague
BSP	*Brigáda socialistickej práce*, Socialist Work Brigades
ČSM	*Československý svaz mládeže*, Czechoslovak Union of Youth
f.	*fond*, collection
FAMU	*Filmová a televizní fakulta Akademie múzických umění v Praze*, Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague
FITES	*Svaz filmových a televizních umělců*, Union of Czechoslovak Film and Television Artists
Komsomol	All-Union Leninist Young Communist League (Soviet Union)
KSČ	*Komunistická strana Československa,* Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
KSS	*Komunistická strana Slovenska*, Communist Party of Slovakia
NA.	*Národní archiv*, National Archive of the Czech Republic
PB	Politburo
ROH	*Revoluční odborové hnutí*, Revolutionary Trade Union Movement
StB	*Státní bezpečnost*, State Security (secret police)
sv.	*Svazek*, volume.
ÚSTR	*Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů*, Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes
ÚV	*Ústredný výbor*, Central Committee.

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The fact that I was able to write this dissertation attests to the help and encouragement of many people.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Professor Eagle Glassheim, for his immense patience for my not-always-well-developed ideas and for suggesting ways to make them more coherent. He has always found time to help me despite his busy schedule and provided valuable advice on writing and other academic matters. I deeply appreciate the feedback from Professor Anne Gorsuch, whose generous and careful feedback on multiple early drafts significantly improved this dissertation. I would also like to thank Professor Timothy Cheek for not only introducing me to the field of Modern China studies but for also agreeing to join my dissertation committee on such short notice.

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Above all, I thank my family. My mother, Meliha, and father Ibrahim were always supportive despite the fact that my dissertation took longer than planned and their son remained abroad. I am grateful to my brother Anıl for helping my parents and keeping them company in my absence, especially during the unfortunate era of COVID-19. Finally, I thank my wife,

Veronika, for tolerating a hopelessly absent-minded and occasionally grumpy husband, who always “needed” to stay awake at night and did not have time for social occasions. This work is dedicated to her and our daughter, Ester Elâ, who, to our great joy, was born shortly before the completion of this research.

Introduction

In his 1974 novel *Life is Elsewhere,* Milan Kundera tells the coming-of-age story of a young poet by the name of Jaromil amidst war and revolution in 1940s Czechoslovakia. After the revolution in 1948, as the poet enters "adulthood when the ramparts of the adult world are crumbling," he is gripped by the ongoing revolutionary euphoria and joins the Communist Party to participate in the making of a new world.[1] At his university, as a member of the Communist Youth League, he reports on the attitudes and opinions of the professors in lectures and examinations to defend the revolution from "teachers with outdated ideas."[2] He informs the police about his ex-girlfriend and her brother, who were planning to emigrate to the West illegally. Yet no matter how hard he tries to be a good communist and become the famous lyrical poet of the revolution (like Mayakovski in the Soviet Union), he can neither achieve fame nor is he able to fill his inner void with an ideological commitment to the cause.[3]

Biographical similarities between Kundera and his protagonist are obvious. Similar to the poet in his novel, Kundera became a Party member in his teens and published socialist-realist poetry throughout the 1950s.[4] Kundera, too, received minor critical acclaim in the communist press and, unlike some other writers of his generation, he was not able to rise to prominence

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[1] Milan Kundera, *Life is Elsewhere* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 138.
[2] Kundera, *Life is Elsehwere*, 138.
[3] For an overview and historical context of the novel, see Man-tat Terence Leung, "Utopia and Its Otherwise: Revolutionary Youthfulness, Lyricism, and Alternative Quests for the 'East' in Kundera's Life Is Elsewhere," *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and History of Ideas* 15, no.1 (January 2017): 23-46.
[4] Kundera first joined the Party in 1948, was expelled in 1950, readmitted again in 1956, and remained a member until 1970. *Encyclopedia Britannica,* s.v. "Milan Kundera," accessed August 3, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Milan-Kundera.

through his poetry during the decade.[5] However, what the Czech historian Adam Hradilek found in secret police archives in 2008 made the autobiographical elements in *Life is Elsewhere* more profound, and raised ethical questions about Kundera's involvement with communism during his youth.

In an article published in the Czech political weekly magazine *Respekt*, Adam Hradilek and journalist Petr Třešňák revealed a police report from 1950 and accused Kundera of "carefully covering his tracks" to hide his collaboration with the communist police in his past.[6] The police report in question contained a piece of information that came from a student "Milan Kundera, born 1.4.1929 in Brno," telling the whereabouts of a young man named Miroslav Dvořáček, who had deserted the military and was working for Western intelligence services. Thanks to the tip-off from Kundera, the police were able to capture Dvořáček with evidence and sentenced him to twenty-two years in prison. Dvořáček served sixteen years in total, most of it in labor camps.[7]

The revelation of Kundera's alleged cooperation with the communist police led to a divisive controversy in the Czech and Slovak Republics. Kundera, who had not given any interviews in years, broke his silence and vehemently denied the allegations, accusing the media of the "assassination of an author."[8] In response, the magazine *Respekt* as well as the government-funded Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (*Ústav pro studium totalitních*

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[5] As will be subsequently mentioned, after the revolution, the Party promoted the works of a new generation of young Stalinists and recruited them to the culture industry throughout the 1950s. The young writers, such as Pavel Kohout, Jan Trefulka, Ladislav Mňačko and Dominik Tatarka, rose to prominence through their socialist-realist works during the decade. Unlike them, Kundera remained largely unknown until the 1960s, when he began writing unorthodox plays and novels instead.
[6] For the English translation of the original article, see Petr Třešňák and Adam Hradilek, "Milan Kundera's Denunciation," *Respekt*, October 13, 2008. https://www.respekt.cz/respekt-in-english/milan-kundera-s-denunciation.
[7] Třešňák and Hradilek, "Milan Kundera's Denunciation."
[8] Kate Connolly, "Communist Scourge Kundera accused of betraying western spy 58 years ago," *Guardian*, October 14, 2008. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/oct/14/humanrights.

režimů- ÚSTR) insisted on the authenticity of the report and pointed out the close parallels between Kundera's works of fiction and his alleged deeds.[9] Meanwhile, some historians, such as Michal Kopeček and Jaroslav Cuhra, argued that individual police files should not be taken at face value as they may include errors and falsifications.[10] In addition, some of the former dissidents such as Ivan Klíma and Petr Uhl criticized the Institute and Kundera's accusers for not considering the conditions of the era and for judging Kundera from a contemporary political and moral perspective.[11]

Regardless of their position about the "Kundera affair," all sides seemingly agree that Kundera's collaboration with the police, even if true, would not be an exceptional case within the context of the early 1950s. In fact, a great many Czechs and Slovaks cooperated with the communist Party either voluntarily or involuntarily during the era, and in return, the Party amply rewarded those who helped and took part in the making of the country's socialist system.[12] Kundera, too, was one of the individuals who seemingly benefited from the socialist takeover. Despite coming from a "bourgeois" family background, he was able to enroll at the prestigious Film Academy (*FAMU*) in Prague, presumably thanks in no small part to his and his father's

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[9] Petr Třešňák and Adam Hradilek, "Kunderovskě Omyly: Když spisovatelé neváží slova," *Respekt*, October 10, 2008, https://www.respekt.cz/glosy/kunderovske-omyly; Aviezer Tucker, "Czech History Wars," *History Today 59*, no.3 (January 2009), 43. In an interview with the New York Times, the head of the institute's documentation department, Vojtech Ripka, stated that "no reasonable doubts have been raised about the accuracy or authenticity of the documents. We are not engaged in witch hunts and we are not going after public figures, and that includes Kundera, whose file was discovered by accident." Dan Bilefsky, "Accusation against Writer Reopens Traumas of Czech Past", *New York Times*, October 17, 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/18/world/europe/18kundera.html.

[10] "Zrada intelektuálov," *Týždeň*, October 18, 2008, https://www.tyzden.sk/casopis/3449/zrada-intelektualov/.

[11] Ivan Klima, "Udání v dobách teroru," *Lidové noviny*, October 16, 2008, 10; Petr Uhl, "Tato aféra není Kunderova," *Právo*, October 16, 2008, 6.

[12] Sociologist Jiří Pehe told American reporters with regard to the Kundera incident that "The reality is that the totalitarian regime was constructed in such a way that 99 percent of people cooperated in one way or another, and the Kundera case helps them to feel morally absolved, like they are the good guys and he was one of the baddies." Bielifsky, "Accusations against Writer Reopens." About the responses to Kundera, see Jana Prikryl, "Kundera Conundrum: Kundera, Respekt and Contempt," *The Nation*, May 20, 2009, https://www.thenation.com/article/kundera-conundrum-kundera-respekt-and-contempt.

membership in the Party.[13] Adam Hradilek, who found the original police report, linked Kundera's admission to the Film Academy to his alleged cooperation with the police and speculated that the writer probably informed the police not out of his idealism, but to score extra points with the authorities in order to get into the school.[14]

Yet, arguably, such an explanation is too simplistic to explain the motivation for Kundera's alleged collaboration with the police. The fact that being a Party member and informing authorities about the enemies of the new regime contributed to his acceptance to the school does not automatically make his collaboration with the regime purely a career move. As Timothy Snyder remarked in his conversation with Tony Judt, Kundera was, after all, a believing communist, and as a communist, it was "his ethical duty to report his suspicions to the police."[15] In this regard, Kundera's political idealism and personal ambitions were not mutually exclusive; they reinforced each other. For this reason, a significant number of young and educated communists like Kundera supported and participated in the Stalinist terror against those individuals the Party labelled as "the enemies of the people's republic" in the name of revolution.[16] The Party, in return, regarded these young Stalinists as the backbone of the new

[13] Around the same time that Kundera was accepted to the Film School, Václav Havel, coming from a liberal upper-class background, applied to the Theatre Faculty (AMU) to study dramaturgy. Asked to write an interpretation of a play called *The Eccentric* by a communist writer Nazım Hikmet, Havel produced a Marxist interpretation, which argued that Hikmet's narrative contained the basic laws of dialectical materialism. Nevertheless, despite his Marxist pretense at the exam, presumably due to his "high bourgeois" and non-communist family background, the admission board sensed a deception and rejected him. He could find a place only at the Department of the Economics of Transformation, from which he quickly dropped out. John Keane, *Vaclav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts* (London: Bloombsery, 1999), 153; Michael Žantovský, *Havel: A Life* (New York: Groove Press, 2014), 44.
[14] Connolly, "Communist Scourge," *Guardian*.
[15] Tony Judt and Timothy Snyder, *Thinking the Twentieth Century* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 242.
[16] Peter Hruby, *Fools and Heroes: The Changing Role of Communist Intellectuals in Czechoslovakia* (New York: Pergamon, 1980), 9-10.

socialist intelligentsia and recruited them to universities and influential white-collar positions in various institutions across the country.[17]

However, the alliance between the Party leadership and the young "socialist intelligentsia" of the late 1940s was relatively short-lived. Starting from the mid-1950s, a growing number of the new socialist middle class, including Kundera, became increasingly critical of the Party's ruling logic and distanced themselves from the Party elites.[18] Especially after Khrushchev's "secret speech" in 1956, many members of the revolutionary "1948 generation" formed the reformist opposition against the Party leadership, and they played an essential role in formulating and popularizing the democratic socialist program during the Prague Spring in 1968.

This dissertation studies Czechoslovak reform socialism through the lens of the social and emotional transformation that the members of the young, socialist educated class went through between 1945 and 1968. After the communist revolution in 1948, through positive discrimination policies in education and job hiring mechanisms, many of the young revolutionaries obtained remarkable social mobility and found jobs in the expanding administrative, cultural, and technical white-collar positions in the 1950s. The new post-revolutionary educated class, who I will refer to as "red-collars," were the leading carriers, promoters, and performers of reform socialism in Czechoslovakia between 1956 and 1968. By studying the mental and emotional geography of the "red-collars" over the two-decade period

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[17] Pavel Urbášek and Jiří Pulec, *Vysokoškolský vzdělávací v letech 1945-1969* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2012), 111-123.

[18] For the changes in the socialist public opinion among certain segments of society throughout the 1950s, see Michal Kopeček, *Hledání ztraceného smyslu revoluce. Zrod a počátky marxistického revizionismu ve střední Evropě 1953-1960* (Prague: Argo, 2009); Hruby, *Fools and Heroes*, 72-78; Lenka Kalinová, *Společenské proměny v čase socialistického experimentu : k sociálním dějinám v letech 1945-1969* (Prague: Academia, 2007), 193-217; Jiří Pernes, *Krize komunistického režimu v Československu v 50.letech 20. století* (Brno: Centrum pro studium a demokracie a kultury, 2008), 128-148.

after the revolution, this dissertation will discuss questions such as: What made a certain group of communists more critical towards the Party than the rest of the members? What were the generational, occupational, and social dividing lines between the reformers and hard-liners? And, how did generational experiences and shared emotions of red-collars reflect in the ideas and declarations of reform socialism before and during the Prague Spring? Through tackling these questions, I hope to demonstrate how complex interactions between social class interests and shared emotional experiences of the post-revolutionary educated class played a crucial role in making reform socialism and the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia.

The main argument of this dissertation is that the reform socialist movement in Czechoslovakia was rooted in a two-dimensional rupture that the Party (and its membership) went through shortly after the revolution in 1948. The first dimension is social. Although post-revolutionary class restructuring policies ultimately succeeded in creating a new socialist educated class, contrary to the hopes of Party leaders and ideologues, it did not secure their long-term loyalty to the official Party line. Instead, many members of the newly educated class came to resent their relatively low level of income, social status, and political capital vis-à-vis the Party elites, many of whom had occupied top political and administrative positions despite their lack of formal education. The second dimension of the rupture is emotional. After Khrushchev's revelations in 1956, there emerged a collective sense of betrayal and guilt among many members of the newly created educated class in the country. Throughout the 1960s, shared feelings of remorse over the Stalinist past and a deep anxiety about deep anxiety over a growing indifference of youth to socialist ideology fueled the red-collar desire for reforming the system and reclaiming what they considered the humanistic core of socialism. In order to capture both dimensions of the ideological transformation from Stalinism to reformism, this dissertation will

combine the methodologies of social and emotional histories, studying the impact of the post-revolutionary class restructuring policies together with the "melancholic" political emotions before and during the Prague Spring era.

Thus, conceptually, this dissertation builds upon the notion that one's social class and generational experiences have a direct impact on the emotional reaction to events and conditions; after all, emotions do not emerge in a vacuum, nor are they experienced identically across society. After the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in 1948, certain factors, such as level of participation in the revolution or position in the social hierarchy under socialism, played a significant role in one's feelings towards the system. After enthusiastically supporting and participating in the revolution in the late 1940s, the educated "1948ers" quickly woke up to a disappointing post-revolutionary reality, where they found themselves working under the hegemony of the new political elites. There soon emerged a conflict between the young intelligentsia and members of the ruling elite, many of whom, despite lacking formal education, came to positions of power thanks to their veteran standing in the Party ranks. As will be subsequently argued, Khrushchev's revelations about the true nature of the Stalinist persecutions coincided with emerging grievances about socialism and led to an immense sense of betrayal and guilt among the members of the young intelligentsia. Throughout the 1960s, the discontent of the new intelligentsia with their social and material standing coexisted and sometimes intertwined with their sense of remorse and angst about the past and present state of socialism in the country.

The Socio-Emotional History of Reform Socialism

The larger question here, of course, is how would studying social discontent and negative political emotions of the young intelligentsia enhance our understanding of reform socialism in Czechoslovakia? What would the analysis of the social and emotional dimensions of reform socialism contribute to the existing literature about the subject? By conducting what I would call a "socio-emotional history" of reform socialism, my main aim is to move beyond the rational disillusionment narrative, which still dominates the literature on the Prague Spring and Czechoslovak reform movement in the 1960s. Scholars and historians have so far conceptualized the collective shift from Stalinism to reformism first and foremost as a political thought process, a rational conclusion that many of the Czech and Slovak intellectuals and politicians reached after Stalinism lost its appeal after 1956.[19] Moreover, by focusing primarily on the intellectual aftereffects of the disillusionment (i.e., political, philosophical, or cultural outputs of the reformist literati) rather than the process itself, the existing literature largely ignores the socio-emotional dimension, which accompanied the tectonic shifts in the reformers' ideology throughout the decade.[20] In this understanding, reform socialism emerges as a top-down political

[19] The seminal works on Czechoslovak reform socialism and the Prague Spring focus mostly on the writings, speeches and activities of the leading political and cultural actors, and do not pay much attention to the social and emotional factors See for instance, Galia Golan, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement: Communism in Crisis, 1962-1968* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Vladimir Kusin, *Political Grouping in the Czechoslovak Reform Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); Vladimir Kusin, *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring: The Development of Reformist Ideas in Czechoslovakia, 1956-1967* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Vladimir Kusin, *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring: The Development of Reformist Ideas in Czechoslovakia, 1956-1967* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Harold Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Lenka Kalinová, *Sociální reforma a sociální realita v Československu v šedesátých letech* (Prague: Vysoká škola ekonomická, 1998); Karel Kaplan, *Kořeny československé reformy 1968* (Brno: Doplněk, 2000); Jan Mervart, *Naděje a iluze : čeští a slovenští spisovatelé v reformním hnutí šedesátých let* (Brno: Host, 2010).

[20] To be fair, some of the studies, albeit in passing, made references to emotions to explain the transformation in the mental geography of the socialist public in Czechoslovakia. The émigré scholar Peter Hrubý argued that the sense of guilt was a vital part of the ideological transformation of the reform-socialist intellectuals, or whom he refers to as the "cultural élite." Similarly, Marci Shore listed "shame" as one of the catalyzing emotions behind the rebellion of the dissenting reformist writers against the Party. More recently, in his article about the philosopher Radoslav Richta's influential socio-political theories on post-industrial communist society in the 1960s, Vítězslav Sommer

project, "an elite liberalization," which was transformed into a mass movement when Dubček came to power in January 1968.[21]

Unfortunately, this narrative does not explain how public opinion for reform socialism was formed in the first place. The sudden and passionate support that Dubček received for building "socialism with a human face" from the large majority of the educated socialist class in 1968 hints that there had been a desire for a political change in the country well before Dubček's ascendence to power.[22] Yet, while focusing on the highbrow political, philosophical, legal, or economic discussions about the new socialist model among the members of the literati, the literature is mostly silent about how reformism emerged as a socio-emotional reaction among the broader socialist reading public in the 1960s.

The high scholarly interest in the narrow intellectual origins of the Prague Spring, which seemingly came at the expense of the socio-emotional dimensions of the reform movement, is surprising, especially when considering that the reformism, even at its height during the Prague Spring, lacked a coherent political philosophy or model.[23] In other words, the reform movement

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claimed that a sense of loss of the revolutionary ethos, which, according to some of the socialist intelligentsia, "had gone missing during the course of the 1950s," was one of the primary motivations for the intellectual searching for an alternative mode of governance to the bureaucratic rule of the Party apparatus during the 1960s. While these works provide inspiring insights and clues for the feelings behind the actions of the political and cultural actors, they do not devote much attention to emotions, instead regarding them as subservient to ideas and activities during the decade. Hruby, *Fools and Heroes*, xvii; Marci Shore, "(The End of) Communism as a Generational History," *Contemporary European History 18*, no.3 (August 2009), 311; Vítězslav Sommer, " 'Are we still behaving as revolutionaries?': Radovan Richta, theory of revolution and dilemmas of reform communism in Czechoslovakia," *Studies in East European Thought 69*, (January, 2017), 104.

[21] See for instance, Kieran Williams, "The Prague Spring: From Elite Liberalisation to Mass Movement," in *Revolution and Resistance in Eastern Europe Challenges to Communist Rule*, edited by Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe (New York: Berg, 2006), 101-119.

[22] According to the public opinion survey conducted in April 1968, 88 percent of Party members in the Czech Lands either "strongly approved" or "rather approved" of the ongoing reform policies of the Party. I will discuss the different degrees of support among different socio-occupational groups in detail in the fifth chapter. See Jaroslav A. Piekalkiewicz, *Public Opinion Polling in Czechoslovakia, 1968-69; Results and Analysis of Surveys Conducted during the Dubcek Era* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 21.

[23] As it will be further analyzed in the fifth chapter, the so-called "Action Program," which was the only official political plan that the Prague Spring government announced during its rule, promised very general aims such as the end of censorship, civil liberties, federalism for Slovakia and an effective economy without any explicit reference to

in Czechoslovakia did not have founding fathers or grand theoretical texts that defined the movement or shaped its political goals. The scholarly books and articles written by the high-profile intellectuals, such as Zdeněk Mlynář, Ota Šik, Michal Lakatoš, and Karel Kosík were confined mainly to the academic and literati circles and never attracted much attention from the broader reading public.[24] By contrast, declarations of discontent with the material standing of the educated cadres, remorse for the Stalinist past, and angst over perceived ideological exhaustion, that is the hollowing out of socialist values and ideas especially among youth, often led to frequent public debates and received widespread commentary from the reading public. In this regard, negative public emotions played a far more crucial role in the making of reformist public opinion than any theoretical discussions about Marxist humanism or democratic socialism.

I find that the emerging literature on the history of emotions provides a valuable analytical and methodological tool kit to dissect societal feelings and their role in shaping reform socialism and, eventually, the Prague Spring in 1968.[25] Without a doubt, one of the most influential models for the historical conceptualization of emotions is put forward by William Reddy in his seminal study titled *Navigation of Feelings*.[26] At the heart of Reddy's theoretical

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any grand ideological text. For an English translation of the Program, see, "The Action Program of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; April 5, 1968," In *Winter in Prague: Documents on Czechoslovak Communism in Crisis*, ed. Robin Alison Remington (Cambridge, Massachusets: M.I.T. Press, 1969), 88-137.

[24] Radovan Richta's theory of "scientific-technological revolution" was perhaps the only exception to the relative irrelevance of "theory" in the making of reform socialism. I will discuss Richta's contribution to reformism in detail in the fifth chapter.

[25] See for instance, William M.Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 2006); Martha Tomhave, *The Work of the Heart: Young Women and Emotion, 1780-1830* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007); Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History: Lost and Found* (New York: Central European University Press, 2011); Steven Mullaney, *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

[26] Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling.* About the importance of Reddy's work for the field of emotional history, German historian Jan Plamber wrote: "Reddy's book is so far the most important theoretical work dealing with the history of emotion. He is one of the very few historians capable of judging the quality of the basic research presented in a paper from the life sciences." Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: an Introduction* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2015), 261.

innovation is the concept of "emotives," affective utterances, which, once voiced, both describe and change one's feelings.[27] People "navigate" their feelings, always trying to find a way to bring forth their sentiments in accordance with social or political expectations.[28] Crucially, this navigation of feelings through "speech acts" is checked against the element of power, or what he calls an "emotional regime."[29] Accordingly, the strict political regimes require "individuals to express normative emotions and to avoid deviant emotions" and "those who refuse to make the normative utterances (whether of respect for a father, love for a god or a king, or loyalty to an army) are faced with the prospect of severe penalties."[30]

Reddy's case study for the strict emotional regime was eighteenth-century France. The absolutist court of Louis XVI dictated an aristocratic code of honor, which "regulated external representation of emotion in an extremely hierarchical manner, and whose prime aim was to avoid giving offense."[31] As a reaction, the newly created salons, Freemasons' lodges, theatres, novels, and correspondence imbued with feeling acted as "emotional refuges," forming a free emotional space outside of the conventions of the court.[32] Soon these refuges encouraged a radical "sentimentalism," emphasizing the honesty of intimate feelings as an antithesis of the cold, unsentimental, dishonest image of the French court. For Reddy, the French Revolution was the expression and triumph of such sentimentalism. The Jacobins were, first and foremost, sentimentalists, who believed in the authenticity and power of tears and other bodily expressions and did not shy away from showing them in public.

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[27] Plamper, *The History of Emotions,* 257.
[28] Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 101.
[29] Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, 125.
[30] Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, 125.
[31] Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions,* 257; Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, 143-144.
[32] Barbara Rosenwein, "Theories of Change in the History of Emotions," in *A History of Emotions, 1200–1800,* ed. Jonas Liliequist, (London: Routledge, 2012), 10-11.

Reddy's study was one of the first systematic studies of emotions and their effects in history. He convincingly argued that feelings are not merely side effects of the circumstances but can be active causes of events, and that historians should not regard them as mere discursive performances, but as one of the agents of historical change.[33] Soon other historians joined the debate about the position and role of emotions and examined how the shift in sentiments impacted various events and social transformations in the past.[34] Nicole Eustace, for instance, argued that emotions and sentimentalism "contributed as much as reason to the structure of eighteenth-century British-American power and politics."[35] The American revolution made the "'passions and feelings of mankind,' the basis for natural equality and the firmest foundation for natural rights."[36] Through emotions, such as love, anger, sympathy, and grief, Anglo-Americans contested and negotiated power relations under colonial rule. Similarly, in his study of competing emotional regimes in the antebellum United States, Michael E. Woods claimed that emotions, such as happiness, jealousy, and indignation, were crucial in establishing regional identities, creating hostilities, and eventually mobilizing for civil war. As "certain emotions were intimately tied to moral judgment," feeling and expressing these emotions "primed Americans to think in uncompromising terms of good versus evil."[37] The emotionality should not be "equated with demagoguery:" emotions had a real impact on the social fabric, creating as well as dividing

[33] Rosenwein, "Theories of Change," 10-11.
[34] Aside from the works quoted below, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 2006); Victoria Hesford, *Felling Women's Liberation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Rob Boddice, *The Science of Sympathy: Morality, Evolution and Victorian Civilization* (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2016).
[35] Nicole Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 3.
[36] Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale*, 3.
[37] Michael E. Woods, *Emotional and Sectional Conflict in the Antebellum United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 2-3.

communities, amplifying "economic, political and cultural conflicts" between the northern and southern polities during the antebellum United States.[38]

"Emotions history" has been slowly making its way into East European, particularly Russian and Soviet, studies as well.[39] Sheila Fitzpatrick, for instance, examined the feelings of happiness and *toska*, a "kind of yearning sadness" in pre-war Russia, and argued, despite not being one of the officially encouraged "Soviet emotions" such as revolutionary enthusiasm and righteous anger for enemies, that large segments of Soviet society expressed their *toska* in both private and public spheres, making such non-official feelings a part of the omnipresent discourse of Soviet daily life.[40] Mark D. Steinberg dissected the various emotional layers of the "social melancholy" among "educated Russians," who, after the failure of the 1905 revolution, increasingly expressed their sense of loss and alienation in the modern era.[41] More recently and related to this dissertation, Juliane Fürst conceptualized Soviet hippies as an "emotional community" (a term borrowed from the medievalist Barbara Rosenwein), arguing that their "emotional style" both challenged and drew from the "dominant official emotional style" of late socialism. While the Soviet hippies defined themselves against the official culture and its

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[38] Woods, *Emotional and Sectional Conflict*, 3.

[39] See for instance, Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Happiness and Toska: An Essay in the History of Emotions in Pre-War Soviet Russia," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 50, no.3 (September 2004): 357−371; Maruška Svašek, ed., *Postsocialism: Politics and Emotions in Central and Eastern Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2005); Glennys Young, "Emotions, Contentious Politics, and Empire: Some Thoughts about the Soviet Case," *Ab Imperio* 2 (2007): 113−151; John Randolph, *The House in the Garden: The Bakunin Family and the Romance of Russian Idealism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007); Mark D. Steinberg, "Melancholy and Modernity: Emotions and Social Life in Russia between the Revolutions," *Journal of Social History* 41, no.4 (Summer 2008): 813−841; Valeria Sobol, *Febris Erotica: Lovesickness in the Russian Literary Imagination* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2009); Jan Plamper, "Emotional Turn? Feelings in Russian History and Culture," *Slavic Review* 68, no.2 (Summer 2009); 229-334. Mark D. Steinberg and Valeria Sobol, eds., *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011); Mark D. Steinberg, "Emotions History in Europe," in *Doing Emotions History*, eds. Susan J. Matt and Peter N. Stearns (Baltimore: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

[40] Fitzpatrick, "Happiness and Toska."

[41] Steinberg, "Melancholy and Modernity," 827.

emotional lexicon, at the same time they were "unable to shake off its influence."[42] As the Soviet hippies borrowed and manipulated the emotional vocabulary of the dominant "emotional regime," they were able to create their separate ideological identity by emphasizing the "rhetoric of emotionally felt difference" from the Soviet conventions of late-socialism.[43] Through their pronounced emotional difference, they not only constructed their separate "emotional style" but also, in the long run, "out-maneuvered and outlasted that of its Soviet parent community."[44]

Fürst's study of Soviet hippies as an "emotional community" is instructive for its careful examination of how emotions and their declarations played a decisive role in the formation of an oppositional social group in a socialist setting. The main subject group of this research, the young reform socialists in Czechoslovakia, who I will call the "red-collars," were both similar to and different from Soviet hippies in several ways. As will be subsequently argued, like the hippies in Fürst's study, by publicly expressing their "emotionally felt difference" from the ruling Party elites, whom they portrayed as insensitive and calculating careerists, the red-collars forged their distinctly critical collective identity in the public sphere, effectively transgressing and challenging the status quo in the country. Yet, at the same time, while the Soviet hippies were a mostly marginal and politically inconsequential subaltern group, the red-collars were significantly more numerous and played a central role in the political and cultural making of Czechoslovak reform socialism during the 1960s. Thus, by conceptualizing the red-collars as an emotional and social community and examining the way their declarations of shared negative feelings—such as guilt, remorse, and angst—transformed once-loyal revolutionaries into an

[42] Juliane Fürst, "Love, Peace and Rock'n'Roll on Gorky Street: The 'Emotional Style' of the Soviet Hippie Community," *Contemporary European History 23*, no.4 (November 2014): 567; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities.*
[43] Fürst, "Love, Peace and Rock'n Roll," 567.
[44] Fürst, "Love, Peace and Rock'n Roll," 569.

oppositional group, this dissertation charts the social and emotional history of the reform socialist movement of the 1960s and the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia.

The discussions and perspectives offered by "emotions history" have not yet made headway in Czechoslovak historiography.[45] Although, since the mid-2000s, a new generation of Czech and Slovak historians have challenged the narrowly defined political history of the earlier scholarship and significantly widened the scope of the historical analysis by studying topics such as youth identity, recreation and leisure, everyday life, and civil society under communism, collective feelings have still been treated as secondary aftereffects of past events and policies.[46] This dissertation offers the first systematic study of collective emotions and their sociopolitical impacts under socialism in Czechoslovakia.

The challenge here is to understand the dialectical interplay between collective emotions and social, political, or economic spheres of life. As mentioned, the emotions appear as individual or collective reactions to the events, predicaments, or actions, and, once declared, they

[45] Notwithstanding, there have been number of sociological and psychological studies on the intersections of social structures and emotions in the Czechoslovak context. As early as 1974, Eva Syřišťová wrote about societal influence on mental illness among the individuals. More relatedly, sociologists Marcel Tomášek and Jiří Šubrt analyzed the impact of collective memory and trauma on political perceptions in post-socialist societies. Understandably, these works did not use the theoretical frameworks of emotional history. See Eva Syřišťová, *Imaginární svět* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1974); Marcel Tomášek and Jiří Šubrt, "Jak se vyrovnáváme s naší minulostí? České a československé nedávné dějiny prizmatem teorie kolektivní paměti a kvalitativní metodologie (focus groups)," *Sociologia* 46, no.1 (2014): 88-115.

[46] For some of the recent contributions in the Czechoslovak historiography, see Jaroslav Pažout, *Mocným navzdory. Studentské hnutí v šedesátých letech 20. století* (Prague: Prostor 2008); Michal Pullman, "Sociálni dejiny a totalitné historické vyprávení" *Soudobé déjıny* 3-4 (2008): 703-717; Jiří Hoppe, *Opozice '68. Sociální demokracie, KAN a K 231 v období Pražského Jara* (Prague: Prostor, 2009); Petr Blažek and Filip Pospíšil. *Vrat'te nám vlasy!: První máničy, vlasatci a hippies v komuninistickém Ceskoslovensku* (Prague: Academia, 2010); Miroslav Vaňék, *Byl to Jenom Rock'n'Roll?: Hudební Alternativa v komunistickém Ceskoslovensku 1956-1989* (Prague: Academia, 2010); Paulina Bren, "Tuzex and the Hustler : Living It Up in Czechoslovakia," in *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, eds. Paulina Bren, Mary Neuburger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 27-45; Jiří Knapík, Martin Franc, *Volný Čas v Českych Zemích 1957-1968* (Prague: Academia,2013); Alžběta Čornejová, *Dovolená s poukazem: Odborové rekreace v Československu 1948-1968* (Prague: Academia, 2014); Jaroslav Pažout (ed.), *Každodenní život v Československu 1945/48-1989* (Prague: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2015); Zdenek Nebřenský, *Marx,Engels, Beatles: Myšlenkový Svét Polských a Československých vysokoškolaku, 1956-1968* (Prague: Academia, 2017).

have the potential to influence the very conditions from which they emerge.[47] This necessitates a careful study and triangulation of the social groups, who carry and voice certain emotions often in relation to hierarchical power relations. To identify and differentiate the young reform socialist intelligentsia from the wider populace, I will use the term "red-collar" to emphasize the interplay between their generational belongings, social class aspirations, and emotional yearnings in the making of the group that was the main force behind the reform socialist ideas and motivations in the 1960s.

The Red-Collars: An "Affective" Class within a Generation

So far, I have mostly referred to the subject group of my research with terms such as "socialist urban class," "revolutionary 1948ers," or "young socialist educated class." Admittedly, these terms are imprecise and do not adequately capture the complex and dynamic interplay of the social and emotional factors that made reform socialism and reform socialists in 1960s Czechoslovakia. In order to accurately define and distinguish the members of the middle-aged reformists of the 1960s from the rest of the reading public, I will use the term "red-collars" throughout the dissertation. By red-collars, I simply refer to the young revolutionaries of the immediate postwar years (born roughly between the late 1910s and early 1930s), who obtained higher education and subsequently white-collar positions thanks to their allegiance to the Party, but later felt emotions of regret and guilt for the moral and institutional failures of socialism in the country. In other words, the term denotes an amalgam of social, generational, and emotional elements; the red-collars are comprised of those individuals from the postwar socialist

[47] As Juliane Fürst wrote, "one of the big questions for the history of emotions is to explain the causality of change in emotional regimes… A closer look at how a non-conformist group in a society that discouraged pluralism constructed a separate 'emotional style', will illuminate some of the mechanisms that cause change…" Fürst, "Love, Peace and Rock'n Roll," 568.

intelligentsia who came of age and became communists during or shortly after the war, experienced substantial changes in their mental and emotional geography after 1956, and eventually became convinced that significant reforms to the country's mode of socialism were needed.

By conceptualizing "red-collars" as a social typology, I hope to expand on the term "generation," which has been the predominant unit of analysis in the literature on the 1960s in both Western and Eastern blocs.[48] [49] In the Czechoslovak context, as early as 1968, the sociologist Jiřina Šiklová used the postwar generations as her units of analysis for explaining different attitudes towards the Party in the 1960s, arguing that each generation's degree of participation in the revolutionary struggle before 1948 determined one's loyalty to the official Party line in later decades.[50] Subsequently, historians of reform socialism in Czechoslovakia

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[48] By social typology, I suggest something similar to what Max Weber called "ideal type," with generational, social, ideological, and emotional undertones. Weber, of course, proposed "ideal type" not in the sense of "desirable," but as a methodological proposition; it is a conceptual distillation of the multitude of variables into a consistent formulation. In other words, "ideal type" is a toolkit to capture the chaotic historical processes through deliberate abstraction and simplification, but without disregarding the complex intersection between social forces and collective values and emotions that societies experience and endorse. To put it in Weber`s words, an ideal type is a "one-sided accentuation of one or a number of viewpoints and through the synthesis of a great many diffuse and discrete individual phenomena… into an internally consistent *mental* image." Thus, such a "mental image" is "not a statistical generalization," but instead refers to the valid and consistent observation of the complex historical phenomena. Max Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," in *The Methodology of Social Sciences*, eds. Edward A.Shils and Henry A. Finch. (News Brunswich, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 90; Pål Strandbakken, "Weber's Ideal Types: A Sociological Operation between Theory and Method," in *Theory in Action: Theoretical Constructionism*, ed. Peter Sohlberg and Håkon Leiulfsrud (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017); 60.

[49] In particular, the manners, sensibilities, cultural preferences and aspirations of the 1960s youth (or in other words, the baby-boomers, 1968ers or *Shestidesiatniki*) is the focal point of the literature on the 1960s. See for instance, Ronald Fraser, *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York: Random House, 1988); Donald J. Raleigh, ed., *Russia's Sputnik Generation: Soviet Baby Boomers Talk about Their Lives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Richard Ivan Jobs,"Youth Movements: Travel, Protest, and Europe in 1968,"*American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (April 2009): 376–404; Anne Luke, *Youth and Cuban Revolution: Youth Culture and Politics in 1960s Cuba* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2018). For a discussion about the emphasis on the "generation of youth" in the literature on the 1960s, see Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker, "Introduction: The Socialist 1960s in Global Perspective," in *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, in ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 14-16.

[50] Jiřina Šiklová, "O mládeži a sociologii mládeže v Československu." in *Záhadná generace : Mýty a skutečnost* ed. by Mikolaj Kozakiewicz (Prague: Mlada Fronta, 1968), 168-188. The paper was later translated into English as well:"Sociology of Youth in Czechoslovakia," *Acta Universitatis Carolinae- Philosophica et Historica* 2 (1969): 79-107.

adopted a similar generational approach and explained the polarization within the socialist base after 1956 and the emergence of different dissident milieus (e.g., journalists, sociologists, writers) by emphasizing—to varying degrees—the generational differences and conflicts between the older generation of Party conservatives and younger reform socialists.[51]

Similarly, "generations" and "generational identities" often emerge as main units of analysis or agents of political change in the historiographies of other socialist countries as well. In his study of the 1989 revolutions in East-Central Europe, Padraic Kenney emphasized the role of the young "*konkretny* generation" who, instead of focusing on theoretical issues such as human rights and freedom of speech, mobilized around immediate concrete issues such as environmental devastation or compulsory military service.[52] Alexey Yurchak focused on how the members of the "last Soviet generation," "people who were born between the 1950s and early 1970s," performed, reproduced, and deterritorialized the Soviet authoritative discourse, giving official language unofficial meanings, which were not controlled or anticipated by the Party (see a further discussion on Yurchak's study in chapter four).[53] Juliane Fürst reached a similar conclusion in her study of "Stalin's last generation," a Soviet generation that came of age between 1945 and 1953 (the year when Stalin died), demonstrating that the traumas and daily suffering experienced during the war led to the weakening of ideological fervor and a search for

[51] See for instance, Frank L Kaplan, *Winter into Spring: The Czechoslovak Press and the Reform Movement 1963-1968* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1977); Dušan Hamšík, *Writers against Rulers: The Heroic Struggle of Writers and Intellectuals against Official Repression on the Eve of the Czech Uprising* (New York: Random House, 1971); Kusin, *Political Grouping*, especially pages 55-142; Elena Londáková, *Rok 1968 Novinári na Slovensku* (Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2008); Mervart, *Naděje a iluze*; Michael Voříšek, *The Reform Generation : 1960s Czechoslovak Sociology from a Comparative Perspective* (Prague: Kalich, 2012).
[52] Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 13.
[53] Alexei Yurchak, *Everything was Forever, Until It Was No More* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

an alternative, non-hegemonical cultural form of entertainment among the youth of the late-Stalinist era.[54]

It is crucial to note here that the term generation does not simply refer to an age group but a particular group of people, united by—to use Karl Mannheim's phrase—"similarly stratified consciousness," eventually resulting in the "participation in the common destiny" of the historical and social unit.[55] In other words, birth year is not the sole factor in determining one's generation; it is rather the socialization process within a particular cultural milieu. Marci Shore perhaps best summarized what "generation" meant in the context of East-Central Europe when she wrote:

> Assuming a generational identity is an active process: it involves encountering "afresh" an accumulated cultural heritage, coalescing early impressions into a 'natural view' of the world through dialectical confrontation with new experiences. To belong to a generation is to take part in a common destiny; a given generation`s `style,` its actualisation … develops through this taking part. At issue is not only age, but also milieu – and in east-central Europe, milieu means everything.[56]

By the term "red-collars", my goal is not to repudiate the value of "generation" as an analytical category but to expand on it. In other words, while I accept the importance of generational commonalities and milieus in the shaping of political perceptions, I think the concept of generation by itself is inadequate to holistically capture the social and emotional dimensions of the reformist intelligentsia of the 1960s. Many of the revolutionary "1948ers" became convinced of the need for reforming socialism, not only because of their generational

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[54] Juliane Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[55] Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge,* ed. Paul Keckskemeti (London: Routledge, 1952), 297.
[56] Marci Shore, "(The End of) Communism as a Generational History," 304.

experiences and the emotional repercussions of those experiences, but also because of their class aspirations and lower social standing vis-à-vis the Party elites under "mature socialism." By defining the subject group as the "red-collars" instead of, for example, the "reform generation," I aim to better understand and emphasize the social class dimension of Czechoslovak reform socialism.[57]

This brings me to yet another conceptual problem: how to understand and formulate "social class" in a social space, within which the political power purposefully limited the impact of economic capital and class inequalities. Arguably, Pierre Bourdieu's theory on class and forms of capital provides an apt theoretical basis on which to examine the red-collars in relation to other social groups. Rejecting the Marxist insistence on economic capital and the distinction between "base" (i.e., class structure, ownership of means of production etc.) and "superstructure" (i.e., culture, ideology), Bourdieu identified two additional "immaterial" types of capitals, which play an equally crucial role as economic capital in the social construction of hierarchies in society: first, "cultural capital," which is "institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications," and the second, "social capital, made up of social obligations," connections, networks, and acquaintances.[58] Accordingly, the nature of relations in a given social space determines which type of capital is the most consequential and whether and to what extent different types of capital can be converted into the other.[59]

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[57] Vořišek, *Reform Generation*.
[58] Pierre Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education* ed. J.E. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 243; Craig Calhoun, "Habitus, Field, and Capital: The Question of Historic Specifity," in *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives,* ed. Craig Calhoun, Edward LiPuma, Moishe Postone (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 67-71.
[59] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Social Space and Genesis of Groups," *Theory and Society 14* no.6 (November, 1985), 725-726.

For Bourdieu, the social classes turn into "historical reality" not simply because the objective social structure or material conditions dictate and determine them, but also because the people, in their infinite web of social interactions, actively construct them in their "mental schemata of perception" through the process of internalization and by turning social hierarchies into a "common sense" in their daily lives.[60] Or, to put it in more sociological terms, Bourdieu's relational model treats social class as an end product of the "sociosymbolic alchemy," whereby the material relations, or "sets of objective positions that persons occupy (institutions or 'fields')" turn into a "historical reality through the inculcation of schemata of perception and their deployment to draw, enforce, or contest social boundaries."[61]

Thus, according to the Bourdieusian framework, we cannot analyze red-collars as a distinct social class only through nominal categories such as their type of work, cultural habits, or political power. Instead, one must locate the object group in their relationality to other social groups and analyze the objective, quantitative conditions together with the unquantifiable subjective elements, such as discourse and emotions of the social agents resulting from often hierarchical relationships and symbolic interactions. Following such a methodological approach, I conceptualize the term "red-collars" as an affective social class that is both an objective and subjective social category. On the one hand, it is an objective category because, as we will see in the First Chapter, the Party's class restructuring policies after the revolution in 1948, in conjunction with the overall rise of white-collar positions, led to an increase in the number of young and educated people with socialist convictions in the country. However, these objective conditions themselves would lead only to the conglomeration of individuals with a common

[60] Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Power," *Sociological Theory 7* no.1 (Spring 1989): 19.
[61] Loïc Wacquant, "Symbolic power and group-making: On Pierre Bourdieu's Reframing of Class," *Journal of Classical Sociology 13* no.2 (May 2013): 274.

profession, worldview, or educational background. In order for these young white-collar individuals to become a critical social group, they needed to develop a sense of distinction and oppositional collective emotions in their often hierarchical social interactions with other groups. Thus, "the red collar" is also a subjective social category because it is socially rooted in the shared counter-hegemonic emotions against the status quo and ruling logic in the country.

Though this dissertation is primarily about the social and emotional roots of reform socialism in Czechoslovakia, it also offers a modest contribution to the scholarly debate on class restructuring and the emergence of the so-called "new class" after the socialist revolutions in the Eastern Bloc and in China.[62] In their seminal study *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, the Hungarian dissident-sociologists György Konrád and Ivan Szelényi put forward the thesis that the intelligentsia, as a class, seized power and became the dominant social group in late socialist societies.[63] They argued that the new socialist intelligentsia had merged with the bureaucratic elite and, contrary to the egalitarian principles of Marxism-Leninism, built a technocratic order favoring educated cadres (in terms of salaries, participation in the political decision-making processes, and access to cultural and educational resources) at the expense of the proletariats. The contemporary and subsequent studies on the social history of late-communist systems in Eastern Europe and China are mostly in line with Konrád and Szelényi's arguments about the emergence of the technocratic vision and the dominant status of the Party

[62] György Konrád and Ivan Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).
[63] This was a significant departure from Milovan Djilas's famous theory of new class, which had regarded the "bureaucratic elite," or high Party functionaries, as the new ruling class of socialist societies. For Konrád and Szelényi, as of 1960s, "the distinction between the bureaucracy and the intellectuals has become more and more open to question" and the highly trained technocratic cadres had been replacing the old Party veterans in the ruling circles. Konrád and Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, xiv; Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Praeger, 1957).

intelligentsia under late-socialism.[64] In what some scholars identified as "restratification," the socialist systems eventually jettisoned some of the radical distributive practices and established a new hierarchy within which cultural capital eventually became the basis of political capital, and the highly-trained Party cadres emerged as a dominant social group.[65]

The study of red-collars in Czechoslovakia offers a fresh perspective to the discussion about the rise of the new technocratic class across socialist countries in two ways. First, my research seeks to go beyond the analyses of the "new class" that posits the technocratic vision and eventual hegemony of the intellectuals in late-socialism as a logical consequence of the creation of a new educated class after the revolutions. At least as of the 1960s in Czechoslovakia, the bureaucratic elite, which was mostly composed of party veterans without former education, did not readily share power with the young, newly educated socialist intelligentsia, and the groups that had cultural and political capital remained mostly separate. As will be argued, particularly in the fifth chapter, the discrepancy between red-collars' cultural and political capital was one of the main reasons they mobilized to reform socialism. Second, my conceptualization of the red-collars as an emotional (as well as social) community emphasizes the fragmented

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[64] For studies on the emergence of the new class and restructuring after the revolution, see Peter Ludz, *The Changing Party Elite in East Germany* (Cambridge, M.A.: MIT Press, 1972); Thomas Baylis, *The Technical Intelligentsia and the East German Elite: Legitimacy and Social Change in Mature Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Kendall Bailes, *Technology and Society Under Lenin and Stalin: Origins of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia*, 1917-1941 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978); David Lane, *The End of Social Equality?: Class, Status and Power under State Socialism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982); Joel Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Benjamin Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia: Universities and Intellectual Life under Stalin and Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[65] For a use of the term "restratification," see John Connelly, *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish higher education, 1945-1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 252; Unlike Konrád and Szelényi, who portrayed the technocratic characteristics of socialist rule as the outcome of a deliberate Party plan, many of the later studies regarded them as a deviation or a retreat from the original intentions and plans. See for instance, Joel Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers*, 4; Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 124-144; also see Nicholas Timasheff, *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1946).

nature of the post-revolutionary new intelligentsia. Despite their shared generational and social commonalities, the new post-revolutionary intelligentsia was not a uniform "class-for-itself" as scholars (including Konrád and Szelényi) have sometimes claimed.[66] They developed varying political attitudes towards the Party leadership and their ruling logic in the country, and, as we will see, their emotions were key denominators in this differentiation. Thus the term red-collars does not refer to the new intellectual class in its totality but to an "emotional community" within it.

As in all historical research, the present study encountered certain silences, which are telling on their own and suggest future avenues of research. First, although the red-collars consisted of both men and women, the majority of the red-collar individuals cited in this dissertation are men, due to their greater representation in the Czechoslovak political and cultural scenes. Perhaps because of the prevailing patriarchy, women's rights issues were conspicuously absent in the debates and proclamations of the red-collars. Second, unlike women's rights issues, political and cultural demands of the Slovak intellectuals for greater national rights and representation were at the forefront of the political discussions during the Prague Spring. At the same time, however, in the context of this research, that is red-collars' socio-emotional responses to the past and present state of socialism in Czechoslovakia, my sources do not show a Slovak deviation from the norms of emotional expression. In other words, when expressing their emotional pain and complaints over their low social status, Czech and Slovak intellectuals were

[66] In addition to Konrád and Szelényi, for conceptualization of the post-war intelligentsia as a class for itself, consciously acting out of their political interests, see Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power: The Post-Stalin Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). For a fruitful discussion about the conceptualization of intelligentsia in Russian and Soviet historiography, see Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia*, 7-12.

seemingly in synchrony with each other. For this reason, I envision the red-collars as a Czechoslovak (rather than Czech or Slovak) phenomenon.

Sources and Survey of Chapters

Before discussing my sources and presenting a summary of the chapters, I shall clarify some of the terminology used throughout the dissertation. In addition to the term "red-collars," I use the term "intelligentsia" or "intellectuals" to refer to the whole spectrum of the university or *gymnasium* educated people.[67] In other words, while by the term red-collars, I refer to a particular group of people with specific generational, emotional, and social backgrounds, I use the terms "intellectual" or "intelligentsia" more as a generic term referring to a broader group of educated people in the society. I also use the word literati to refer to the relatively small number of cultural actors (i.e., writers, journalists, academics) active in the media.

The present study is based on a wide range of sources, which include print media materials (e.g., newspapers, cultural magazines, theoretical journals) as well as cultural products such as literary works and films. I did an extensive reading of the commentaries, declarations, and polemics on a wide range of social, political and cultural issues in influential publications in both the Czech Lands and Slovakia, including *Rudé právo*, *Pravda*, *Literární noviny*, and *Kultúrny život*. Also, I have done archival research in the National Archive (*Národní archiv*) in Prague and the Archive of the Institute of National Memory (*Ústav pamäti národa*) in Bratislava.

[67] This is in accordance with the usage of the term *inteligence* in the Czech and Slovak languages. The term was often used as a value-free substitute for "petit-bourgeoisie," which had a negative connotation in the Marxist lexicon. Thus, when communist politicians and writers write and talk about the intelligentsia, they often refer to the whole educated layer of society. While the people who were employed in the industries that required technical knowledge and skills, such as engineers, technicians, and doctors, were called "technical intelligentsia," (*technické intelligence*), those who worked in the cultural industry (journalists, writers, editors etc.) were "cultural laborers"(*kulturní pracovníci)*. See for instance, "Úloha technické intelligence v rozvoj socialistického soutěžení," *Tvorba*, April 12, 1951, 338-339; "Velká manifestace českých kulturních pracovníků," *Rudé Právo*, May 31, 1945, 1.

In particular, I have looked at the large collection of secret police (*StB*) reports documenting the public moods and subversive comments made by individuals as well as the letters Party members sent to the chairman Antonín Novotný after 1956. Although I used these sources only in the second chapter, they were vital in helping me understand the fears and concerns of Party leaders and members of the security apparatus about the rise of criticism and reformist sentiments in the country.

Perhaps, more controversially, in order to capture the views and emotions of the broader, red-collar reading public rather than a relatively small number of literati, I often drew on readers' letters to the newspapers and weekly magazines. Almost all the major publications regularly published letters from their readers, who commented and polemicized about a wide range of topics from problems of public transportation to the meaning of de-Stalinization. Some of these letters demonstrate a surprising degree of defiance against the official rhetoric of the party leaders, often exceeding the tone of criticism offered by the reformist public intellectuals. These letters provide vital information for my research as they reflect the views, perceptions, and feelings of members of the reading public. Admittedly however, because the print media was subject to heavy party censorship and letters were presumably edited before their publication, to what extent they were authentic reflections of the feelings and views of the readers is an open question. Yet, regardless of the level of authenticity, the very fact that these subversive letters appeared in the print journals point towards a shift within the system itself, whereby media gave space to views critical of ruling elites and orthodoxies. For this reason, the publication of critical letters from readers reinforces my arguments about the widening influence of critical, reformist networks and their emotional repertoires. The first chapter analyzes the Communist Party's efforts to create a loyal socialist intelligentsia after the revolution. After 1948, as part of the

efforts for creating a new, ideologically loyal intelligentsia, the Party implemented an affirmative action policy for the children from working-class and socialist family backgrounds in university admissions. The chapter focuses on the long-term consequences of this policy and argues that, despite the setbacks, the Party was mostly successful in creating a new socialist intelligentsia, who were employed in large numbers, especially in the critical cultural and political sectors. These first student cohorts of socialism, who had just achieved remarkable upward social mobility, became the backbone of the reform socialist movement in the 1960s.

The second chapter follows the fresh graduates of the socialist universities into the 1950s. In many ways, the chapter studies the political emotions of the young revolutionaries after the revolutionary élan of the postwar era began to fade. Already before 1956, there were mildly critical articles, cartoons, and letters appearing in the communist press, complaining about the shortage economy and the privileges of the party higher-ups. Then in 1956, Khrushchev's secret speech came as a shock and brought a shared sense of guilt and betrayal among many members of the newly emerging socialist urban class. The chapter will argue that these emotions played a crucial role in the emergence of "red-collars" as a critical socio-emotional group against the Party's ruling logic in the country. Here I will pay particular attention to how "us" and "them" rhetoric appeared for the first time between the members of the top Party elites and young intelligentsia. Although the Party elites were eventually able to contain the criticisms through imposing tight censorship after the 1956 uprising in Hungary, the division between the Party higher-ups and dissident red-collars first became obvious during this period.

While the Party was able to contain criticism in the print media and public forums, the country's film industry showed remarkable resilience and frequently transgressed the limitations imposed by the ideological departments of the Party. The third chapter analyzes the self-image

and distinction of red-collars in the early Czechoslovak New Wave films, made between 1956 and 1964. The directors of these so-called "Ur-Wave" films were red-collars. They had become part of the film industry largely thanks to their socialist family backgrounds or Party memberships, and their films provide invaluable insights into the self-image of red-collars in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The films often portrayed red-collar protagonists stuck and struggling between the careerist Party elites and insensitive workers in the new socialist reality. Through content and reception analysis of several of the most influential of these early New Wave films, the chapter will analyze how red-collars distinguished themselves from not only Party elites but also from the members of the working-class under socialism in the country.

The fourth and fifth chapters dissect the duality between "idealistic" negative political emotions and social class aspirations of red-collars and investigate the way in which they contribute together to the making of the reformist mental and emotional geography before and during the Prague Spring. The fourth chapter studies the emotional reaction of red-collars to the social and cultural transformation they were witnessing in the 1960s. As they became painfully aware of the exhaustion of socialist ideology, especially among young people, many red-collars reflected on the ebullient revolutionary hopes and dreams of their own youth years. In these reflections, they voiced a profound sense of remorse for their beliefs and actions during the Stalinist era. At the same time, while regretting over their past, they expressed anxiety over the irrelevance of socialism for the new generations. However, crucially, I argue that these feelings about the past and present state of socialism did not lead to cynicism or apathy. In emphasizing their melancholic feelings about the past and present state of socialism in the country, red-collars reflexively fueled their desire to reform the system and revive the revolutionary ethos during the 1960s.

Chapter five looks at how the red-collar desire for negating the Stalinist past and reviving the revolutionary spirit entangled with their class politics before and during the Prague Spring. Criticizing the unqualified top Party cadres for their moral and administrative blindness in leading socialism, the red-collars, as holders of the educational capital and communist credentials, demanded a better socio-political position for educated cadres (like themselves, conveniently) to implement the rules of scientific and efficient management in the country. In this way, they argued, as scientific management would eliminate the residues of Stalinism and increase the overall living standards in the country, the revolutionary ethos of the postwar era would be reinstated in society. However, such a technocratic vision alienated many of the blue-collar cadres in the Party ranks, who regarded, with justification, reform socialism and later the Prague Spring as a movement of the intelligentsia.

The conclusion briefly analyzes the emotional impact of the Warsaw Pact invasion through the emotion of *lítost*, a unique Czech and Slovak word for describing the feeling of powerlessness, resentment, and regret after the realization of irreparable harm. Following the initial months of resistance to the invasion, many red-collars came to the painful realization that the political experiment they had been part of for the last two decades was irrevocably lost. With feelings of *lítost*, the red-collars accepted the depoliticized domesticity propagated by the post-invasion communist regime of Gustáv Husák, the so-called "normalization" era, and as a result, ceased to exist as a relevant social and political force in the country.

Chapter One:

The Revolution and Its Intelligentsia

On May 9, 1945, the official newspaper of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ), *Rudé Právo*, appeared openly for the first time after seven years of operating underground with a proud and straightforward title: "Long live the Red Army, Red Tanks are in Prague."[1] Earlier that day, units of the Soviet Second Front, along with the 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps, had entered and cleared the city of the battle-weary German army. The city's conqueror-liberator, Marshal Konev, arrived in his open-top car to be greeted by thousands of celebrating Praguers.[2] For the celebrating citizens, the war was over; more than six years of occupation had finally come to an end.

In those fateful spring months of 1945, when Red Army units brought an end to German occupation and liberated the Czech lands and Slovakia, they not only removed fascism from the country but also placed traditional pro-Western Czechoslovak parliamentary democracy, which was expected to be restored after the war, into serious ideological jeopardy. The betrayal by Western democracies at the Munich conference of 1938 and the liberation by the Red Army significantly boosted the prestige of the Soviet Union and the popularity of the Communist Party in the country.[3] In 1946, thanks to the unprecedented level of support it now enjoyed in broader

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[1] "Ať žije Rudá armáda!"*Rudě Právo*, May 9, 1945.
[2] The American army liberated Pilsen in Western Bohemia and stopped at the predetermined demarcation line just beyond the town of Rokycany, about eighty kilometers west of Prague.
[3] For the impact of the war on the rise of communism in Czechoslovakia, see Jaroslav Kadiva, *Kultura a Politika 1945-1948* (Prague: Nakladatelství Svoboda, 1968), 88-93; Karel Kaplan, *The Short March: The Communist Takeover in Czechoslovakia 1945-1948* (London: C. Hurst, 1987), 55-58; Jon Bloomfield, *Passive Revolution:*

society, the Czechoslovak Communist Party won the first democratically held election with a strong plurality of the vote. Two years later, in February 1948, using a government crisis as a pretext, it declared a revolution and abolished Czechoslovakia's multi-party liberal democracy.

The immediate postwar years were pivotal in the ideological development of the red-collars as a critical social group. Many of its members became committed communists and party members during this period, taking part in both the revolutionary mobilization that led to a Communist takeover in 1948 and also the subsequent Stalinist crackdown on perceived enemies of the revolution. After 1948, benefiting from the Party's efforts to create a socialist intelligentsia, the young revolutionaries were able to enroll in universities, eventually filling the growing white-collar sectors en masse.

This chapter sets the stage for the rest of the dissertation by discussing the emotional and social transformation of Czechoslovak youth of the 1940s. After a brief summary of the history of communism in the country, the chapter will examine how the traumas of war and occupation made communist ideals popular among youth and inspired a feeling of "revolutionary élan," prompting them to embrace the combative confrontation of Stalinism with the liberal intelligentsia and their "bourgeois" values. The chapter will then analyze the Party's efforts in forming a new intelligentsia after the revolution and the role that the revolutionary 1948ers played in this effort. By examining the revolutionary élan of the postwar era and the Party's efforts in class restructuring through positive discrimination in higher education, the chapter will lay out the social and emotional roots of the future red-collar group.

Politics and the Czechoslovak Working Class, 1945-1948 (London: Allison and Busby, 1979), 112-114; Bradley Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Culture of Communism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 9-12.

There is substantial literature on how education functioned as one of the main mechanisms for class restructuring and state-sponsored social mobility after the communist revolutions in Eastern Europe and China. [4] Scholars such as Sheila Fitzpatrick, Joel Andreas, and John Connelly have examined the efforts of communist parties to eliminate class distinctions and create a loyal intelligentsia through higher education mechanisms, providing a comprehensive picture of how the parties tackled, contested, and at times negotiated with existing educational norms, academic circles, and cultural establishments. While the literature on the Czechoslovak case is nowhere near as extensive as the cases in China or the Soviet Union, several sociologists and social historians have reflected on the Party's affirmative action policies after the revolution, arguing that these policies were, for the most part, successful in transforming the composition of the intelligentsia and eliminating class distinctions of the earlier era.[5]

In his comparative study of the "Sovietization" of universities in East-Central Europe, John Connelly forcefully argues against this popular view, claiming that the KSČ's plans for creating its own intelligentsia through revolutionized universities ultimately resulted in failure.[6] Outlining various setbacks that the Party experienced in bringing workers to the universities (e.g., workers' reluctance to pursue higher education, insufficient academic preparation from

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[4] For the role of education in social mobility after the revolution in China and the Soviet Union, M. N.Ruthkevich and F. R. Filippov, "Social Sources of Recruitment of the Intelligentsia," in *Social Stratification and Mobility in the USSR*, ed., Murray Yanowitch and Wesley A. Fisher (White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1973), 241–274; James C. McClelland, "Proletarianizing the Student Body: The Soviet Experience during the New Economic Policy," *Past and Present* 80 (August, 1978), 122-146; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineer*; Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia*. To my knowledge, John Connelly's *Captive University* remains the only comparative study of higher education and its role in the Communist Party's plans for class restructuring after the revolution in East-Central Europe. Connelly, *Captive University*.

[5] For discussions about the social roots of the new intelligentsia in Czechoslovakia, see Pavel Machonin, *Sociální struktura Československa v předvečer Pražského jara 1968* (Prague: Karolinum, 1992), 29-36; Jaroslav Krejčí, *Social Change and Stratification in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (London: Palgrave, 1972), 49-61; Kalinová, *Sociální reforma a sociální realita*, 88-119; Pavel Urbášek and Jiří Pulec, *Vysokoškolský vzdělávací systém*, 91-93.

[6] Connelly, *Captive University*, 249-272.

preparatory courses), Connelly emphasized that the percentage of students from working-class families never formed a majority of the overall composition of the students at universities. Thus, he concluded, the Party's affirmative action policies were unsuccessful in bringing enough students from the working classes and, in the long run, did not accomplish the goal of creating an ideologically loyal socialist intelligentsia.[7]

Whether the Party succeeded in creating a socialist intelligentsia after the revolution or not depends, of course, on the criteria used for interpretation. Here I suggest using more comprehensive criteria than Connelly, and consider affirmative action for the working-class students in conjunction with the policy of preferential treatment that favored communist students irrespective of their class backgrounds. In other words, this chapter will point out that, in the first few years after 1948, in addition to the students with working-class backgrounds, the Party admitted thousands of students with anti-fascist or communist backgrounds to universities, irrespective of their class origins. Thus, to evaluate the effectiveness of the Party's policies in creating a socialist intelligentsia, the chapter will examine not only the changes in the class-background of the university students but also the overall transformation in the ideological outlook of the new intelligentsia after the revolution.

The Setting: The History of Communism in Czechoslovakia until 1948

Already before the war, the Czechoslovak Communist Party was the third-largest Party in the Communist International outside of the Soviet Union, with 150,000 members and strong working-class support.[8] The Party was founded by the branch that left the Czechoslovak Social

[7] Connelly, *Captive University*, especially 266-272.
[8] H. Gordon Skilling, "Gottwald and the Bolshevization of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia," *Slavic Review* 20, no.4 (Dec 1961), 645. The figure is from 1928. In 1929, the party underwent an internal leadership crisis, and, as

Democratic Party in 1921, and won 13.2 percent of the votes in their first election in 1925.[9] In the beginning, instead of the Leninist model of revolution, the Party leaders advocated for using democratic means to acquire political power and bring socialism to the country. However, with the victory of the Bolshevik group headed by Klement Gottwald in the Fifth Congress in 1929, the Party abruptly abandoned its parliament-friendly approach and aligned itself with the Comintern, which urged communists in all countries to overthrow the bourgeois establishment through proletarian revolution. In his maiden speech to the Czechoslovak National Assembly, Gottwald, when accused of taking orders from Moscow, responded:

> We are the Party of the Czechoslovak proletariat and our supreme revolutionary staff is in fact a Moscow .... We go to Moscow to learn from the Russian Bolsheviks how to wring your necks. And you know that the Russian Bolsheviks are masters in this.[10]

However, the "Bolshevization of the Party" and confrontational attitudes toward bourgeois institutions did not yield successful results for the Party in the 1930s. Despite its relative strength vis-à-vis the other communist parties in the Comintern, the KSČ achieved only mediocre election results, remaining a small opposition Party throughout the decade. After its member numbers peaked in late 1928, it lost more than two-thirds of its members by 1934.[11] While the communists had considerable working-class support, especially in the Czech lands, the

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a result, lost two thirds of its membership by 1934. Yet, even then, there were almost twice as many as card-carrying communists in Czechoslovakia than in France, which had the next largest communist party. Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin vol.2: Waiting for Hitler 1929-1941* (New York: Penguin, 2017), 155.

[9] Zdeněk Suda, *Zealots and Rebels: A History of the Ruling Communist Party of Czechoslovakia* (Stanford: California: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), 82.

[10] Cited in Skilling, "Gottwald and Bolshevization of the Party," 643.

[11] For the data on Party membership, see Skilling, "Gottwald and the Bolshevization of the Party," 645.

centrist parties such as the Social Democrats and the National Socialists were far more popular among the middle class than the KSČ.[12]

The capitulation of British and French liberal democracies at Munich in 1938 and the six years of German occupation greatly altered the liberal sensibilities of the prewar order and significantly boosted communist popularity in the country.[13] An important part of the growing communist appeal to the Czechoslovak public came from their uncompromising resistance against German occupation. In 1938, the Communist Party was the most vocal critic of the Munich Agreement and urged the Czechoslovak government to resist Hitler by mobilizing the military, while the Soviet Union was the only major world power that openly condemned the agreement. The partisan resistance and subsequent liberation by the Red Army gave the Party an immense moral superiority, and made the communist worldview more credible among the population.[14]

In the first year after liberation, the Party had a massive surge in its membership, gaining more than one million new members, dwarfing all other political parties "with the second-place National Socialist Party having less than half its number of members."[15] Moreover, by late December 1945, 73.5 percent of the labor force (1,696,698 employees) in Bohemia and Moravia were members of the communist-dominated Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (*Revoluční odborové hnutí - ROH*).[16] Even after the mass joining of middle-class citizens, the Party

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[12] Karel Kaplan, *Znárodnění a socialismus* (Prague: Práce, 1968), 68-69; Jaroslav Opat, *O novou demokracii: příspěvek k dějinám národně demokratické revoluce v Československu v letech 1945-1948* (Prague: Academia, 1966), 75-76. The Czech National Socialist Party was the most popular liberal-nationalist, non-communist party in postwar Czechoslovakia and, despite a similiar-sounding name, was not affiliated with German National Socialists.
[13] Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation*, 148-155.
[14] For the impact of communist resistance on the popularity of communist ideas, see Kladiva, *Kultura a Politika*, 88-89.
[15] Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation*, 57.
[16] Bloomfield, *Passive Revolution*, 129-130.

remained first and foremost a working-class organization. By March 1946, it counted 577,000 industrial workers as members in its ranks, representing 57.7 percent of the total membership.[17] In addition, people with working-class backgrounds also dominated the Party leadership. The Party Chairman Klement Gottwald was a tailor, and his second-in-command Antonín Zápotocký was a stonemason by trade.[18]

The overall radicalization of society was reflected in the programs and discourse of other political parties, as well. The entire political spectrum shifted to the left. The main difference between the Communist Party and Social Democrat Party was their preferred method for achieving a socialist end; whether by democratic evolution or proletarian revolution, they agreed that the end goal was the same vague political concept of socialism.[19] Even the non-socialist centrist parties, such as the People's Party in the Czech lands or the Slovak Democratic Party, declared their support for "social reforms that were not contrary to socialism or that even resembled it."[20] The pro-Western and anti-communist political parties and actors of the First Republic, such as the liberal-nationalist National Socialist Party and the president Edvard Beneš, now argued that Czechoslovakia could stand as a friendly mediator between the Soviet East and the democratic West in postwar Europe without allying exclusively with either.

In April 1945, a month before the liberation of Prague, the Communist Party, following Moscow's directives, created an alliance with the liberal, conservative and social democratic parties, forming a "National Front" government to transition the country from a German-

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[17] Kaplan, *Znarodneni,* 111. Of the remainder, farmers formed 12.8 percent, small craftsmen and shopkeepers (živnostníci) 4.1 percent, intelligentsia 9.2 percent, and "others" 16.2 percent. See G. Wightman and A.H.Brown, "Changes in the Levels of Membership and Social Composition of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, 1945-73" *Soviet Studies 73,* no.3 (July 1975), 399.
[18] Five members of the twelve-man politburo were from working-class backgrounds. Only two politburo members (Jaromír Dolanský and Zdeněk Nejedlý) were university graduates.
[19] Kaplan, *Short March,* 34-35.
[20] Kaplan, *Short March,* 34.

occupied regime to democracy.[21] During this period, the KSČ leadership adopted a more moderate stance with regard to the nature of the socialist revolution while retaining its nationalistic, anti-German discourse. In their campaign for the 1946 election, they repeatedly emphasized that they would not copy the Soviet model and, instead, would lead them on the "Czechoslovak national road" to socialism. Although what constituted the national road to socialism was far from clear, it seemed the Party leadership no longer regarded the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as a precondition for socialist change. Instead of class war and a 1917-style revolution, the Communist Party made moderate promises such as a six-hour workday, better wages, national employee insurance, and further land reforms.[22] While in their discourse, the communists maintained their revolutionary rhetoric and socialist ethos, their Party program and election promises were almost identical to the social democrats.[23]

The strategy of combining revolutionary rhetoric, anti-German sentiment, pro-Slavic nationalism, and moderate election promises proved successful for the Communist Party. In the first postwar Czechoslovak parliamentary election, which took place on May 26, 1946, the KSČ finished in first, obtaining 38.1 percent of the total vote, making it by electoral standards the most successful communist Party in Europe after the war. [24] By way of comparison, in the elections held in 1945 and 1946, the French Communist Party had 26 percent of the total vote, the Italian Communist Party 19 percent, and Hungarian communists only 17 percent of the total vote.[25] Although its Slovak branch was second in rural and more catholic Slovakia, strong

[21] Kaplan, *Short March,* 38.
[22] Martin M. Myant, *Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia 1945-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 106.
[23] Myant, *Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia*, 120-123.
[24] This figure is the total votes of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), which went to election in the Czech Lands, and Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS). Two parties merged after 1948.
[25] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (Penguin: New York, 2005), 79.

support in the industrial centers of the Czech lands gave the Communist Party almost one million more votes than their main rival, the National Socialist Party.[26]

The results solidified the position of the Communist Party as a dominant yet not exclusive political force in the country.[27] After the elections, the Party kept its coalition with the National Front government and, by extension, its ideological commitment to the "national path to socialism." A new, parliament-friendly "Czechoslovak road to socialism" replaced the "dictatorship of the proletariat" line of the interwar era. In his lecture to Slovak Party functionaries in Bratislava, titled "Our Road to Socialism," the chairman of the Slovak Communist Party Viliam Široký claimed that Marxist-Leninist theory should not be taken as "dogma" and that communists, instead of copying the Soviet model, ought to consider the domestic and international conditions very carefully in developing their strategies and policies. He argued that the Bolshevik model of the revolution was only one of many ways to achieve socialism, and Czechoslovak communists needed to find their own national road to construct socialism.[28] The Party ideologues explained the shift from the "proletariat dictatorship" line to the "Czechoslovak road" as a result of a change in the strength of the reactionary bourgeoisie in the country. Accordingly, because the bourgeoisie had dominated every aspect of political life during the First Republic, communists had no choice but to adopt Lenin's dictatorship of the proletariat line to fight against reactionary forces. Yet, as the argument went on, thanks to the victory over fascism and the elimination of the reactionary finance-capitalist class in the country, socialism could now be achieved through peaceful, parliamentary means.[29]

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[26] While the KSČ received 2.205.697 votes, Czech National Socialists had 1.298.980.
[27] Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 22.
[28] "Súdr. Široký o našej ceste k socializmu," *Pravda,* February 25, 1947.
[29] See for instance, Fr. Lužický, "O různých cestach k socialismu," *Tvorba* 15 (1946): 796–97.

At the same time, however, the notion of a "national path to socialism" did not stop the KSČ leadership from striving for greater control in critical governmental and bureaucratic institutions. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Ministry of Interior, which controlled the police, proved to be the key institution where the Party sought to strengthen its grip. When in February 1948 the Communist Minister of the Interior, Václav Nosek, attempted to purge the leading non-communist elements in the police force, the liberal members of the Czechoslovak cabinet made a crucial mistake and submitted their resignations in protest. Believing that public opinion would back them on the issue, the resigning members presumed that President Beneš would reject their resignations and new elections would be called.[30] Sensing an opportunity, the KSČ responded with widespread strikes and rallied thousands of people for mass demonstrations, demanding that President Beneš appoint an all-communist government. Fearing political turmoil and civil war, Beneš accepted the communists' demands, giving way to the proclamation of a new socialist constitution in parliament. Beneš refused to sign the constitution and resigned from the presidency. When Gottwald replaced him, this simply meant that the communist takeover in the country was complete. Within a few weeks, the Communist Party, capitalizing on the weaknesses of the mainstream liberal parties and backed by strong industrial working-class support, used mass demonstrations and strikes to consolidate power and overthrow the capitalist-democratic order without foreign intervention. As émigré historian Vilém Prečan noted, "unlike in Poland and Hungary, Czechoslovakia was the only country in East-Central Europe that a Soviet-style totalitarian regime was installed without Soviet presence or intervention."[31]

[30] Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation*, 276.
[31] Vilém Prečan, *V kradeném čase: Výběr ze studií, článků a úvah z let 1973–1993* (Brno: Doplněk 1994), 116.

The communist revolution in Czechoslovakia, or "Victorious February" (*Vítězný únor*) as the communists later called it, was a significant milestone on the road to the Cold War. It further strained the already tense relationship between the emerging blocs, and soon there would be a hostile stand-off between the capitalist West and the communist East.[32] The revolution, the intensification of the Cold War, and the Soviet-Yugoslav split brought a gradual end to the "national path to socialism" line in Czechoslovakia, and the communist leaders began to portray the Bolshevik model, with its "class warfare" and the "dictatorship of the proletariat" lines, as the only way to achieve "scientific socialism" in the country. [33] While the Party removed opposition parties, independent civil society organizations, and media apparatuses, the communist intellectuals propagated the need for deepening class struggle and wiping the residues of a bourgeois way of thinking from the hearts and minds of the people. The Party leadership and ideologues now called for class warfare against the enemies of the revolution within the country and with the imperialists abroad. Gone was the sympathetic discourse about the country's democratic heritage, or the possibility of a national, non-Bolshevik way to achieve socialism in the country.

However, convincing ordinary Czech and Slovak citizens that the Czechoslovak road to socialism was no longer open did not prove to be an easy task. Even though the communist press was filled with portrayals of happy workers—who benefited from the material and recreational gains after the revolution—some members of the literati reported a sense of confusion and discontent about the end of democratic traditions and institutions in the country among some of

[32] As Tony Judt wrote: "The Prague coup was of enormous significance, precisely because it came in a more or less democratic country that had seemed so friendly to Moscow. It galvanized the Western allies, who inferred from it that Communism was on the march westwards." Judt, *Postwar*, 139.
[33] For a good summary of the end of the "national road to socialism," see Myant, *Socialism and Democracy in Czechoslovakia*, 233-242.

the reading public. In May 1948, one of the supporters of the new line reported that his ordinarily well-tempered elderly friend was very upset about the political developments, and told him: "Excuse me, what are you all doing? Is this a democracy? With only one candidate? *Audiatur et altera pars*! Let others also speak up! Democracy is, above all, about the discussion."[34] The writer then lamented that the people did not understand the meaning and the value of the "people's democracy," and that there was a strong need for the ideological education of society.

The problem for the Party leadership was that not only the general public but also members of the communist intelligentsia were confused about the ideological change after the revolution, and did not readily accept it. As late as August 1948, an instructor in the political school for Party members in the Bohemian town of Liberec was still teaching pupils that the political developments in Czechoslovakia were different than what had happened in Russia in 1917:

> Our road to socialism is specifically Czechoslovak because of the higher consciousness of the masses (in Czechoslovakia). We move towards socialism without revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, but, relying on the working-class, we will realize socialism through nationalization of the key industries, land reform, and (thus) controlling the means of production.[35]

The lecture was published in a local Party journal in Liberec (*Stráž severu*), conveying the message that it was still the Party line. Soon both the political school and the journal came under strong attack in *Tvorba* by Gustav Bareš, one of the leading and most prolific communist intellectuals at the time. "So in other countries, the masses have less developed consciousness, and that is why our road to socialism ought to be different?" Bareš rhetorically asked, and called

[34] Julius Dolanský, "Jde o demokracii," *Tvorba*, May 19, 1948, 1.
[35] Cited in Gustav Bareš, "O naši cestě k socialismu," *Tvorba*, September 22, 1948, 741.

such a view "blatant idiocy and an example of harmful national big-headedness, which is not only offensive to Russian workers but also working people of the other countries."[36] He argued that the key question in the road to socialism is not the consciousness level of the working class, nor can socialism be achieved only through the nationalization of key industries and land reform. The fundamental question was instead, "to whom belongs the political power (*komu patři politická moc*)?" [37] The foundation to socialism in Czechoslovakia, as elsewhere in the world, lay in "breaking the power of capitalists and big-landowners and building people's democracy, where working people have the power under the leadership of the working class."[38] Bareš claimed that, thanks to the "Victorious Revolution," the communists now had the political power and, unlike the revisionists in Yugoslavia, "the road to socialism in Czechoslovakia has to and will be the road of Marxism-Leninism."[39]

The end of the "Czechoslovak road to socialism" brought what H.G. Skilling called the persisting "dualism of Czechoslovak communism."[40] On the one side stood those who, despite the apparent changes in the official Party line, still believed in democratic mechanisms and an alternative national road to socialism. On the other side, there were the people "cleaving to the Soviet Union and properly Bolshevik traditions."[41] As we will see, the Party leaders and ideologues explained the differentiation among socialist intellectuals with regard to the Stalinist turn by two mutually reinforcing arguments. First, because the majority of the Czech and Slovak

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[36] Bareš, "O naši cestě," 741. He added that, after all, the Russian working class had demonstrated their ideological maturity (*vyspelost*) in the October Revolution in 1917.
[37] Bareš, "O naši cestě," 741.
[38] Bareš, "O naši cestě," 741.
[39] Bareš, "O naši cestě," 741.
[40] Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 21-42.
[41] Bradley Abrams, "Hope Died Last: The Czechoslovak Road to Stalinism," in *Stalinism Revisited: The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 355.

intelligentsia came from bourgeois families, even the socialists among them could not grasp the necessity of class war as it meant fighting against their own class. Second, decades-long bourgeois indoctrination had a lasting influence on the political sensibilities of the members of the intelligentsia, who had studied in bourgeois-controlled schools. Therefore, in their view, the main dividing lines between those intellectuals who supported the Stalinist turn and the ones who were uncertain about it were their class backgrounds and exposure level to bourgeois indoctrination. Thus, they argued, in order to create a loyal and socially conscious intelligentsia, there was an urgent need to "democratize" the school system and allow proletarians to join the ranks of the intelligentsia.[42]

Revolutionary Élan and the Fight for A New Intelligentsia

As argued above, communism before German occupation in Czechoslovakia was largely a movement of the industrial workers, and the level of support for the Party among the intelligentsia was considerably lower.[43] However, especially for the younger generation, the German occupation and subsequent war blurred the distinction between the blue-collar and white-collar milieus. In November 1939, the German occupation regime, the so-called Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, closed down all Czech universities and eventually forced students to work as forced laborers in factories in the Czech lands and Germany. This forced proletarization brought students into contact with workers and led to an immense sense of discontent and national humiliation.[44] As the Red Army and the communist partisans appeared to be the strongest fighting force against the occupation regime, many of the students came to

[42] For a good overview of how the Party saw the country's intelligentsia; see Klement Gottwald, *O kultuře a úkolech intelligence* (Prague: Ministerstvo informací a osvěty, 1948).
[43] Wightman and Brown, "Changes in the Levels of Membership," 399.
[44] Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation*, 45-46 and 148-155.

sympathize with communist ideas and enthusiastically joined the Party ranks following liberation.

In her memoirs, Auschwitz escapee Heda Margolius-Kovály (b. 1919) explains how the communists won minds via hearts by recalling a heated discussion between two of her friends. On the one side stood Franta, a liberal democrat who remained passive like a "hibernated animal" during the war and, out of concern for his own safety, refused to give Margolius-Kovály shelter when she was living as a concentration camp escapee in Prague. On the other side stood communist Zdeněk, who had spent all the war years with partisans:

> Every argument Franta made for democracy sounded right and reasonable to me. But every argument Zdeněk made for communism was supported by the force of his personality and his experiences. Anything he said sounded strong and convincing simply because it was he who said it. As I listened to him, I felt almost ashamed to be agreeing with his opponent, Franta, who was so rational and prudent and who never forgot which side his bread was buttered on. It seemed unthinkable to choose Franta's side in this confrontation between caution and courage… The Communists at that time kept stressing the scientific basis of their ideology, but I know that the road that led many people into their ranks in Czechoslovakia was paved with good and strong emotions.[45]

Similarly, the émigre scholar Peter Hrubý (b. 1921) later remembered watching one of his friends, "the best Czech recitor of poetry…strenuously fighting all her humanist education and orientation as mere class prejudices and was trying to achieve complete victory over her 'bourgeois' past, till she became a steeled representative of the Bolshevik cause."[46] Hrubý observed that, due to experiences in the war, many people from his generation "accepted the Stalinist thesis that fascism was the last stage of capitalism. They expected all bourgeois

[45] Heda Margolius-Kovály, *Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague 1941-1968* (London: Granta, 2012), 56-57.
[46] Hruby, *Fools and Heroes*, 3.

democracies to develop into fascist systems, and at the same time, they imagined that the Soviet Union was a paradise of political as well as economic democracy."[47]

For many young Czechs and Slovaks, who came of age amid war, occupation, fascism, forced labor, and concentration camps, communism signified a hopeful new beginning within which past sufferings and injustices would be eliminated, or if necessary, avenged. In his memoirs, Zdeněk Mlynář (b. 1930), who later became an influential political figure during the Prague Spring, argued that the members of his generation, "the children of war" as he calls them, brought their "wartime mentality" into the first postwar years.[48] Not being old enough to participate in the resistance during the occupation, they joined the revolutionary cause "when the opportunity to fight for something presented itself at last.[49] For them, communism provided an opportunity to fight against the past, "sweep it aside, to overcome it in a revolutionary way."[50]

For the young communists of the postwar era, the country's mostly older, liberal intelligentsia, who were reluctant to adapt to the revolutionary élan of the times, represented what was wrong and immoral about the past. Writing in *Mladá Fronta* in November 1945, one young writer named Jozef Zika (b. 1921) argued that the country's intelligentsia was unable to think outside of their old mental framework and thus could not realize the coming of the new era.[51] Accordingly, because of their individualistic ideological upbringing, the intelligentsia was not able to "see the greatness of Gorky, Lenin, and Stalin" and were scared because they sensed capitalism was about to collapse and the communists would bring a new intelligentsia from the

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[47] Hruby, *Fools and Heroes*, 3.
[48] Zdeněk Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague* (New York: Karz Publishers, 1980), 2.
[49] Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 2.
[50] Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 2.
[51] Josef Zika, "Problém inteligence," *Mlada Fronta*, November 1, 1945, 1. The author, Josef Zika became a dissident after 1968 and published in *samizdat* literature.

classes that they considered "lowly and insignificant."[52] Similarly, another young writer, Vladimir Ruml (b. 1923), blamed the intelligentsia for "voluntarily serving the exploitative interests of the large industrial and agrarian reactionaries" for the sake of material benefits. "In the pursuit of gold," he declared, intellectuals "sell their value and [thus] the cash flows to their pockets."[53]

At the heart of the communist suspicion of the intelligentsia was their belief that the intelligentsia, as a class in itself, was the natural ally of the industrial bourgeoisie and large agrarian classes. For this reason, they advocated for the replacement of the old bourgeois intelligentsia with a new, socialist one. Contrary to petit-bourgeois sensibilities and the reactionary political convictions of the bourgeois intelligentsia, they argued that the new so-called "laboring-intelligentsia" (*pracující intelligence*) would have proletarian roots and promote progressive socialist ideals.[54] And, in order for this transformation to occur, the school system and student body (*studentstvo*) had to be revolutionized.

For the communists, who strongly believed in the correlation between one's social class and ideological orientation, this was not only an issue of social injustice; low working-class attendance at the universities constituted a political threat for the communist future. For instance, in January 1948, in an article titled "Social Sources of the Politics at the Universities" (*Sociální kořeny vysokoškolské politiky*), the twenty-two-year-old commentator and future economist Zdeněk Vergner (b. 1925) claimed that universities were an ideological apparatus of the bourgeoisie to create its own intelligentsia, "as a bearer of its ideas, economic and self-serving

[52] Zika, "Problém inteligence," 1.
[53] Vladimír Ruml, "Inteligence a pracujíci třida," *Lidová Kultura*, August 25, 1945, 1.
[54] For such arguments, see Ota Šik, "Komunisté pracující inteligenci," *Rudé Právo*, May 19, 1946, 11; Jaromír Dolanský, "Slovo k pracující inteligenci", *Tvorba*, March 17, 1948, 203-204; Jaroslav Černy, "Přiklad pracující inteligence," *Mladá fronta*, July 20, 1946, 2.

traditions."[55] He then explained the defeat of the leftist candidates at the faculty elections by analyzing the class backgrounds of the university students.[56] Vergner claimed the faculty election results demonstrated the power of the "reactionary forces" among university students, and it was mostly due to the absence of the working class among the university students. To demonstrate the impact of the class composition of student backgrounds on the political outcome of the elections, Vergner compared the results from the School of Pharmacy, where the rightist candidates received 95 percent of the votes, and the Academy of Performing Arts (*Akademie múzických umění v Praze - AMU*), where the leftist candidates won by receiving 60 percent of the votes. For Vergner, the chief reason for the difference between these two election results was the difference in the percentage of the working-class students: while the Pharmacy School had only 1.3 percent of students from working-class families, AMU had 10.17 percent. Accordingly, the comparison of the election results together with the working-class presence in the faculties was very telling, as it showed "how much influence even a small percentage of the people from working-class families would exert on the balance of political forces in the faculty associations."[57] Thus, in order to break the vicious cycle of bourgeois-elite dominance in the reproduction of the intelligentsia, Vergner urged the rapid democratization of higher education in the country.

In connection to the revolutionary élan of the postwar era and the widespread desire to eliminate past injustices, the Party heavily promoted the democratization of higher education in the country. The communist Minister of Education, Zdeněk Nejedlý, claimed that the governing bourgeois classes had been intentionally raising youth to be politically ignorant through the so-

[55] Zdenék Vergner, "Sociální kořeny vysokoškolské politiky," *Tvorba*, Jan 28, 1948,73-74
[56] Vergner, "Sociální kořeny," 73.
[57] Vergner, "Sociální kořeny," 73.

called apolitical education in schools.[58] Similarly, trade union chief and future president of the country, Antonín Zápotocký, wrote in his think piece in the communist student journal *Studentské noviny* that the intelligentsia had been used purposefully to serve the capitalists' class interests and, moreover, that schools were the main instrument in the functioning and reproduction of the country's caste system:

> Their caste upbringing was perhaps not as noticeable in schools as it was in social education. Student dance hours, student soirées, student balls, etc. All of this neatly limited to the caste, only for the invited, and for their guests "coming out" into society. All of this so that venerable bourgeois matrons will have a guaranteed selection of the men who are supposed to fertilize their ripening seedlings (*oplodňovat jejich dozrávající sazenice*). And for that reason this selection, before its own ripening to real life, has to receive its own registered trade marks: JUC, PhC, MUG, IngC, etc.[59]

Available statistical information from both the First Republic and the immediate postwar years indeed confirms that the communists were justified in their condemnation of the education system in the country; working-class children were, in fact, at a significant disadvantage in terms of access to education. According to the data collected by Czech sociologist Inocenc Arnošt Bláha, as of 1934, only 0.4 percent of workers were high school graduates, and the high cost of education and lack of funding for students with financial difficulties created a significant barrier for working-class children to attend even high school, let alone university.[60] As late as 1947, only 8 percent of university students came from working-class families.[61] It is thus not surprising

[58] Zdenék Nejedlý, "O ideovost školy," *Mladá fronta*, October 1, 1947, 2.
[59] These were the academic titles for the Czechoslovak university graduates. "Antonín Zápotocký hovoři ke studentstvu," *Studentské noviny*, January 21, 1947, 1-2. Cited in Connelly, *Captive University*, 106.
[60] Inocenc Arnošt Bláha, *Sociologie Inteligence* (Prague: Orbis, 1937), 97.
[61] For the percentage of working-class children among university students, see Vladimír Kaigl, "Výroba a vysoké školy," *Rudé Právo*, November 26, 1947, 2.

that the democratization of higher education became one of the highest priority issues in the Party's political agenda after the revolution.

Revolutionizing the Universities

Shortly after Victorious February, inspired by the Stalinist restructuring of the student bodies at universities in the 1930s, the KSČ began to implement a radical "affirmative action policy" for the children of the working class and small-peasant families in university and gymnasium admissions.[62] In doing this, the Party leadership hoped they would be able to form a new intelligentsia with a socialist ideological orientation and overall loyalty to the Party line. President Gottwald proclaimed to Party members that "in order to build socialism, the working people (*pracující lid*) must create and educate its own intelligentsia, coming from its core, connected with its class and ideology."[63] The Party General Secretary Rudolf Slánský explained to the members of the Central Committee exactly how the Party would create the new intelligentsia in more concrete terms:

> We will now regulate the selection of students to high schools and especially to universities and higher technical schools. We will mercilessly purge high schools and higher schools of reactionary students and we will be at pains to recruit the majority of students for high and higher schools from workers' families and families of the laboring strata. The working class is the most numerous, and the governing class and the social composition of the students must reflect this.[64]

As part of a plan to transform the ideological outlook of the country's intelligentsia, in addition to affirmative action for working-class students, the Party implemented mass purges

[62] Urbášek and Pulec, *Vysokoškolský vzdělávací systém*, 111-113; Also see, "Stalin o Inteligenci," *Tvorba*, May 12, 1948; "Nová inteligencia krajín ľudovej demokracie," *Pravda*, June 5, 1951, 4. For "affirmative action policies" in the Soviet Union, see Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*.
[63] Cited in Maňák, "Orientace KSČ," 110.
[64] Cited in Connelly, *Captive University*, 249.

against the suspected enemies of communism among the current students and academics at the universities. The student councils, which were comprised almost exclusively of communist students, were entrusted with identifying and expelling "reactionary" students and professors from universities. Given extraordinary powers to decide the fate of their fellow students and professors, the communist students embarked on the mission with revolutionary enthusiasm and zeal. As there were no exact criteria to decide who was considered reactionary or not, the student councils implemented the purges more or less freely and made decisions based on what one official complained was a "frivolous evaluation of students with greater wealth."[65] Pavel Machonin (b. 1927), a future sociologist and leading functionary in charge of the committees in Charles University (Prague), defined the students and academics to be expelled as "loafers, golden youth, nihilists, and basic enemies of honest work, incompetents and people socially irresponsible." [66] Overall, through the so-called "academic evaluation" (*studijní prověrka*), the student commissions expelled 8,608 students in total, 21.8 percent of the university students enrolled in the 1948-1949 academic year.[67] In addition, the student councils purged suspects among the professoriate, expelling an exceptionally high number of academics from faculties in humanities and law. For instance, twenty-five of the thirty-seven law professors in Charles University (Prague) and Masaryk University (Brno) lost their positions and were eventually replaced by communist, non-academic experts.[68] The screenings, which sporadically continued

[65] Cited in Connelly, *Captive University*, 250.
[66] Cited in Connelly, *Captive University*, 249.
[67] Connelly, *Captive University*, 250.
[68] Urbášek and Pulec, *Vysokoškolský vzdělávací systém*, 85-87. The purges in the only Slovak university at the time, Comenius University in Bratislava, were relatively lighter. Only thirteen professors were expelled from the university. Of these thirteen, five went into retirement, and the remaining found other jobs outside of academia. Jan Pešek, *Štátna Moc a Spoločnosť na Slovensku 1945-1948-1989* (Bratislava: Historický Ústav SAV, 2013), 275.

until the mid-1950s, became one of the Party's most effective disciplinary methods in maintaining ideological control of universities.[69]

While the Party purged "reactionary" students from universities, communist and working-class students filled their place. By the 1949-1950 academic year, only one year after the introduction of the affirmative action policy, the percentage of working-class children in gymnasiums in the Czech lands was raised from 8 percent to 46.5 percent.[70] Similarly, the number of university students with working-class and small peasant family backgrounds steadily rose until 1958, reaching 41.5 percent from 18 percent in 1946.[71] As historian Jiří Pulec puts it, "compared to pre-February levels, this was a breathtaking take-off" for the communists.[72]

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[69] Urbášek and Pulec, *Vysokoškolský vzdělávací systém*, 95-96. Meanwhile, the communist press frequently celebrated the purges of "collaborators and active agents of the enemies of the republic" in the universities. In December 1948, a commentator in the trade union newspaper in Slovakia, *Práca*, rhetorically asked: "Who could study before? Students at our universities were mostly sons of office-workers (*úradnikov*), rich peasants, and of course, the sons of capitalists and the factory-owners." He argued that as Victorious February broke the old order and made workers the rulers of the country, it would also change the "class character" of the universities and bring progressive "worker instinct" to the new intelligentsia. Vladimír Čorba, "Robotníci na univerzite," *Práca*, December 5, 1948, 2; see also "Očista na vysokých školách," *Pravda*, February 29, 1948, 6; "Gottwaldova vláda složila slib vysoké školy se zbavují reakcionářů," *Mladá fronta*, February 28, 1948, 1; "Nový duch ve studentstvu," *Rudé Právo*, April 24, 1948, 2.
[70] Connelly, *Captive University*, 254.
[71] Connelly, *Captive University*, 273.
[72] Urbášek and Pulec, *Vysokoškolský vzdělávací systém*, 92.

Table One: Percentage of University Students with Worker and Collective Farmer Backgrounds in the Czechoslovak Universities [73]

Year	Workers	Collective Farmers	Other
1947-1948	18%	Not Available.	82%
1950-1951	36.80%	Not Available.	63.20%
1953-1954	37.30%	Not Available.	62.70%
1955-1956	29.10%	13.40%	57.50%
1956-1957	31.40%	12.40%	56.20%
1957-1958	34.40%	12.60%	53.90%
1961-1962	36.80%	8.90%	54.30%
1962-1963	37.60%	8.80%	53.60%

As also discussed at the beginning of the chapter, whether affirmative action was ultimately successful in creating a socialist intelligentsia with a working-class consciousness and socialist convictions is open to interpretation. Czechoslovak scholars and commentators, including the later dissidents, traditionally regarded the new education policy in a positive light, praising it for democratizing and transforming the student profile at universities. In his memoirs, the journalist and dissident Jiří Pelikan claimed that after the revolution, through purges and affirmative action policies, the Party succeeded in removing "collaborators" and bringing a socialist student-body to the universities.[74] Likewise, the sociologists Pavel Machonin and

[73] The data until 1955 refers only to the student bodies at the universities in the Czech lands and, in these years, students from "collective farmer" backgrounds are not counted as a separate category. Ústřední úřad státní kontroly a statistiky, *Statistická ročenka republiky Československé 1957* (Prague: Orbis, 1957), 238; Ústřední úřad státní kontroly a statistiky, *Statistická ročenka republiky Československé 1958* (Prague: Orbis, 1958), 362; Ústřední komise lidové kontroly a statistiky, *Statistická ročenka Československé socialistické republiky* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství technické literatury, 1963), 422. Connelly, *Captive University*, 252.

[74] Jiří Pelikan, *Ein Frühling, der nie zu Ende geht* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1976), 77-79; In an interview with Connelly, Čestmír Císař, an important reformist politician of the 1960s, also regarded the affirmative action policy as a success. Connelly, *Captive University*, 386.

Jaroslav Krejčí portrayed the affirmative action policies as successful and claimed that by the 1960s, the Party was able to create a new type of intelligentsia with socialist convictions.[75] More recently, however, John Connelly challenged this view and argued that because the percentage of students from the working class and small peasant families never formed a majority at universities, the communist plan for creating its own intelligentsia was a failure.[76]

However, to evaluate the success or failure of the Party's post-revolutionary education policy, I think one needs to consider the fact that affirmative action for the working-class students took place in tandem with the mass recruitment of members of the communist youth, irrespective of their class backgrounds, to universities. Throughout the 1950s, especially in social science and law departments, the students with middle-class backgrounds were accepted only "when either of the parents stood the test of an explicitly positive attitude towards the system, or when they themselves after having worked one or several years in the industry were sent to further studies by their enterprises."[77] In fact, many well-known reform-socialist figures of the Czechoslovak 1960s, such as Milan Kundera, Radovan Richta, Ivan Klíma, and Antonín J. Liehm, could enroll at universities in the late 1940s and early 1950s despite their middle-class family backgrounds thanks to their Party activism during the pre-revolutionary era.

For instance, in his memoirs, aptly titled *My Crazy Century*, the writer and ex-dissident Ivan Klíma writes that when he applied to the University of Economics and Political Sciences to study journalism in the early 1950s, he felt the need to mention in the cadre questionnaire that two of his communist uncles had been executed by the Nazis.[78] In the end, despite coming from

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[75] Pavel Machonin and Jaroslav Krejčí, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-92: A Laboratory for Social Change* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 160; Krejčí, *Social Change and Stratification*, 49-61.
[76] Connelly, *Captive University*, 266-272.
[77] Krejčí, *Social Change and Stratification*, 49.
[78] Ivan Klíma, *My Crazy Century* (New York: Grove Press, 2013), 66.

a middle-class background, his own Party membership and communist family background facilitated his admittance to the school. Klíma remembered many of his classmates in the faculty were "indeed originally blue-collar workers or Youth Union members or Party functionaries."[79] Although members of the latter two groups ("Youth Union members" and "Party functionaries") were not necessarily from working-class family backgrounds, it did not make them ideologically less desirable for the Party.[80]

Unfortunately, there is no statistical data on the percentage of students who were admitted to universities on political grounds despite their non-working-class backgrounds. Nevertheless, considering that almost half of the students were from working-class families by the late 1950s (see Table One above), it is reasonable to speculate that through a combination of affirmative action and ideological screening policies, the Party ensured that the majority of university students either had working-class family backgrounds or explicit socialist credentials.

A New White-Collar Class

While the Party was implementing affirmative action and purges in universities to transform the country's intelligentsia, another issue at hand was what to do with the existing intelligentsia, a large group of the educated workforce already employed at various white-collar positions across the country. Shortly after the revolution, similar to the discussions about the university students and intelligentsia in general, the communist media and some of the rank-and-file members were calling for purges of the existing educated workforce, particularly the ones in managerial positions across the country. In April 1948, only two months after the revolution, the cultural magazine *Tvorba* opened up a public discussion about the role of the intelligentsia under

[79] Klíma, *My Crazy Century*, 66.
[80] Klíma himself was a member of the communist "Youth Union" (ČSM). Klíma, *My Crazy Century*, 62-65.

socialism and published a number of readers' letters on the topic. While the majority of the letters distinguished between "progressive" and "reactionary" groups within the intelligentsia and targeted the latter, some declared the whole of the intelligentsia a social layer (*vrstva*) of the bourgeoisie, and thus an enemy of the working class.[81] The letters from workers, in particular, reveal the intense distaste that some of the working-class rank-and-file communists felt for the country's educated middle class. A metal-worker from Ústí nad Labem wrote that even after the revolution, nothing had changed in the attitude of the intelligentsia toward the workers at the workplace:

> A good factory manager is perhaps one in a thousand…Some of them can work with workers especially well, but I would rather see an open enemy than hypocritical ones, especially here in the borderlands, where they are more visible than elsewhere. From directors all the way to the foremen in the workplace, all of them were collaborators. They fled from the land when they would be punished for their behavior during the occupation, and now they are pretending to be nice … nothing would benefit us more if we got rid of these bloodsuckers (*píjavek*).[82]

Such a degree of hostility against the entire educated strata of society attracted support from other workers, whose letters were published in the next issues of the journal. One worker from the *Praga* automobile-airplane factory wrote that manual workers did "not one hundred percent trust the contemporary stance (*dnešný postoj*) of the office people (*úředníci*)" and he had the feeling at work that they did not support the "people's democracy" as they could not forget how the rulers of capitalism had favored them over the workers.[83] While the degree of hostility

[81] "Čtenáři nám píší: Diskuse o inteligenci," *Tvorba*, April 21, 1948, 319-320; "Čtenáři nám píší: Diskuse o inteligenci," *Tvorba*, April 28, 1948, 339-340; "Čtenáři nám píší: Diskuse o inteligenci," *Tvorba*, May 5, 1948, 358-360; "Čtenáři nám píší: Diskuse o inteligenci," *Tvorba*, May 12, 1948, 378-380; "Čtenáři nám píší: Diskuse o inteligenci," *Tvorba*, May 12, 1948, 397-400; "Čtenáři nám píší: Diskuse o inteligenci," *Tvorba*, April 28, 1948, 339-340; "Čtenáři nám píší: Diskuse o inteligenci," *Tvorba*, May 5, 1948, 419-420.
[82] "Čtenáři nám píší: Diskuse o inteligenci," *Tvorba*, April 21, 1948, 319.
[83] "Čtenáři nám píší: Diskuse o inteligenci," *Tvorba*, May 5, 1948, 419.

differed among the discussants, they all agreed that a very significant part of the educated stratum was against the revolution, and the Party needed to take action to bring them closer to the working class. After all, a people's democracy needed the people's intelligentsia.

To this end, within three years after the revolution, the Party purged and relocated 142,000 office workers to manual labor jobs due to their suspected political loyalties, and filled some of the newly vacant positions with "class-conscious" workers, many of whom had been Party members for a long time.[84] Based on the yearly statistical reports, sociologist Daniel Kubat estimated that the Party promoted around 32,000 workers to some of the vacant white-collar positions after the purges.[85] The rest of the positions were eventually filled by the first graduate cohorts of the revolutionized universities.[86]

The Party efforts to transform the intelligentsia corresponded with an increase of white-collar positions and the need for educated personnel in the country. As Table Two demonstrates, between 1950 and 1961, the percentage of people employed in office jobs increased from 16.4 percent to 27.9 percent.[87] Those sectors which normally required university-educated individuals as employees had the biggest boom. While the number of people employed in the sectors of "education and culture" and "health and social care" almost doubled, the number working in "research and science" more than quadrupled (Table Three).[88]

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[84] For the relocation of white-collar workers to manual jobs, see Kalinová, *Společenské proměny*,132-133.
[85] Daniel Kubat, "Social Mobility in Czechoslovakia," *American Sociological Review 28*, no.2 (April, 1963): 204.
[86] Kusin, *Political Grouping*, 57.
[87] Krejči, *Social Change and Stratification*, 43.
[88] Krejči, *Social Change and Stratification*, 47; Radovan Richta et al., *Civilizace na rozcestí* (Prague: Svoboda, 1969), 383.

Table Two: Changes in the Social Structure in Percent of Czechoslovak Population[89]

	1950	**1961**	**1969**
Industrial Workers	56.4	56.3	58.2
Office Workers	16.4	27.9	29.7
Co-operative Farmers	0	10.6	8.3
Other Co-operative Producers	0	1.2	1.1
Small Peasants	20.3	3.5	2.2
Capitalists	3.8	0	0
Professionals, Small Craftsmen and Shopkeepers	3.1	0.5	0.5

Table Three: Changes in Occupational Patterns[90]
Persons Engaged (including regularly helping family members) per 1,000 of population

	1950	**1960**	**1968**
1.Agriculture and Forestry	173.9	115	91.2
2.Industry and Construction	164.6	203.9	223.1
3.Distribution and Transport	60.7	62	72.1
4.Other Economic Services	11.1	12	20.1
5.Education and Culture	13.2	20.9	28.3
6.Health and Social Care	8.6	13	17
7.Research and Science	1.9	7.8	12
8.Government, Administration and Justice	13.1	7.8	7.7
9.Armed Forces and Security	***	18.4	19
10.Total	***	460.8	491
12.Total Population	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00

[89] Krejči, *Social Change and Stratification*, 43.
[90] Krejči, *Social Change and Stratification*, 47; Radovan Richta et al., *Civilizace na rozcestí* (Prague: Svoboda, 1969), 383.

To meet the growing demand of industries for an educated workforce, the universities graduated an ever-growing number of students throughout the 1950s. According to the statistical yearbook, between 1952 and 1962, the total number of "educated specialists" (*odborníci*) with university or specialized technical education employed in all sectors of the country rose from 420,959 to 695,858.[91] Remarkably, upon entering the workforce, many fresh graduates of the revolutionized schools found themselves working under the ideological and professional control of the ex-workers, who were now working as Party functionaries or managers in various institutions across the country, despite their lack of formal education. According to the study conducted in 1954, 47 percent of employees in the ministries and administrative institutions did not have the education required for their occupation.[92] In the National Committees, which were the equivalent of "soviets" in the USSR, 56 percent of employees were undereducated.[93] And more crucially, the data from 1961 showed that 61.1 percent of the leading cadres in the state administration sector had only primary school education, while only 5.4 percent had a university diploma.[94] As will be subsequently argued, the unequal power relationship between the new Party elites and the young socialist intelligentsia, who—despite their high cultural/educational

[91] Štátny úrad štatistický Československé, *Statistická ročenka Republiky Československé 1958* (Prague: Orbis, 1958), 92; *Statistická ročenka Československé Socialistickě Republiky 1963* (Prague: Orbis, 1963), 117.
[92] Krejčí and Machonin, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-92*, 160.
[93] Krejčí and Machonin, *Czechoslovakia, 1918-92*, 160; Lenka Kalinová, *K proménám socialní struktury v Československu 1918 - 1968* (Prague: ÚSPV FSV UK, 1993), 69.
[94] Lenka Kalinová, *Sociální reforma a sociální realita*, 83. The Party attempted to address the problem of qualification by setting up "workers schools" (*dělnicke školy*) *)* to equip workers with the necessary education and training for the administrative positions that they were going to occupy. However, due to the hasty selection procedures, organizational deficiencies, and consequent high drop-out rates, the schools were unable to succeed in transforming enough workers into qualified administrative personnel. Consequently, starting from 1952, as the fresh graduates of the revolutionized universities had begun to enter the job market in large numbers, the campaign for recruiting workers to white-collar positions came to a halt, and graduates of the new socialist universities were given preference instead. Connelly, *Captive University*, 260-266; Kalinová, *Společenské proměny,* 133.

capital and socialist credentials—lacked political power, would play an important role in the emergence of the reformist sentiments among the red-collars.

However, before discussing the social conflict between the two groups, a crucial question to ask here is to what extent the Party succeeded in changing the overall political and ideological outlook of the post-revolutionary era intelligentsia. Because there was a limited degree of freedom of speech during most of the period, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the new intelligentsia continued to support the Party and remained socialists by conviction. The public opinion research conducted by the Czechoslovak sociologists during the relatively free atmosphere of the Prague Spring indicates that, as of the late 1960s, the overwhelming majority of the country's intelligentsia, despite their criticisms and demands for reform, supported the socialist ideals and did not want to return to the capitalist era.[95] According to a late 1967 public opinion survey conducted among university students, around 80 percent of the students stated that they preferred socialism to capitalism as an economic model, and only 6.1 percent were unequivocally in favor of capitalism.[96] The number is especially high when considering that Party membership among university students was only around 5 percent at the time.[97] In another survey conducted in April 1968, 82 percent of university-educated people declared confidence in the Communist Party of the Dubček era.[98]

Moreover, compared to the other countries in East-Central Europe, the proportion of Party members among typically well-educated white-collar workers in Czechoslovakia was

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[95] For a compilation of the public opinion polling from the era, see Piekalkiewicz, *Public Opinion Polling*.
[96] Šiklová, "Sociology of Youth in Czechoslovakia," 94.
[97] Unfortunately there is no data about the percentage of Party members among university students across the country. We have data on the percentage of Communist students in Prague universities. Accordingly, the percentage "steadily decreased from 11 per cent in 1958, to 10 percent in 1960 and 8.2 per cent in 1963, to 5.2 per cent in 1967." Given that the Communist Party was stronger in Prague than in the rest of the country, the corresponding percentage in the country was probably lower. Kusin, *Political Grouping*, 134.
[98] Piekalkiewicz, *Public Opinion Polling*, 21.

significantly higher. As of 1968, 80-90 percent of the officials of "social and interest organizations," 70 percent of the "cultural and public education officials," 50-55 percent of "male teachers of elementary and secondary schools," 60 percent of "teaching staff at universities" and 40-45 percent of "workers in research and development" were members of the Party.[99] According to a data from 1962, the KSČ had around 434,878 white-collar Party members, which was roughly one-fourth of the total white-collar workforce in the country.[100] In Hungary, as of the same year, the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party had approximately 53,000 white-collar workers (10.3 percent of the Party membership) in its ranks, which was less than 7 percent of the total white-collar workforce in the country.[101] In Romania, only around 10 percent of white-collar workers were members of the ruling Communist Party in 1960.[102] In Poland, where the proportion of communist members within the middle class was the closest to Czechoslovakia, the United Workers Party had around 495,000 white-collar members, slightly less than 19 percent of the total number of white-collar workers.[103] In this regard, compared to the other ruling socialist parties of the region, the KSČ was the most "intellectual" in character.

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[99] Kusin, *Political Grouping*, 66.

[100] For the number of white-collar people, see "Složení a počet členu KSČ," *Rudé právo*, June 21, 1966, 3; for the total number of white-collar people in the country, see, Krejči, *Social Change and Stratification*, 43; and *Statistická ročenka Československé Socialistickě Republiky 1963*, 113.

[101] According to the census data provided by the Hungarian Statistical Yearbook, the number of people employed in the workforce in Hungary was 4,759,600 and 17.1 percent of those people were office workers. Based on these numbers, there were around 837,689 white-collar workers in Hungary in 1960. *1970 évi népszámlálás* (Budapest: Központi Statisztikal Hivatal, 1977), 5. For the Party membership in Hungary, see Raymond Sin-Kwok Wong, "The Social Composition of the Czechoslovak and Hungarian Communist Parties in the 1980s," *Social Forces* 75, no. 1 (September 1996): 66-68.

[102] This calculation is based on the statistical information provided in Daniel Chirot, "Social Change in Communist Romania," *Social Forces 57* no.2, (December 1978), 469.

[103] One must also note that Poland and Czechoslovakia had a similar number of white-collar Party members even though Poland was two-and-a half times more populous.
I calculated the number of white-collar workers in Poland based on the data provided in Krzysztof Zagórski, "Urbanization and Resulting Changes in Class Structure and Education," *International Journal of Sociology 7*,no..3-4 (1977): 50-51; and David S. Mason, "Membership of the Polish United Workers Party," *The Polish Review* 2-3, no. 27 (1982): 139-144.

Conclusion

For the members of the generation that came of age amid the occupation, forced labor, concentration camps, and national humiliation of 1939-45, communism offered a chance to get even with history, to participate in the struggle for salvation after a catastrophe. Young people joined the revolutionary banners with enthusiasm, supporting, participating in, and benefiting from post-revolutionary policies. Many of them studied and found employment in critical cultural and political sectors in no small part due to their class background and allegiance to the communist cause.

However, the honeymoon between the young revolutionaries and the Party was short-lived. Unlike what the Party leaders and ideologues had hoped, forming a new intelligentsia did not guarantee the unquestioning loyalty of its members. On the contrary, as we will see in the next chapters, as committed socialists, the new intelligentsia closely and critically witnessed, followed, and discussed important events and phenomena such as the Stalinist show trials, ideological suppression, the shortage economy and, perhaps most importantly, Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956. Sharing common generational, social, and political backgrounds, they soon developed common political emotions independent of the Party's official discourse, forming an affective opposition against the ruling logic in the country.

Chapter Two:

When the Dust Settles: The Shock of 1956 and the Affective Birth of the "Red-Collars"

Euphoria is a transitional feeling; the joy and excitement after the revolution is bound to dissipate into the mundane daily reality of the post-revolutionary predicament. What happens when the dust settles, "the class enemies" are defeated, "the agents of imperialism" inside and outside the Party are eliminated, and all that revolutionaries are left with is the shortage economy, political domination, and worst of all, the realization that the revered hero of the movement was a tyrant with the blood of innocent people on his hands? This chapter is about the first sigh of despair that the young militants of the 1948 revolution took upon glimpsing the moral devastation their movement brought to the country.

The chapter follows the red students, whom—as we have seen—the Party had recruited to white-collar positions thanks to their ideological or class backgrounds after the revolution. In particular, it analyzes how the collective emotion of guilt appeared among the members of the new intelligentsia, leading to their open criticism of the new political elites and their ruling conduct for the first time since the revolution in 1948. As supporters of and participants in the revolutionary purges only a few years earlier, many members of the young intelligentsia felt and declared their sense of betrayal and guilt for their past support of Stalinism. The chapter will argue that, out of these widely shared negative political emotions, "the red-collars" emerged as a

critical socio-emotional group, affectively differentiating themselves from the Party elites and their ruling conduct in the country.

Certainly, Czechoslovakia was not the only country in the communist bloc to be impacted by Khrushchev's speech in 1956. The revelations caused massive shock and trauma among the citizens of the other Eastern bloc countries as well, leading to a requestioning and rethinking of the past and present state of socialism.[1] Moreover, as the social upheavals in Hungary and Poland in 1956 attest, Khrushchev's speech had a destabilizing effect in other East-Central European countries as well; it led to ideological confusion and the temporary loss of authority, challenging the rule of the local communist parties as well as Soviet dominance in the region.[2] What was unique in Czechoslovakia, however, was that unlike in Poland, Hungary or the Soviet Union, the country experienced neither a top-down de-Stalinization process nor a change of leadership in 1956. The KSČ leadership, who were the leading supporters and organizers of the Stalinist show-trials only a few years earlier, were able to retain their positions and resist the domestic and international pressure for thorough de-Stalinization until 1962.[3] Consequently, as the biggest Stalin statue in the world continued to stand defiantly in Prague's Letná Park

[1] For the history and impact of Khrushchev's speech in the Soviet Union, see Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 79-156; Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953-70* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Kathleen Smith, *Moscow 1956: The Silenced Spring* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017).
[2] For its impact in East-Central Europe outside of Czechoslovakia, see Tom Kemp-Welch, "Khrushchev's 'secret speech' and Polish Politics: The Spring of 1956," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, no.2 (March 1996), 181-206; Judt, *Postwar*, 309- 323; R.J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century- and After* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 307-326; Balázs Apor, "The 'Secret Speech' and its Effect on the 'Cult of Personality' in Hungary," *Critique* 35, no.2 (2007), 229-247; Paweł Machcewicz, *Rebellious Satellite: Poland 1956* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009).
[3] Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 32.

overlooking the city, there remained, as Paulina Bren noted, "too many Stalinist skeletons lurking in the closets of the Czechoslovak Communist Party leadership."[4]

Thus the revelations about the Stalinist era had more profound and longer-lasting implications for the KSČ leadership than its Soviet, Hungarian and Polish counterparts, who implemented—what historians Kathleen Smith and Polly Jones called—"a policy of regicide," or a "strategy of inverse legitimacy," that is, legitimacy sustained by distancing the new order from the Stalinist era, which was now deemed immoral and flawed.[5] Although after Khrushchev's speech, the Party leaders admitted that Stalin's cult of personality had a negative impact on the country, they never accepted personal responsibility, nor did they distance themselves—ideologically or politically—from the Gottwald era.

The question here is, how was the KSČ leadership able to retain their power? Why, unlike in Poland and Hungary, did the country not experience political instability in the aftermath of the Twentieth Congress?[6] As Muriel Blaive convincingly argues, an important part of the reason why Czechoslovakia did not experience social upheaval in 1956 was due to the level of grassroots support that communism enjoyed in the country.[7] As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the KSČ was the only indigenous socialist party in East-Central Europe that

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[4] Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV : The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 3; Hana Pichova, "The Lineup for Meat: The Stalin Statue in Prague," *PMLA (Publication of the Modern Language Association of America)* 123, no.3 (2008): 614-631.

[5] Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, 7. The term "inverse strategy" is from Kathleen E.Smith, *Remembering Stalin's Victims : Popular Memory and the End of the USSR* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 40.

[6] Jiří Pernes described the social predicament in Czechoslovakia in 1956 as "deathly calm" (*mrtvý klid*). Jiří Pernes, "Ohlas Maďarské revoluce roku 1956 v Československé veřejnosti. Z interních hlášení krajských správ ministerstva vnitra," *Soudobé dějiny* 4 (1996): 512-526; Also see, Kevin McDermott and Vitezslav Sommer, "The 'Club of Politically Engaged Conformists'? The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Popular Opinion and the Crisis of Communism, 1956," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars* (March 2013), 59-60. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/CWIHP_WP_66_the_club_of_politically_engaged_conformists_web.pdf

[7] Blaive argued that the main reason for the popularity of the KSČ leadership was the betterment of living standards in the 1950s. Muriel Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost. Československo a rok 1956.* (Prague : Prostor, 2001), especially 302-312.

was able to overthrow the liberal-democratic establishment independent of the Soviet Union in 1948. By 1956, unlike the other socialist countries in the region, there were no Soviet troops stationed in Czechoslovakia; rather than depending on the Soviet Union and the implicit threat of intervention, the KSČ relied on its own strength, popularity, and security forces to maintain its rule in the country.[8] As a result of such self-reliance, the Czechoslovak Party leaders were not only able to keep the situation under control in 1956, but also could stubbornly resist Moscow's pressure for de-Stalinization until 1963.

At the same time, however, one can argue that because proportionally more Czechoslovaks than Hungarians and Poles had supported and participated in the revolution and subsequent persecutions, the revelations about the moral bankruptcy of the recent Stalinist past brought a more emotionally-laden yet ideologically loyal opposition to the Party leadership. In Poland and Hungary, the shock of 1956 and the temporary loss of authority led to an upheaval against Soviet hegemony. In contrast, the criticism that surfaced in Czechoslovakia was strongest among intellectual circles and did not target the position of the Soviet Union in the communist world, continuing to adhere to the overall premise of Marxist-Leninism.[9] Instead, voicing their own feelings of guilt and betrayal for their support and participation in the recent revolutionary purges, the young socialist intelligentsia questioned the moral position of the Party leadership and whether they could continue to rule the country. As we will see in the next chapters, this

[8] For the strength and persistence of Stalinism in Czechoslovakia, see Jacques Rupnik, "The Roots of Czech Stalinism," in *Culture, Ideology and Politics: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm,* eds. Raphael Samuel, Gareth Stedman Jones (London: Routledge, 2016), 302-317; Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 25-42.
[9] For an overall summary of the emerging demands among the intelligentsia after the Twentieth Congress in Czechoslovakia, see Suda, *Zealots and Rebels*, 268-276; Karel Kaplan, *Kronika komunistického Československa Doba tání 1953-1956* (Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2005), 416-421.

ideologically loyal, emotionally combative opposition would later play a vital part in the emergence of the reform socialist movement of the 1960s.

A number of historians have tackled the importance of Khrushchev's speech for the history of communism in Czechoslovakia. During the Cold War, émigré scholars in particular, such as Zdeněk Suda, Vladimír Kusin, and Peter Hrubý, emphasized the year 1956 as a turning point for the political subjectivity of the young communist intelligentsia.[10] Accordingly, the shock of Khrushchev's speech, the political crisis in Poland, and the revolt in Hungary shook the confidence of ordinary party members and eventually led them to question the "totalitarian" aspect of their Bolshevik beliefs and re-embrace the country's "profound democratic and cultural tradition."[11] After the 2000s, a new generation of historians significantly broadened the focus of research on the Czechoslovak 1950s and challenged many of the assumptions of earlier scholarship. Jiří Pernes and Johann Smula argued that communism in Czechoslovakia had its crisis not after 1956, but in the early 1950s, when the shortage economy became unbearable for many of the workers and peasants as evidenced by the workers uprising in Pilsen in 1953.[12] Michal Kopeček, in his study of "Marxist revisionism" in Central Europe, shifted the attention from local political and economic factors to the transnational exchange of ideas and the creation of new, reformist political language among socialist intellectuals after the death of Stalin in 1953.[13]

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[10] Hruby, *Fools and Heroes*, 57. Suda, *Zealots and Rebels*, 272-276; Kusin, *Political Grouping*, 66-67; Vladimir Kusin, *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring: The Development of Reformist Ideas in Czechoslovakia, 1956-1967* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 13-15.
[11] Vladimir Kusin, *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring*, 15.
[12] Jiří Pernes, *Krize komunistického režimu*; Johann Smula, "The Party and the Proletariat: Škoda 1948–53," *Cold War History* 6, no.2 (August 2006).
[13] Kopeček, *Hledání ztraceného smyslu revoluce*.

In perhaps the most original take on the year 1956 in Czechoslovakia, Muriel Blaive argues that even though the communist reading public was shaken by the events of that year, a majority of the Czech and Slovak Party members remained indifferent to the criticisms in the media directed at the Stalinist Party leaders by the newly emerging reformist intellectuals.[14] She emphasized that, unlike in Poland and Hungary, Czechoslovakia did not experience social unrest and full-scale de-Stalinization in 1956 chiefly because communism had much stronger grassroots support among the Czech working class, and because the country had relatively better economic conditions than the other communist-ruled East-Central European countries. Thus, unlike the disenchantment narrative of earlier scholarship, which portrayed the ideological demoralization and confusion after 1956 as a widespread phenomenon among Party members, Blaive claims that the reform socialist sentiment was indeed confined to the educated strata of the socialist base, and thus the Party leaders were able to delay and conduct de-Stalinization in a controlled manner.[15]

Blaive's study is beneficial in terms of successfully challenging the earlier essentialist Cold War narrative, which depicted Czechoslovaks as traditionally democratic and portrayed some of the criticism and demonstrations in Czechoslovakia as signs of widespread opposition to Party rule.[16] She convincingly argues that the opposition to Stalinism after 1956 was "intellectual in character," and even members of the opposition were demonstrably loyal to communist ideals and the Party.[17] Nevertheless, she seems to concede, although neither Khrushchev's speech nor the political turmoil in Hungary and Poland in 1956 significantly

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[14] Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost*, especially 302-312.
[15] Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost*, especially 149-153.
[16] For instance, see Barbara Jancar-Webster, *Czechoslovakia and the Absolute Monopoly of Power* (New York: Praeger, 1971), 50-52; Edward Táborský, *Communism in Czechoslovakia 1948-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 77-97.
[17] Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost*, 151.

altered the political convictions and loyalty of the majority of Party members in the Czechoslovak Community Party, by the mid-1950s, there had emerged a critical group within the communist ranks that demanded faster de-Stalinization and liberalization in the country.[18] This chapter will focus on the birth of this loyal opposition in Czechoslovakia after 1956 and analyze the social and emotional dividing lines that separated this critical group from the rest of the communist base.

The methodological challenge here is that negative emotions rarely surfaced in the public sphere in the 1950s. Except for the few months after Khrushchev's speech, the Party implemented strict control over print media and did not allow criticism to surface in the public sphere, making criticism and critical emotions harder to detect from print media. In other words, unlike in the 1960s, print media sources retained their propagandistic character throughout the 1950s, and they provide only occasional and indirect references to the emerging negative feelings in the country. Luckily, for the few months after Khrushchev's speech, as the KSČ leadership temporarily loosened the extent of censorship in the media, there appeared critical articles and speeches published in print media against the so-called "cult of personality." These sources are extremely valuable in terms of demonstrating the role of negative emotions in the making of the "us" and "them" rhetoric among red-collars in the aftermath of Khrushchev's speech. This chapter also draws on the reports by local Party organizations and the secret police (*StB*) on the reactions of Party members to Khrushchev's speech. These reports provide a window into the mostly uncensored critical comments made at Party meetings during 1956. In addition, to trace these critical emotions, especially from the era before 1956, the chapter makes extensive use of the memoirs written by various writers and public intellectuals either in-exile

[18] Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost*, 151.

after 1968 or after the collapse of communism in 1989. Despite their potential shortcomings, the autobiographical accounts provide rich source material for analyzing critical emotions such as feelings of betrayal and regret over past support of and participation in bringing Stalinism to the country.[19] By triangulating between print media articles, Party records, and memoirs, this chapter aims to paint a holistic picture of the collective political emotions that emerged after 1956 and their role in making the red-collars as an oppositional group.

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[19] Surely one's retrospective account of past events and emotions is bound to be in conversation with the contemporary era and is affected by the transformations that have occurred in the interim. As Tony Judt suggested, the evocation of the memory itself is closely linked with contemporary politics and the ideological "myth-building" of the given contemporary context. For instance, after the end of the Second World War, the political establishment in Western European countries (particularly West Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands) intentionally suppressed the memory of collaboration under German occupation, and even after 1989, the general public opinion paid minimal attention to the controversial issues of the recent past. Whereas "if the problem in Western Europe has been a shortage of memory, in the continent's other half the problem is reversed." In Eastern Europe, "there is too much memory, too many pasts on which people can draw, usually as a weapon against the past of someone else." And the fact that the controversial issues of the past could not be acknowledged publicly until 1989 added extra strata of public mythology surrounding the events, which came into full play after the collapse of communism.
At the same time, the existence of "too much memory" in the public sphere does not mean that the public memory of events is static and uniform. In her study of nostalgia during and after *perestroika* in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia, Svetlana Boym emphasized the multi-directional nature of collective memory. While during *perestroika*, nostalgia manifested itself in the neo-conservative movement *Pamiat* (Russian for "memory") promoting Russian right-wing culture of the pre-revolutionary era, during the 1990s, the nostalgia appeared as the longing for the bygone communist era, its sense of idealism and security. In Boym's words, "nostalgia became a defense mechanism against the accelerated rhythm of change and the economic shock therapy." Similarly, Maya Nadkarni and Olga Shevchenko claimed that nostalgia is "a product of particular temporality and way of approaching history"; depending on the dominant political discourse, the nostalgic practices and discourse "can represent a move beyond the past and render the past harmless, but it can also create phantasmagoric loyalties and divisions."
The temporality of nostalgia (the post-socialist nostalgia in particular) is a good example of the presence of the present in the way in which we think, remember, and feel about the past. The reminiscences about the communist era are bound to be influenced by the socio-political predicament after 1968 or 1989. At the same time however, I think, this does not render memory accounts totally useless for the historian's craft. By using the retroactive autobiographical accounts in conjunction with the contemporary "archival" sources from the era, my hope is to be able to trace and capture the emotions as close to how they emerged in the past as possible. For the quoted works, see Tony Judt, "The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe," *Daedalus* 121, no.4 (Fall 1992): 99; Svetlana Boym, *Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 64; Maya Nadkarni and Olga Shevchenko, "The Politics of Nostalgia: A Case For the Comparative Analysis of Post-Socialist Practices,"*Ab Imperio* 2 (2004): 491 and 518. For further discussion on nostalgia and memory accounts as source-material, see Jennifer Jensen Wallach, "Building a Bridge of Words: The Literary Autobiography as Historical Source Material," *Biography* 29, no.3 (Summer 2006): 446-461; Thomas Lahusen, "Decay or Endurance? The Ruins of Socialism," *Slavic Review* 65, no.4 (Winter 2006): 736-46; Serguei Oushakine, "'We're nostalgic but we're not crazy': Retrofitting the Past in Russia," *Russian Review* 66, no. 3 (July 2007): 451-82; and Kevin Platt, " Russian Empire of Pop: Post-Soviet Nostalgia and Soviet Retro at the 'New Wave' Competition," *Russian Review* 72, no. 3 (July 2013): 447-469.

The First Discontents

Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, as the young revolutionaries enrolled at universities and began to join the white-collar workforce, the country underwent a rapid transformation under communist banners. Following the Soviet example, the Party quickly abolished all non-communistic media and non-governmental organizations, brutally persecuted the resistors, nationalized the economy, and began the process of collectivizing agriculture.[20] Ironically, many well-known members of the reformist literati of the 1960s were active supporters and participants of the Stalinization of the country during this period. Ota Šik (b. 1919), then a young academic, who would later become one of the leading proponents of "market socialism" during the 1960s, vigorously attacked the country's middle classes for propagating the false "democratic theories of socialism" and advocated for the full implementation of Stalinist economic principles with their emphasis on centralization and heavy industry.[21] Karel Kosík (b.1926), a future philosopher of humanist Marxism and vociferous proponent of democratic socialism during the Prague Spring, passionately defended the death verdicts in the so-called Slánský trial, an anti-Semitic show trial against the former First Secretary of the KSČ Rudolf Slánský and thirteen other leading members of the Party in 1952. "Such is the logic of history!," the young Kosík declared, "who does not faithfully serve the people, becomes a lackey of slave-dealers. Such is the fate of bourgeois hirelings, such is the fate

[20] For the revolutionary changes that took place after 1948, see Karel Kaplan, *Kronika komunistického Československa*, 42-63; Jiří Suk, *Veřejné záchodky ze zlata:konflikt mezi komunistickým utopismem a ekonomickou racionalitou v předsrpnovém Československu* (Prague: Prostor, 2016), 75-90; Suda, *Zealots and Rebels*, 236-251.
[21] Hruby, *Fools and Heroes*, 62.

of the traitors to the workers' class—of Slánský, Šling, and Co."[22] Similarly, the famous reformist writers of the 1960s, such as Pavel Kohout, Milan Kundera, and Ladislav Mňačko, first came to literary prominence through their highly Stalinist verses and articles glorifying the achievements of the ongoing revolution and praising the Generalissimo for his leadership of the communist movement.[23]

However, despite their euphoria and participation in the making of the new era, the revolution did not bring material welfare to the majority of the new intelligentsia. On the contrary, the emergence of the new intelligentsia corresponded with the loss of status and income for non-manual workers in Czechoslovakia. In accordance with the Marxist philosophy of labor, the Party placed industrial workers and collective farmers above the non-manual workers in terms of salary and access to various consumer goods and services.[24] In the new salary structure after the revolution, while the managers (the top-Party elites), miners and locomotive drivers became the top-earning income groups in the country, the white-collar employees' purchasing power either did not improve or worsened compared to the white-collar workers of pre-revolutionary Czechoslovakia.[25] As a result, by the mid-1960s, doctors and teachers were earning less than lathe operators and dairywomen, respectively.[26] Soon there emerged complaints about the living standards of the educated cadres in the country. In May 1955, a reader's letter to the cultural magazine, *Literární Noviny*, criticized the new salary policy for demanding "that the

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[22] Karel Kosík, "Stalin nás učí lásce k vlasti a nenávisti k jejím nepřátelům," *Tvorba,* December 20, 1951, 1211-1212; also cited in Hruby, *Fools and Heroes*, 189.
[23] For a general discussion about Czechoslovak intellectuals during Stalinism, see Hruby, *Fools and Heroes*, 9-20; 21-27; 62-63; and Shore, "Engineering in the Age of Innocence," 410-411.
[24] About the lowering of the salaries of white-collar workers, especially in relation to the workers, see Karel Kaplan, *Sociální souvislosti krizí komunistického režimu v letech 1953-1957 a 1968-1975* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, 1993), 9; Kalinová, *Společenské proměny*, 163-164.
[25]Krejči, *Social Change and Stratification*, 43.
[26] The data is from 1965. Krejči, *Social Change and Stratification*, 72.

people with better education worked for half salary or sometimes even for less than the other people" and claimed "the principle of brotherly unity between the workers, farmers, and working intelligentsia is wise and absolutely correct. Yet, in order not to have it only on paper, then it should reflect in our salary policy as well."[27] As will be analyzed in detail in the fifth chapter, the low-level salaries of the intelligentsia would become an integral part of the reformist complaints in the 1960s.

In addition to their declining purchasing power, the "social prestige of the intelligentsia was significantly reduced" during the 1950s.[28] Because the Party promoted Party-veterans, many of whom were working-class by occupation, to positions of power and recruited fresh graduates of the socialist universities to mid and low-level positions, it created a discrepancy between one's education level and political capital. In other words, while the typically less-educated Party veterans constituted a new political elite and occupied top managerial positions thanks to their connections, the recent graduates of the revolutionized universities were situated below lesser-educated individuals in terms of status and position in the social hierarchy. The new power hierarchy soon created conflict between those whom Slovak historian Marína Zavacká referred to as "intellectually unfit and politically meritorious" Party veterans and the young intelligentsia. One of the first instances of the socio-generational conflict between the two groups was observed during the ideological courses organized in the agricultural collectives, where the recent graduates of the revolutionized universities were tasked with training Party members, including the higher-ups, on the ideology of Marxism-Leninism.[29] However, soon the instructors began to

[27]"Dopisy čtenářů: O Naši Novou Školu," *Literární Noviny*, May 12, 1955, 9.
[28]Pernes, *Krize komunistického režimu*, 32.
[29] Marína Zavacká, "Identity and Conflict: Communist Activist in Local Environment (1949 – 1956)," in *Overcoming the Old Borders. Beyond the Paradigm of Slovak National History*, ed. Adam Hudek (Bratislava: Institute of History), 160.

complain they were not receiving the respect they deserved from "the Old Communists" who "think that they need no learning, that they know everything."[30] In return, the Party officials blamed the young instructors for lacking workers' ethics and for being "unreliable intelligentsia, torn off from the people and looking down on their audiences."[31] In his report to the Party headquarters, after a negative experience with the instructors, a Party head in the small town of Banská Štiavnica questioned the overall dedication of the urban communists: "We have got a hundred activists here and based on the what and who they are, should we not call them 'cabinet Communists?' The dedication of our female and male comrades is attested while building socialism in our village; therefore, we should take a proper look at all those communists in the cities."[32]

Especially in the culture industry, where the Party implemented strict ideological control and screenings, the unequal relationship between the characteristically older Party higher-ups and young literati was particularly pronounced. For instance, in the area of journalism, the young communist cadres dominated the field; by 1956, "66.6 percent of the approximately 3,000 members of the Union of the Czechoslovak journalists were no more than thirty-five years old, and only 11 percent had any journalistic experience before 1945."[33] Yet this young generation of journalists had to work under the tight control and supervision of the Chief Authority for Press Supervision (*HSTD*, *Hlavní správa tiskového dohledu*), whose ranks were "filled with the bureaucrats who never wrote for publication."[34] According to a Party report about the "original professions" (*původní povolání*) of the censors (*plnomocník*) employed in the HSTD from 1955,

[30] Cited in Zavacká, "Identity and Conflict," 160.
[31] Cited in Zavacká, "Identity and Conflict," 161.
[32] Cited in Zavacká, "Identity and Conflict," 160.
[33] Frank L. Kaplan, *Winter into Spring: the Czechoslovak Press and the Reform Movement, 1963-1968* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Quarterly, 1977), 24.
[34] Kaplan, *Winter into Spring*, 24.

the majority of the censors (fifty-four in total) lacked relevant education and experience; eleven of them were shop assistants; seven were unskilled laborers (*pomocný dělník*); five were typographers; two were seamstresses; and there were a dressmaker, a soldier and a waiter among them.[35] As late as 1963, 35 percent of the censors had only a primary school education, and 17 percent were high-school drop-outs (*nižšie stredné - bez maturity*).[36]

In his memoir, the writer and journalist Ivan Klíma explains the atmosphere created by the relationship of domination between the Party controllers and the young intelligentsia in the editorial office of the socialist lifestyle magazine *Květy*, where he found a job upon his graduation from university in the mid-1950s:

> The editor-in-chief at the time, at least in a name, was a bad writer whose only merit, besides membership in the party, was that he'd composed a novel in which he assiduously and mercilessly denigrated exploitation in Tomáš Baťa factories… Another class-conscious bigwig worked here, the venerable widow of the Communist writer Egon Ervín Kisch. This comrade likewise did little actual work; instead she watched over everything that went on in the editorial offices and apparently *did not take kindly to the fact that youngish and insufficiently class-conscious people were employed there who, in her opinion, threatened the quality, but most of all the party mission, of the magazine*... I was stunned by how the environment bubbled over with rancor, continual suspicion, malicious gossip, and personnel screening.[37]

It is important to note here that, for young intellectuals like Klíma, any deviation from the tight and rigorously controlled ideological parameters would mean not only professional suicide but also, potentially, persecution. After the revolution, once the Party successfully overcame any

[35] Milan Bárta, "Cenzura československého filmu a televize v letech 1953-1968," *Securitas imperii 10, (2003):* 9.
[36] Vladimir Jancura, "Cenzúru mal poľudštiť zákon," *Pravda,* November 9, 2016, https://zurnal.pravda.sk/neznama-historia/clanok/410291-cenzuru-mal-poludstit-zakon/
[37] Klima, *My Crazy Century,* 121. Italics are mine.

pockets (or rather possibility) of political resistance from the non-communists, there began an internal crusade against those so-called class enemies, Zionists, or Slovak bourgeois nationalists, leading to mass arrests and lengthy prison terms.[38]

Not surprisingly, the new social hierarchies and tight ideological control led the young socialist intelligentsia to question the way in which socialism was implemented in the country. In an interview conducted during the Prague Spring, the writer and journalist Ladislav Mňačko (b. 1919) remembered that, after following and supporting many political trials as a journalist, what finally changed him was the Slánský trial: "I had been a pioneering agitator, convinced about the fact that I was doing the right thing. But what broke me was the Slánský trial, in such a way that from that time onward, I began to be a rebel. At least on a level that was possible."[39] Čestmír Císař (b. 1920), a young functionary and one of the future leaders of the Prague Spring, later remembered that the "atmosphere of insecurity, suspicion, watchfulness, and fear left (the people) breathless" in their social environment: "People who have been friends started to behave differently, I would say, with careful correctness (*s opatrnou korektnosti*)."[40] Similarly, Libuše Šilhánová (b. 1929), a later dissident who was a young communist teacher during the early 1950s, remembered the era as when "the élan of the youth fell away. Serious doubts and skepticism emerged in our lives and in our thoughts, [and] this was especially the case for the people who until then were engaged" in revolutionary activities.[41]

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[38] Although the exact number is not clear, it is estimated that around 150,000 people were imprisoned for political reasons between 1949 and 1954. Crampton, *Eastern Europe*, 267. For the best monograph on the Stalinist show trials in Czechoslovakia, see Karel Kaplan, *Report on the Murder of the General Secretary* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990).
[39] Cited in Kaplan, *Winter into Spring*, 23.
[40] Čestmír Císař, *Paměti: Nejen o zákulisí Pražského jara* (Prague: SinCon, 2005), 390-391.
[41] Libuše Šilhánová, *Ohlédnutí za životem* (Portál: Prague, 2005), 103.

Despite the heavy censorship and ideological control of the media, there were hints about the existence of criticism, ideological confusion, and demoralization among the members of the new intelligentsia. In one such instance, in May 1955, the Party's main daily *Rudé Právo* reported on the "insufficient ideological activity," criticism, and "various incorrect opinions distorting Party policy" among the employees of the Ministry of Agriculture, who were also members of the Party.[42] For the writer of the article, the reason why the employees had incorrect opinions was because, instead of participating in the ideological courses given by the Party, they were left to study Marxism-Leninism alone. [43] In a more telling article from September 1955, the journalist Ladislav Mňačko (b.1919)[44] reported in *Kultúrny život* that many of the people he knew were feeling sad and depressed even though they had everything they needed in their life.[45] Mňačko narrated an encounter with a friend, who told him that he felt unsettled but could not explain why. "To tell you the truth, I do not know. It is only this…everything."[46] With an unusually combative tone for the era, Mňačko emphasized that the sadness and discontent of his friend was not a result of an individual condition. "I came to realize that he is not alone," Mňačko wrote: "There are many people like that, I am meeting with many people like that. The person that I know is not some embarrassed intellectual (*rozpačitý intelektual*)."[47] He

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[42] Jaroslav Pokorný, "Zaměřit školení na hlavní úkoly," *Rudé Právo*, May 24, 1950, 2; Also quoted in Taborsky, *Communism in Czechoslovakia 1948-1960*, 226-227.
[43] Pokorný, "Zaměřit školení na hlavní úkoly," 2.
[44] Already a communist before the war, Ladislav Mňačko (1919-1994) spent the war years first in a concentration camp, then after his escape, with the partisans in rural Slovakia and Moravia. After the war, he worked as a journalist and editor for the Party's official journal *Rudé právo*, and was thus actively involved in the Stalinist propaganda campaign in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He became increasingly critical after 1956 and wrote highly unorthodox best-selling semi-fictional works, targeting the corruption and hunger for power among Party elites during the 1960s. In 1967, in protest against the Czechoslovak support of Arab countries in the Six-Day War, he emigrated to Israel but returned back the following year during the Prague Spring. After the Warsaw Pact intervention, he emigrated to Austria. See, Jozej Leikert, *Takový byl Ladislav Mňačko* (Prague: Slovenský literárny klub v ČR, 2013).
[45] Ladislav Mňačko, "Pravdivejšie a zodpovednejšie,"*Kultúrny život*, September 24, 1955, 1.
[46] Mňačko, "Pravdivejšie a zodpovednejšie," 1.
[47] Mňačko, "Pravdivejšie a zodpovednejšie," 1.

emphasized that the feeling of discontent ("*nespokojnost*'") was widespread among society and the root cause was that Marxist-Leninism was reduced to a few propaganda points and empty phrases for the general public. While avoiding casting blame on any specific individual or institution for the current situation, he claimed that "repeating the same phrases over and over again like a parrot in every possible and not-possible opportunity" did not help the spiritual well-being of citizens.[48] And to tackle the demoralization in society, Mňačko made a plea for his fellow-communists to be "more truthful and responsible" (*pravdivejšie a zodpovednejšie*) in their political discourse and to stop publicly acting as though they had a "monopoly over infallibility".[49]

At just about the same time as Mňačko's article appeared, in late 1955, the chess grandmaster Luděk Pachman (b. 1924) voiced similar opinions about the state of socialism during an international chess tournament in Belgium. Pachman too had become a communist in his teen years during the war and, thanks to his ideological loyalty, found a position at the cultural department of the Revolutionary Trade Union (ROH) in 1952. However, he soon quit the job because he was "disgusted" by the "atmosphere of suspicion" in the workplace and decided to pursue a career in chess instead.[50] During the tournament, in a private conversation with a non-communist Dutch colleague, he admitted the grave problems that he witnessed in the country, but optimistically predicted that changes in the system were coming, and people would soon "see what socialism was really like."[51] And, he promised that "should things fail to improve and the Communist movement proves incapable of building a new society," he would join the

[48] Mňačko, "Pravdivejšie a zodpovednejšie," 1.
[49] Mňačko, "Pravdivejšie a zodpovednejšie," 1.
[50] Luděk Pachman, *Checkmate in Prague: The Memoirs of a Grandmaster* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1975), 45.
[51] Pachman, *Checkmate in Prague*, 48.

critics and "fight the system to [his] last breath."[52] Only a few months later, when the content of Nikita Khrushchev's famous secret speech became known, despite his shock at the revelations, he thought that the change he had been expecting, and promising, was finally on the horizon.

Khrushchev's Tear Bomb

On February 25, 1956, in a speech addressed to a closed session of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin for establishing a personality cult and for the unjust persecution of innocent people. Although the speech was intended to be secret, its content quickly circulated and caused shockwaves throughout the bloc.[53] In Czechoslovakia, a limited number of copies of the speech were first distributed among higher-level Party officials, who were instructed to return the copies after reading them.[54] Then, as the rumors about the content of the speech spread throughout the country, the Central Committee decided to organize discussion sessions in order to minimize the extent of emerging doubts and criticisms.[55] In these meetings, although the regional Party leaders initially only told members the filtered version of Khrushchev's speech and tried to limit its wider implications, especially with regard to its meanings for Czechoslovak communism, the Party members were not satisfied with the "half-information" they were given and asked questions in anticipation of further "sensational revelations" (*senzačních odhalení*).[56] Karol Bacílek, the head of the Slovak branch of the Party, reported to the Central Committee in Prague

[52] Pachman, *Checkmate in Prague*, 48
[53] For the ramification of the speech in the Soviet Union and in East-Central European countries, see Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*, 79-156; Tom Kemp-Welch, "Khrushchev's 'secret speech, 181-206; Judt, *Postwar*, 309- 323; R.J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century- and After* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 307-326.
[54] Souda, *Zealots and Rebels*, 269-270.
[55] Matěj Bílý, "Reakce již bourá pomníky a my… teprve projednáváme! Některé aspekty debaty o XX. sjezdu KSSS ve vybraných nižších organizacích KSČ," *Securitas Imperii 30* (2017): 63-64.
[56] NA, f. 1261/0/11, sv. 90, a. j. 108/7, Zprava o průběhu kampaně po XX. sjezdu KSSS, 17. 3. 1956.

that the local functionaries were influenced by the information provided by Western radio about the content of Khrushchev's speech, and the Party should address certain questions, especially with regard to the personality of Stalin, in a more extensive way.[57] As it became clear that the efforts at censoring and filtering the speech were futile, the Party announced the true content of the revelations first for the members in closed Party meetings, then for the general public in print media.[58]

The revelations about the criminal nature of the Stalin era—as multiple witness testimonies have stated— "hit the country like a bomb."[59] Many of those who attended the Party meetings reported witnessing strong and emotional reactions to the news from ordinary members, especially from the women. Years later, one Party member recalled the atmosphere within the Party as "a real explosion… the people, especially women and old communists, for whom Stalin was an absolute symbol of revolution and liberation and even their own lives, burst into tears. Others, who still could not recuperate from his death, were not ready for the news that their idol was indeed a maniac and criminal."[60] In Olomouc, the local Party functionaries reported that the discussions were filled with frustrated screams, noting that some members now ceased to wear the Party badge for fear of being associated with Stalin's personality cult. [61] A Party official in Pilsen, who was responsible for discussing the meaning of Khrushchev's speech at the Party's evening school, wrote to the headquarters that "all the present female-comrades

[57] NA, f. 1261/0/11, sv. 90, a. j. 108/7, Zprava o průběhu kampaně po XX. sjezdu KSSS, 17. 3. 1956.
[58] Souda, *Zealosts and Rebels*, 270-271.
[59] See Eduard Goldstücker, *Vzpomínky 1945-1968* (Prague: Vydalo nakladatelstvi G plus G, 2005), 114; Kovaly, *Under a Cruel Star*, 100; Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 29. It also appeared in an interview conducted by Radio Free Europe with a 19-year-old émigré from the Brno region. See, McDermott and Sommer, "The 'Club of Politically Engaged Conformists'?," 59-60.
[60] Quoted in Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost*, 65.
[61] Bílý, "Reakce již bourá pomníky a my," 70.

(*soudružky*) cried" upon the news about Stalin.[62] In Brno, the (female) typists working in the Party organization wept when they were informed about "Stalin's mistakes."[63] Similarly, Ivan Klíma later remembered the tense atmosphere among the Party members upon the verification of Khrushchev's speech by the Party leaders: "Excerpts of the Khrushchev's heretical speech was finally read at some Party meeting in the department…Now the members were stunned. Some of the women started sobbing, and I remember the hysterical cry: 'You deceived us.'"[64]

In his thematic essay on the history of tears and crying, Italian historian Marco Menin describes tears, or more accurately, reporting on witnessing or experiencing an act of crying as a "barometer of the emotionalism itself, since their effusion certified the authenticity of the felt passions."[65] Arguably, above mentioned Party officials and memoirists wrote about the crying of "women and old communists," who were presumably innocent believers of the revolution, to a similar effect. Neither the Party officials nor the memoirists went into details about the emotional reactions of people other than "crying women" or "old comrades" (say for instance, young or middle-aged men) during these meetings; instead, they used the tears of "women" to reflect the broader sense of shock and disappointment felt by the rank-and-file communists across the country.

The shock and frustration following the news about Khrushchev's declaration were often accompanied by questions and doubts about its implications for Czechoslovakia. To what extent

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[62] NA, f. 1261/0/11 , sv. 90, aj. 108/7, Zpráva o pruběhu kampaně po XX. Sjezdu KSSS, 19.3.1956. Also quoted in Pernes, *Krize komunistického režimu*, 132.
[63] Quoted in McDermott and Sommer, "The 'Club of Politically Engaged Conformists?," 21.
[64] Klíma, *My Crazy Century*, 115-116. Although Klíma had already been critical about some practices of the Communist Party, Khrushchev's speech made him "realize that the fraudulence (*podvod*) was not the mistake of the dead leader but of the entire system." The last quote is from the longer, Czech version of his memories. Ivan Klíma, *Moje Šílené Století* (Prague: Academia, 2009), 266-267
[65] Marco Menin, "Who Will Write the History of Tears? History of Ideas and History of Emotions from Eighteenth Century France to the Present," *History of European Ideas* 40, no. 4, (August, 2013), 517.

did the Czechoslovak Party leaders, many of whom spent the war years in the Soviet Union, know about Stalin's true nature? If Stalin was responsible for the murder of innocent people through show trials, what about the trials that took place a few years back in Czechoslovakia? Such questions and doubts were openly declared in the Party meetings and summer months of 1956, not only in larger cities and universities but also in rural areas. In Šumperk (Olomouc region), one member said to a local Party official that she "does not understand, it is very difficult to comprehend, how to make sense of these things. Today we criticize Stalin, and from what we know now, does not it seem like we will criticize comrade Gottwald and Zápotocky soon?"[66] According to meeting reports from the small borderland town of Nové Město pod Smrkem (Liberec region), one Party member by the name of Jílek criticized the Czechoslovak Party leaders for their complicity in the crimes of Stalinism and questioned possible wrongdoings in the Slanský trial. He asked: "How was it possible that his [Slanský's] colleagues did not see any of his alleged crimes before? Were they blind? Or, what was the specific reason behind his hanging?"[67] In the same meeting, another member openly criticized top Party leaders for not acknowledging their own failures while asking lower cadres to admit the mistakes of the past.[68]

Similar intense discussions took place among white-collar employees across the country. In his diary entry from April 1956, Josef Charvát, a non-communist professor of medicine, reflected on the emotionally-charged discussions he witnessed among the Barrandov Film studio employees about the implications of the Twentieth Congress:

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[66] Cited in Jaromír Mrňka, *Svéhlavá periferie : každodennost diktatury KSČ na příkladu Šumperska a Zábřežska v letech 1945-1960* (Prague: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2015), 160.
[67] Cited in Michaela Valnohová, "XX. Sjezd Komunistický Strany Sovětského Svazu, Události v Maďarsku a Polsku v Roce 1956 a Jejich Ohlas na Liberecku," (BA thesis, Technická Univerzita v Liberci, 2014), 45.
[68] Valnohová, "XX. Sjezd Komunistický Strany," 45.

> The situation is so tense that it reminds me of the days before Munich in 1938… The reaction of communists (to Khrushchev's speech) is very interesting. Suddenly they are all indignant (*rozhořčení*)… Some of the meetings are really furious (*bouřlivé*). In the meeting of Barrandov (Film Studio) employees, they talked about Čepička and Kopecký as if they talked about murderers. There came accusations: Why did 'the red aristocracy' use the methods which the real aristocrats abandoned already in the last century?[69]

Around the same time as Charvát recorded the impassioned criticisms against the "red-aristocracy," another medical doctor, an informant of the secret police, reported a similarly tense atmosphere among Party members in the medical faculty. He complained that the Twentieth Congress had a detrimental impact on discipline in the Party as the orders no longer carried much importance for the members. "Before the Twentieth Congress, the president or secretary had a certain respect and when they said something… everyone had to obey. Whereas now, he has to beg everyone [to implement the orders], and in the end, the people do not bother to help (*vykašle na hlavu*) and you cannot tell them a single word in return."[70] He also informed secret police agents that he "heard from an assistant at the department of Marxism-Leninism that, in certain circles, they were saying there could be some unrest (within the Party) because Bacílek, who did a lot of bad things when he was the minister of security, is now the secretary of the Central Committee of Slovak Communist Party."[71] For the young doctor, the Party had lost its grip on its members among the employees and students in the medical faculty.

Generational Guilt and the Affective Emergence of the Red-Collars

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[69]Josef Charvát, *Můj labyrint světa: Vzpomínky, zápisky z deníku* (Prague: Galén, 2005). 429-430. Václav Kopecký and Alexej Čepička were Ministers of Culture and Defence respectively and were known as the country's chief proponents of Stalinism and show trials. Čepička was also the son-in-law of Klement Gottwald. He was the only major Party official who lost his position after Khrushchev's speech in 1956.
[70] AÚPN, KS ZNB S-ŠtB Operatívne zväzky, Spisy o udalostiach v Maďarsku; KS A9 č.1; B8 7 inč. 7; page 89.
[71] AÚPN, KS ZNB S-ŠtB Operatívne zväzky, Spisy o udalostiach v Maďarsku; KS A9 č.1; B8 7 inč. 7; page 89.

All in all, the available evidence suggests that the news about Khrushchev's speech in 1956 brought a widespread sense of shock and disappointment among broad segments of the country's communist base. Unfortunately, however, what the evidence does not conclusively show is whether and to what extent the reactions to the speech differed from one social group to another. As also discussed in the introduction, Muriel Blaive argues that, largely due to the more favorable economic conditions in the country, unlike in Hungary and Poland, the general public in Czechoslovakia remained quiescent during 1956, and the strong reaction came mostly from intellectual circles.[72] In a more recent study of the socio-political history of the Šumperk and Zábřeh region between 1945 and 1960, Jaromír Mrňka confirms Blaive's argument and claims that although the revelations caused a legitimacy crisis for the Party at the regional level, the betterment of living standards under communism had a stabilizing effect on the general public.[73]

Arguably, for the members of the young intelligentsia, the situation was different. As we have seen, upon graduating from university and entering the workforce, they witnessed not only the dwindling of their social status and salaries but also experienced the tight ideological control and dominance of the new power elites. Khrushchev's speech coincided with already emerging discontents and made a deeper emotional impact on the young socialist intelligentsia, whose introduction to socialism during the war was closely connected with the charismatic persona of Stalin. Moreover, as we have seen, believing that a crackdown was justified to protect the revolution against its enemies, many of them had supported and taken part in the purges and persecutions after the revolution. Thus, the news about the widespread injustices conducted in the name of the revolution brought up the issue of personal responsibility for many of the young

[72] Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost*, 133.
[73] Mrňka, *Svéhlavá periferie*, 167.

revolutionaries, prompting an acutely felt sense of guilt for the injustices of the recent past. As participants in the communist revolution and supporters of the subsequent Stalinization, they questioned their own role in adopting the Stalinist model and declared their sense of guilt for supporting and participating in past wrongs.

To put it in more conceptual terms, out of a combination of social discontent with the post-revolutionary present and emotional pain from the revolutionary past, a significant section of the new intelligentsia became increasingly critical of the Party's ruling conduct in the country and questioned the political legitimacy of the Party elites. After 1956, the members of this new socio-emotional group, whom I will refer to as the "red-collars," increasingly distinguished themselves from the ruling cadres who refused to accept personal responsibility for past wrongdoings. In this regard, the confession of guilt served a discursive purpose to form a critical public opinion within the confines of the Party's censorship and ideological control of the public sphere.

It is crucial to note here that the political connotations associated with the public declarations of emotions do not make them mere discursive tools to insinuate criticism; the painful emotions after 1956 were real and had an impact on the political outlook of the red-collars. Even in their retrospective accounts written long after 1956, the red-collars reflected on their deep emotional pain after Khrushchev's speech. Zdeněk Mlynář (b. 1930)[74], then a young

[74] Zdeněk Mlynář (1930-1997) became a member of the Party at the age of 15 in 1946. As one of the promising bright members of the communist youth, he was sent by the Party to study Law at Moscow State University (MGU) in the Soviet Union**.** Upon his return to Czechoslovakia, he first found employment in the Prosecutor's office in Prague, then in the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. In 1968, he became one of the leading politicians of the reform government under Dubček. After the Warsaw Pact intervention, he was expelled from the Party and eventually emigrated to Austria. Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague;* Alessandro Catalano, "Zdeněk Mlynář a hledání socialistické opozice. Od aktivní politiky přes disent k ediční činnosti v exilu," *Soudobé dějiny* 3 (2013), 277-344; Rachel Applebaum, *Empire of Friends: Soviet Power and Socialist Internationalism in Cold War Czechoslovakia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 54.

lawyer in the prosecutor's office, who became secretary of the Central Committee during the Prague Spring, later reflected on how news about the Twentieth Congress left him in utter shock and shook his "insouciant attitude" with regard to one's ethical responsibility in believing and following the Party orders:

> Up till then, I had been convinced that if I obeyed the party, I would be acting in the 'interests of the working class,' with no responsibility for any eventual errors because the party bore that responsibility before history. Now Stalin had been clearly called to account by that very same party: he was to bear the responsibility himself. Where, then, did that leave me? Was I any different?[75]

As a recent graduate of Moscow State University in Moscow, Mlynář was not a stranger to the long-standing problems of socialism in the Soviet Union. Although he had harbored some criticism and disappointment with the state of affairs under socialism both in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, the news about Khrushchev's speech came as a complete surprise and left him with the feeling of guilt and questions about his personal responsibility for past crimes. Mlynář remembered that "in discussions both in and outside Party meetings" in 1956, he gradually grasped the "concrete view of a terrifying reality," that the Czechoslovak Party leaders knowingly sent "doubtfully guilty, and even quite obviously innocent people to prison or to their deaths."[76] As a result, his earlier ideological conviction – that standing with the official Party line meant being on the right side of history-- came to an end.[77]

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[75] Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 33.
[76] Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 34.
[77] A few months later, when the Red Army invaded Hungary amidst the news about the lynching and hanging of communists from the lampposts of Budapest, Mlynář recalls one of his like-minded friends saying: "But what could I do if they bust in off the streets and said they were going to hang the Communists? Tell them I'm not one of that lot anymore? They won't care… My next-door neighbor is a Stalinist whore! I don't want to hang on the same tree as him; so I'll have to tell them: fine, gentlemen, go right ahead, but would you mind hanging me a couple of trees down from this man here?" Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 42-43.

In an interview conducted in the spring of 1967, the journalist and writer Jaroslav Putík (b. 1923)[78] recalled 1956 as being the "milestone marking the end of an epoch," representing "a major existential shock" for the members of his generation.[79] Putík had followed the show trials as a journalist and observed the accused people testify "like robots," suppressing his inner voice, which had told him, "this is all nonsense."[80] Thus, he emphasized that Khrushchev's revelations did not "fall out of a clear blue sky;" although it was tempting to think that guilt lay with somebody else, in reality, people "refused to believe" the indications, and thus, nobody "can plead ignorance as an excuse."[81] More than a decade after 1956, Putík still regretted not listening to his inner voice and taking part in the legitimization of the persecutions. "These are experiences with which I shall have to come to terms some day," he said.[82]

Similarly, the young poet Pavel Kohout (b. 1928), who had written many odes to Stalin a few years earlier, questioned his own responsibility in the apparent crimes of the Stalinist era.[83] In his (edited) diary, he asked himself whether and to what extent he was guilty of the crimes of

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[78] Jaroslav Putík (1923-2013) became a communist sympathizer during the war and was imprisoned by the occupation regime because of his participation in the resistance. After the liberation, he studied at journalism school and worked as an editor for various publications. In 1959, he had to leave his position due to his disagreements with the authorities and instead focused on his literary career. After the Warsaw Pact intervention in 1968, he resigned from the Communist Party and became one of the forbidden authors during the normalization era. Bohumil Svozil, "Jaroslav Putík," *Slovník české literatury po roce 1945,* ed. Michal Přibáň, Eduard Burget et.al. (Brno: Host, 2002) http://www.slovnikceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=855

[79] Antonin J. Liehm, *The Politics of Culture* (New York: Groove Press, 1971), 240. The interview was conducted by the writer and film critic Antonín J. Liehm as part of a project to document the stories of the generation that came of age during the years of the war and revolution. Liehm published the collection of interviews first in Czech, then in English after 1968.

[80] Liehm, *The Politics of Culture*, 242.

[81] Liehm, *The Politics of Culture*, 243.

[82] Liehm, *The Politics of Culture*, 243.

[83] In many ways, Pavel Kohout (b. 1928) epitomized the changing political convictions of the red-collars in the decades after the revolution. Coming from a middle-class communist family, he joined the Party immediately after the war and first rose to literary prominence through highly Stalinistic verses in the early 1950s. After 1956, he became increasingly critical of the Party policies and, in the 1960s, became actively involved in the reformist wing of the communist intelligentsia. Like many other reformist intellectuals, he was expelled from the Party after the forceful suppression of the Prague Spring. He emigrated to Austria in 1980. Pavel Kohout, *From the Diary of a Counter Revolutionary* (New York: Mcgraw-Hill Company, 1972); Věra Brožová and Veronika Košnarová, "Pavel Kohout," in *Slovník české literatury po roce 1945,* ed. Michal Přibáň, Eduard Burget et.al. (Brno: Host, 2002). http://www.slovnikceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=43&hl=pavel+kohout+

the Party: "Where and in what had I lied? Or had we truly been so frightfully ignorant?" [84] Along with questions about his own responsibility, he also blamed Party leaders for adopting the Stalinist model and criticized their apparent unwillingness to make substantial changes to the existing ruling logic in the country: "Why do they threaten those Party organizations which demanded an extraordinary congress? Why are we climbing stepladders to take Stalin's portraits down from the walls when he is quite evidently rising from the dead? ... This year, instead of hammer and sickle, we ought to have a big question-mark on our heads."[85]

The future sociologist—then a young communist student—Jiřina Šiklová (b. 1935) recalled similar questions and emotions upon the news about Khrushchev's speech at her university faculty: "I remember to this day the discussions after the Twentieth Congress. Some said that we were all wrong; we all share responsibility for the cult of personality." [86] She further remembered that as the discussion went on, the declarations of guilt and self-responsibility gave way to blaming political leaders. One young docent refused to take on responsibility for the wrongdoings of the Party and claimed that blame lay with someone else. "Wait a second, comrades, do not tell me any of this. I did not do anything; why would I take the blame for it?"

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[84] Kohout, *From the Diary of a Counter Revolutionary*, 177
[85] Kohout, *From the Diary of a Counter Revolutionary*, 178.
[86] Jiřina Šiklová, *Bez ohlávky* (Prague: Kalich, 2001), 85.
Born in 1935, Jiřina Šiklová enthusiastically answered the revolutionary call by becoming first a member of the socialist youth in her early teenage years, then a Party member in 1956. After finishing her Ph.D. studies at the Faculty of Philosophy at Charles University, she co-founded the Department of Sociology within the Faculty. In 1968, she became one of the leading functionaries at the university and took part in the organization of the widely-participated and reported student debates about socialist democracy in the faculty. Due to her active involvement in the reform efforts during the Prague Spring, she was promptly expelled from the Party and her academic position by the normalization regime in 1969. Afterward, she was involved in the dissident movement and was one of the signatories of *Charter 77*, a public manifesto and later civic initiative to call on the Husak government to respect civil liberties.

he asked rhetorically.[87] He then went on to blame Party leaders and talk about the unjust trial of Tukachevsky and the Doctor's plot in the Soviet Union.[88]

Such critical, emotion-filled discussions about the Stalinist past did not remain confined to private conversations or Party meetings. As the discussions about the implications of the Twentieth Congress were raging across the country, the Party Presidium began to receive numerous petitions from the Party organization calling for a thorough investigation of similar procedures which took place in Czechoslovakia, some demanding expulsion of all culprits "regardless of their position in the Party hierarchy."[89] It soon became clear that some concessions needed to be made to quell the wave of discontent at home and answer Khrushchev's call for de-Stalinization across the bloc. The First Secretary Antonín Novotný accepted that the KSČ imported "unhealthy practices" from the Soviet Union and portrayed the adaptation of the "cult of personality" (*kult osobnosti*) as an honest mistake of the now-deceased former First Secretary Klement Gottwald in the war against class enemies during the first years after the revolution.[90]

Despite the efforts at containing the implications of the revelations, the fact that the KSČ officially accepted that Stalin's "personality cult" had had a detrimental impact on the country signaled a green light for many to criticize the Party, albeit without directly indicating leaders by name, for dogmatism, bureaucratism and for failing to understand the expectations of citizens.[91] Soon, "the cult of personality" (*kult osobnosti*) became a permissible abstract catchphrase to

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[87] Šiklová, *Bez ohlávky*, 85.
[88] Šiklová, *Bez ohlávky*, 85
[89] Suda, *Zealots and Rebels*, 269.
[90] Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost*, 62.
[91] See for example, Mirko Novak, "Spory a pravdu," *Literárny noviny*, February 23, 1957, 3; Karel Kosik, "O Byrokracii, Tentokrát Polemicky," Literárny *noviny*, June 15, 1957, 6; Ladislav Mňačko, "Do Budúcich Dní," *Kultúrny život*, April 27, 1957, 1.

mildly criticize some of the past wrongdoings in general terms without implicating the contemporary leadership of the Party. It was in this wave of criticism that the red-collars discussed the issue of personal responsibility for the now-apparent injustices of the past and communicated their emotion of guilt in the media.

The first major and most significant public demonstration of the emotional criticism of the red-collars among the literati occurred at the Second Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers, which took place between April 22-29, 1956. On the first day of the Congress, Mňačko made one of the most memorable speeches. "What pains me above all else is who I actually am," he said at the beginning of his speech.[92] "They called me, and I called myself an engineer of human souls. And lately, as a writer, I have been given roles such as agent of public control, or conscience of the nation." [93] Unlike in earlier times, however, he was now not sure whether he fulfilled the criteria of these roles, and noted that this hesitation itself pained him deeply: "For such internal evaluations, one needs time. Not without pain or internal torment. [But] I do not want to cry now or sentimentalize here."[94] Then, moving to the heart of the issue of personal responsibility, he asserted that he could not respect anyone that said he had known nothing about what had been going on. Even though, as a journalist, he had traveled widely throughout the country and had first-hand experience of the inefficiencies and injustices, he wrote "not one critical word" about them. His work needed to contribute to an "expanding atmosphere of joyful

[92] Ladislav Mňačko, "Z Prvních Diskusních Příspěvku," *Literárny noviny*, April 25, 1956, 13-14; Some of the speeches in the Congress were translated in length by Marci Shore in her article on the Czechoslovak Writer's Union between 1949 and 1967. I use her translation when available. Marci Shore, "Engineering in the Age of Innocence: a Genealogy of Discourse Inside the Czechoslovak Writers' Union, 1949-67," *East European Politics and Societies* 12, no.3, (1998): 397-441.
[93] Mňačko, "Z Prvních," 13.
[94] Mňačko, "Z Prvních," 14.

optimism," he said.[95] After all, he claimed, he had always been, and still was "the Don Quixote" of socialism.[96]

Toward the end of his speech, Mňačko turned his attention from the issue of personal guilt to collective responsibility, and how to move forward in the future. Here, presumably because the extent of allowed criticism was still not clear, his language became more figurative. Echoing the proverb, "everybody knows everything (*všichni lidé všechno vědí*)," he claimed that the ordinary people, unlike the Party's cadre policy, recognize "who is who" and distinguish between who was honest and who was not. However, he argued, unlike the wisdom of the ordinary people, the Party, through its cadre policy, promoted ill-suited people to the positions of power. The cadre policy "harmed the honest people... and benefited the mediocre careerists, amoral people, who did not stop at anything."[97] And, in order to remedy the issue, he makes a poetic suggestion:

> Allow me to finish figuratively. We shall take all those cadre questionnaires to Wenceslas Square, light them on fire, and make a great folk festival about it. Then we shall let people dance, it will be a different type of dance than how the young people dance in organized events.[98]

Thus Mňačko's self-criticism and declaration of guilt were intertwined with the criticism of the Party. While confessing his past falsifications as a journalist and writer, he emphasized the good intentions in his mistakes as opposed to the self-centered motives of the "mediocre careerists," who unjustly benefited from the Stalinist era. Although Mňačko did not clarify who

[95] Mňačko, "Z Prvních," 14.
[96] Mňačko, "Z Prvních," 14.
[97] Mňačko, "Z Prvních," 14.
[98] Mňačko, "Z Prvních," 14.

exactly these "amoral" cadres were, it was evident that he was referring to the higher Party circles.

Although not all of the speakers had the same level of criticism as Mňačko, many declared their sense of guilt and responsibility for past injustices at the Congress and demanded a change in the Party's ruling conduct. The young poet Stanislav Neumann (b. 1927)[99] began his speech by reflecting on the Stalinism of his generation and the emotional toll that the past was taking on them: "My generation grew up with Stalin's name, and with his name, in 1944, as seventeen-year-old boys, we came to the party. My best friends went to their deaths in Terezín with his name. He personified our youth and our hope."[100] After emphasizing his pain over his past support for the Stalinist persecutions, Neumann called for an open dialogue over the "truth" and "conscience" within the party.[101] More combatively, Pavel Kohout claimed that there was a moral crisis in the country and criticized the leading functionaries and ideologues in the cultural sphere, namely the Minister of Culture Václav Kopecký, and the literary critic Ladislav Štoll, for ignoring the recent developments and failing to face their roles in the wrongdoings of the past. "Why are the ministers and their deputies evading the questions like the devil evades the cross?" he semi-rhetorically asked.[102] Reflecting on his own past Stalinism, he shared that he simply wanted to become a "partisan of the revolution" instead of remaining a mere "observer," but

[99] Coming from a family of celebrated artists, Stanislav Neumann (1927-1970) was first involved in political activity with an illegal anti-fascist organization called *Předvoj* (vanguard) during the German occupation. He was arrested and imprisoned in Terezín concentration camp and was released after contacting typhus a few days before the liberation in 1945. After working in various cultural institutions in the 1950s, he found employment in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After the forceful end of the Prague Spring, depressed by the political atmosphere and conditions at the ministry and the Party, he committed suicide in 1970. Vladimír Macura, "Stanislav Neumann," in *Slovník české literatury po roce 1945,* ed. Michal Přibáň, Eduard Burget et.al. (Brno: Host, 2002). http://www.slovnikceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=1083&hl=Stanislav+Neumann+
[100] Stanislav Neumann, "Sjezdová Diskuse," *Literárny noviny,* May 5, 1956, 7; also quoted in Shore, "Engineering in the Age of Innocence," 416.
[101] Neumann, "Sjezdová Diskuse," 7.
[102] Pavel Kohout, "Z Diskuse," *Literárny noviny,* April 29, 1956, 10.

admitted that this choice led him to make many errors, of which he was only now grasping the full extent.[103]

For many of the red-collars, the criticism at the Second Writer's Congress and the fact that it was openly published in print media signaled that profound change was coming. In his letter to *Literární noviny*, a cultural weekly of the Union of Writers, an enthusiastic reader, an office-worker (*úředník*) from Liberec reported that when the readers of the magazine read the speeches, they wondered if there would be consequences for the uttered "words." "There was a good deal of discussion among the people and endless wondering (*přetřásat*) about what is newly developing in the Union Hall. People talk about it in the factories, in the offices, race clubs, and cultural circles."[104] The reader applauded the writers for commencing the hard battle for the "revival of truth and honest pursuit of a better future."[105] Another reader, a teacher from Moravia, expressed the hopes and expectation of the critical reading public for the new era:

> You cannot imagine with what animation we are analyzing your newspaper here! How the wilted, almost dead, flower of trust again rises in our hearts – we again have our writers! After all, they are the ones in whom we place our trust... There was no template (in their speeches); they think, they feel, they talk, they are ours! [106]

The rebellion at the Writer's Congress took place amidst increasingly combative criticism against Party leaders by the red-collars in the public sphere. For example, in March 1956, before the Party openly announced the content of the speech to the general public, a feuilleton written by a young teacher in Slovak *Pravda* criticized the careerism and disrespectful attitude of the leading functionaries of the District National Committee (*ONV- Okresný národný výbor*) in the

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[103] Kohout, "Z Diskuse," 10.
[104] "Čtenáři o sjezdu Československých spisovatelů," *Literárny noviny*, May 26, 1956, 7.
[105] "Čtenáři o sjezdu," 7.
[106] "Čtenáři o sjezdu," 7; also quoted and translated in Kaplan, *Winter into Spring*, 16.

district of Zvolen.[107] The teacher specifically targeted the ruling conduct of three individuals, all unnamed Party officials, accusing them of arrogance and dictatorial tendencies. One month later, when Khrushchev's speech began to be discussed openly in the media, the newspaper reopened the case reported in the feuilleton and published another reader's letter from Zvolen. This time, however, the criticism was not only about the local functionaries in Zvolen; it was directed against the entire group of high Party functionaries. The reader verified the validity of the accusations of the earlier letter and claimed the Twentieth Congress confirmed the widespread abuse of power by the Party leaders. In order to remove the negative influence of "Stalin's personality cult" from the country, the reader called for an open discussion and critique among the general public (*široká verejnosť*).[108]

In a similar vein, in the cultural journal *Kultúrny život*, the young journalist Milan Ferko (b. 1929)[109] criticized the high-Party officials for dictatorial tendencies and ignoring the demands of university students, branding them as "provocateurs and wreckers."[110] With a sentimental tone, Ferko claimed that the students spoke "their hearts when they cry for freedom" and, referencing the working-class backgrounds of many students of the new era, he suggested that their cry "came from the bosom of working-class and peasant mothers, the nation's blood is boiling (*vrie rodna krv*) in it."[111] Accordingly, the negative reaction to student demands indicated that there was resistance against the "spirit of the Twentieth Congress" among the high-cadres

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[107] Jan Turis, "Prestíž je prestíž," *Pravda*, March 7, 1956, 3.
[108] "Ohlas na fejtón" *Pravda*, April 15, 1956, 3.
[109] Coming from a communist-leaning working-class family, Milan Ferko (1929-2010) studied at the Faculty of Law at Comenius University in Bratislava. He entered literary work through poems glorifying the Soviet Union and the international socialist movement in the early 1950s. After his graduation, he worked as a journalist and editor for various popular publications, such as *Smena*, *Mlada Tvorba* and *Slovenské pohľady*. He was expelled from the Union of Slovak Writers after 1968 because of his support for reform socialism. "Milan Ferko," *Literárne Informačně Centrum*, last accessed September 28, 2020, https://www.litcentrum.sk/autor/milan-ferko/zivotopis-autora.
[110] Milan Ferko, "Senzácia? Vrenie!," *Kultúrny život*, May 26, 1956,1.
[111] Ferko, "Senzácia?," 1.

and an open and fierce battle was raging on the "inner front" to restore the "Leninist principles of the socialist life."[112] Shortly after Ferko's article, emphasizing the opposition between the conduct of the Party elites and the normative values of the ruling ideology, *Kultúrny život* went as far as to publish a caricature depicting a car with a private chauffeur having to stop because Karl Marx is blocking the way. And the chauffer shouts: "Move away from the road! Don't you see, I am driving the comrade director?!"[113] (Figure I)

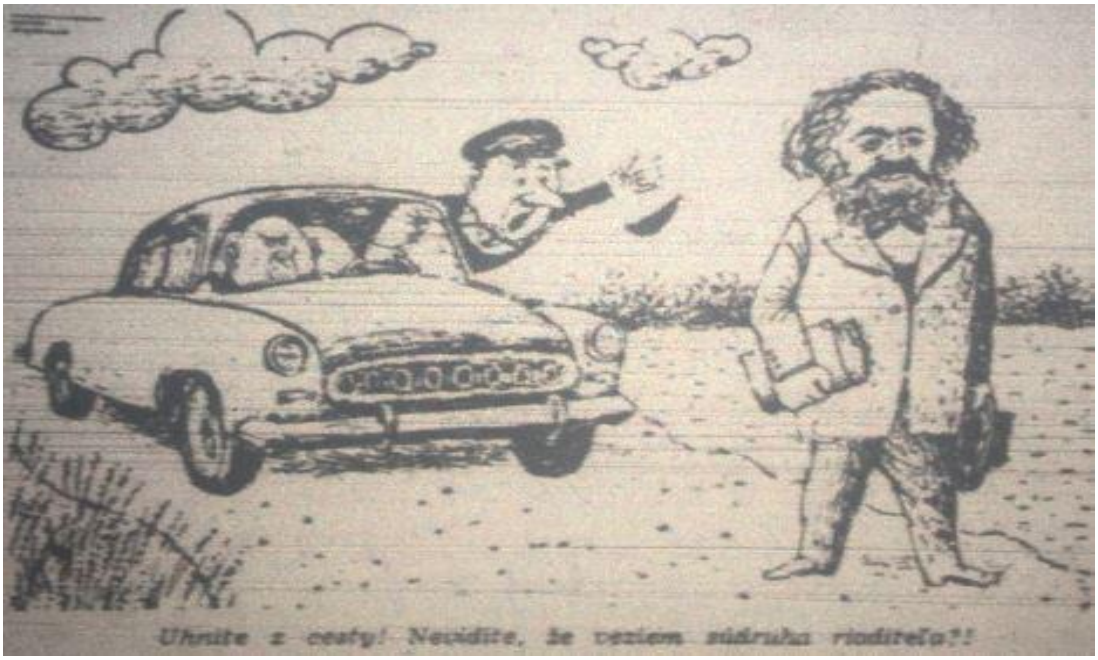

Figure 1[114]

(Move away from the road! Don't you see? I am driving the comrade director.)

[112] Ferko, "Senzácia?," 1.
[113] *Kultúrny život*, July 14, 1956, 8.
[114] *Kultúrny život*, July 14, 1956, 8.

The End of the Prague Thaw and Beyond

The uprisings in Poland and Hungary put an abrupt end to such discussions and criticisms in Czechoslovakia. Amidst the news about lynchings of communists by "anti-communists and chauvinists" in the streets of Budapest, the KSČ launched a counter-de-Stalinization policy, which significantly reduced the extent of criticism of the leadership in the media.[115] Starting from the summer of 1956, as the upheaval and political crisis in Poland and Hungary deepened, the Party re-established heavy censorship of the press and the discussions about harmful impact of Stalin's "cult of personality" largely came to an end.[116] Ironically, however, the Party's counter de-Stalinization campaign made the inner strife and division within the socialist base between the red-collars and the ruling elite more visible in the print media. Whereas earlier, the red-collar readers and critical members of the literati could only covertly and indirectly criticize the power elites in print media, now the Czechoslovak Party leaders and ideologues directly identified and blamed "some intellectual groups" and "petit-bourgeois elements" for "showing intellectual pessimism," "falling for demagogy and liberalism" or "creating anarchy and lawlessness" in the country.[117] In this regard, one can trace the emergence of the red-collars as a counter-hegemonic social group through official Party rhetoric after 1956.

During the Central Committee meeting in December 1956, along with Novotny's declaration of support for Soviet intervention in Hungary and lashing out at revisionism in Yugoslav and Polish forms, many of the high functionaries questioned the loyalty of the

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[115] For some examples of the coverage of events in Hungary, see "Moje pocity pri počúvaní budapeštianskeho rozhlasu," *Pravda*, November 6, 1956, 3; "Z Maďarské 'Bílé knihy': Jak řádila kontrarevoluce v Maďarsku," *Rudé pravo*, December 14, 1956, 2.
[116] Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 34-36.
[117] See for instance, "O poslaní úlohách inteligencie," *Pravda*, October 20, 1956, 3; Jan Fojtík, "Třídní boj a Maďarské události," *Rudé pravo*, December 6, 1956, 4-5.

country's intelligentsia.[118] They argued that the "country's writers, university students and other layers of the intelligentsia" were inclined to have "incorrect" revisionist ideas and suggested that the Party's ideological and pedagogical apparatus should pay more attention to the ideological work at universities and admit even more students from the working-class families.[119] Meanwhile, the newspapers were filled with articles and speeches on the dangers of revisionism and how "certain groups among the intelligentsia" were failing to realize them.[120]

In doing this, they often portrayed the dissenting red-collars as hypocritical opposites of the country's honest proletariats. One such article, headlined "Martin Klzký is criticizing the cult of personality," caricaturized a fictitious middle-aged office worker, who has never worked at a farm or with peasants, and was eager to blame honest Party officials for cultivating the cult of personality during Party meetings at the collective farm.[121] Klzký says, "I have been beaten as a working intellectual (*pracující inteligent*), and now in the spirit of Twentieth Congress, I will show it to them."[122] With arrogance and a sense of vengeance, he attacks the "personality cult" at every meeting, but in fact, he had been part of the cult before and knowingly supported the practices, which he now denounces as terror. The text was accompanied by a caricature of a clumsy intellectual with an unsatisfying look on his face. (Figure 2)

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[118] Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 34-35.
[119] For the speeches made at the Party meetings, see "Z diskuse na zasedání ÚV KSČ dne 5. a 6. Prosince 1956," *Rudé pravo*, December 11, 1956, 3-4.
[120] See for instance, "Proti zvyškom buržoáynej ideolôgie," *Pravda*, December 18, 1956; Jaromír Sedlák, "O čistotu marxistického myšlení," *Rudé právo*, June 10, 1958, 3; Jiří Hendrych, "Některé současné otázky ideologické práce strany," *Rudé právo*, June 19, 1957, 7-8; Vladimír Koucký, "Čtyři poznámky k otázkám ideologické práce," *Tvorba 25*, June 20, 1957, 2-3.
[121] Miloš Krno, "Martin Klzký kritizuje kult osobnosti," *Pravda*, October 20, 1956, 6. "Klzký" means slippery in Slovak.
[122] Krno, "Martin Klzký kritizuje," 6.

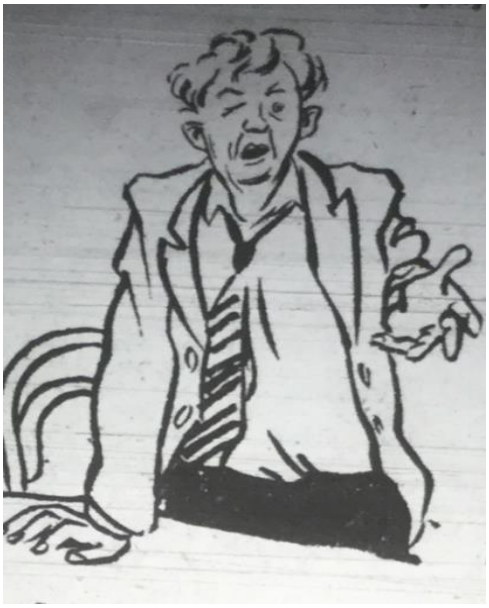

Figure 2:

Martin Klzký is criticizing the cult of personality

Not surprisingly, the contemporary Party sources do not provide direct information about how red-collars like Klzký felt about the counter de-Stalinization campaign in the country. Already in the summer of 1956, when it was becoming clear that de-Stalinization would be slower than anticipated and that Party leaders were reverting back to discourse on "fighting against revisionism," one university student wrote in his diary that he "almost cried" upon reading the summary of speeches made by the Party leaders: [123]

> The worst repercussions are (felt) among the intelligentsia. It showed us that eight years since February did not take away the innate need for personal freedom and especially freedom of thought. Now there will be suffering for it. I am afraid that I will now become a reactionary. A month ago, I believed, and I was happy that finally, the time of free-thinking and feeling is coming. Today I am disappointed, and I am starting to doubt the humanism of the current order. I have never followed the (political) events so carefully as in the last weeks.[124]

[123] Pavel Juráček, *Deník II (1956-1959)* (Prague: Torst, 2017), 44
[124] Juráček, *Deník II*, 44.

Although the red-collars could no longer declare such strong negative emotions and their opposition in the public sphere, the Party leaders and hard-lining ideologues soon began to admit that the "campaign against revisionism" was not going as smoothly as hoped. They reported on "revisionist" or "petit-bourgeois" tendencies among the "youth" or "intelligentsia" and often blamed the remnants of the old bourgeoisie for such popular inclinations.[125] Occasionally, they singled out concrete cases of individuals with "wrong ideas."[126] *Život Strany*, a magazine intended for circulation among Party functionaries, reported on a young engineer and graduate student at the Department of Mining Engineering in Ostrava by the name of Zdeněk Dubský, who "spread erroneous theories about 'liberalized Stalinism.'"[127] According to the article, Dubský was arguing that "the Leninist conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat is obsolete and it is necessary to replace it with a new form of dictatorship 'of a wider coalition of classes,' i.e., including the bourgeoisie. He attempted to lower the importance of the leading role of the Party in the building of socialism in our country."[128] During the investigation, Dubský defended his ideas and refused to back down. As a result, the school administration relieved him from his post as a "special assistant," and he was soon expelled from the Party. Nevertheless, despite the expulsion, the reporting functionary seemed to be worried about Dubský's self-confidence and insistence in his beliefs, and the Party's inability to counter them. "However, this did not conclude the case," she wrote. "Dubský continued to persist in his opinions… Dubský's case

[125] For instance, see the speeches of Karol Bacílek, the head of the Slovak branch of the Party, "Hlavné ideologicke úlohy strany na Slovensku," *Pravda*, January 12, 1958, 3; also Michal Pecho, "V mene reforiem," *Predvoj*, December 18, 1958, 4.
[126] Jaromír Sedlák, "O čistotu marxistického myšlení," *Rudé právo*, June 10, 1958, 3.
[127] Cited in Hruby, *Fools and Heroes*, 73-74.
[128] Cited in Hruby, *Fools and Heroes*, 74.

demonstrated to us that the fight against (bourgeois) democracy is a difficult one…[it is] difficult because most of us Party members are as yet inexperienced in the conduct of this fight."[129] Even almost one year later, the Party spokesman referred to Dubský to emphasize the pervasiveness of revisionism among the educated layer of society: "All basic forms of modern revisionism could be found in our country, (as shown by the cases of Kühnl and Kusin at the Prague School of Economics, or Zdeněk Dubský at the School of Mining Engineering at Ostrava."[130] For the spokesman, these individual cases were symptoms of pervasive revisionism in the country.

While Dubský's mini-rebellion shows that at least some of the red-collars were in open confrontation with the Party's official ideological stance and policies, the great majority of them managed to stay in the Party by voicing their criticisms and disagreements only about seemingly apolitical social or cultural phenomena (e.g. problems of youth, generational conflicts, clichés of the socialist realist art) and kept their confrontational opinions and emotions in their small social circles.[131] When in late 1956, for example, the Party's district secretary in Rokycany criticized the members of the Czechoslovak Union of Youth (ČSM) for ideological apathy and ignorance, he received significant backlash from readers across the country.[132] Because the speech was published in *Literárne noviny*, the magazine received many letters from the readers, all of which, as the editors noted, were critical of the district secretary as well as of the magazine for publishing it.[133] The editors responded to the criticism by stating that the secretary's opinions did

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[129] Cited in Hruby, *Fools and Heroes*, 74.
[130] Sedlák, "O čistotu marxistického myšlení," 3.
[131] Many of the future cultural and political actors of the Prague Spring era, such as Alexander Dubček, Čestmír Císař, and Zdeněk Mlynář, managed to stay in the Party and climb up the bureaucratic ladder despite their disagreements and dissent with official Party policies and elites thanks to their strategy of silence during this time.
[132] Václav Kas, "Pracovníci ČSM musí být psychology," *Literární noviny*, January 5, 1957, 9; "Mládežníci z Ústecka a Literárním novinám," *Literární noviny*, February 16, 1957, 3; "Oč nám vlastné jde," *Literární noviny*, March 2, 1957, 3.
[133] "Oč nám vlastné jde," *Literární noviny*, March 2, 1957, 3.

not reflect the opinion of the magazine, and published some of the opposing letters from readers. In one such letter, a young office-worker (*uředník*) from Svitavy claimed "criticism requires an honesty and openness from both critic and criticized" and implied that the district secretary lacked both qualities.[134] The reader blamed the local secretary for criticizing for the sake of criticism and not offering any solution to solve the problems he saw within the communist youth. Moreover, the reader argued, the communist youth of the mid-1950s were no different than the youth of the revolutionary postwar era, whom the reader was part of, except the fact that the contemporary youth were "lured to pretend" (*svedena k pretvarce*), and forced to hide their true selves by people like the district secretary.[135]

These protest letters against the district secretary in Rokycany and, more importantly, their publication in *Literárne noviny* were not isolated incidents. After the counter de-Stalinization campaign effectively banned direct political criticism against the ruling ideology and Party elites in the public sphere, many red-collars insinuated their dissenting opinions and emotions through cultural and social topics. While the members of the reading public shared their disagreements and criticisms with the public officials (except top leaders) through readers' letters, which were published in cultural journals and periodicals, the newly emerged communist literati voiced "unorthodox opinions" on various topics, from the definition of socialist realism in the arts to ideological convictions (or lack thereof) of the youth.

Conclusion

[134] "Oč nám vlastné jde," 3.
[135] "Oč nám vlastné jde," 3.

Milan Kundera's 1979 novel, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting,* opens with an anecdote about the photograph of the First Communist President Klement Gottwald standing on a balcony with his comrade Vladimír Clementis in February 1948, right after the revolution, addressing the celebrating masses in Prague's Old Town Square.[136] Kundera narrates that because the weather was cold and Gottwald had no hat, Clementis put his own fur hat on Gottwald's head. However, when Clementis was executed for treason four years later, he was air-brushed out of the photographs and, consequently, the history of that day. All that remained of that warm comradely moment in Czech memory was the fur hat that Gottwald was wearing. After narrating the incident, Kundera abruptly switches to the protagonist of the story, Mirek, who declares, "the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."[137] Accordingly, clinging to memory, remembering the past in its authentic form, is itself an act of resistance.

Unfortunately, Kundera does not really tell us why the act of remembering is an act of resistance. His protagonist simply seems to believe that remembering the past in opposition to the political power's falsifications of history is by itself a form of resistance. Arguably, however, at least in the context of the Czechoslovak 1950s and 1960s, what gave memory a resistive quality was the subversive emotions that it evoked in people. Because the public remembering of past injustices simultaneously gave rise to feelings of personal guilt and the desire for political change, it constituted an existential threat for the new political elite. Because the red-collar reflections about the tainted revolutionary past had gained a resistive character towards the Party

[136] Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (Penguin: New York, 1999).
[137] Kundera, *The Book of Laughter,* 1.

leadership, the counter de-Stalinization movement put an end to the public discussions about the Stalinist past.

At the same time, however, although the KSČ leadership was able to put a temporary end to the red-collar discussions about the Stalinist past and eliminate the emotionally-charged displays of guilt in the public sphere, the red-collars continued to differentiate themselves from official ideology by voicing their unorthodox opinions on various cultural and social issues. Perhaps surprisingly, the country's cinema became one of the most influential and prominent mediums for insinuating and communicating the red-collar (self-)distinction in society. Displaying remarkable resistance against the Party's efforts to implement total control over the industry, the red-collar film-makers often tested (and sometimes transgressed) the limits imposed by the counter de-Stalinization era. In the next chapter, by focusing on the portrayal of different social groups and classes in the so-called Czechoslovak Early New Wave films, the dissertation will discuss how the red-collars situated themselves vis-a-vis the workers and the Party elites in socialist society.

Chapter Three:

Between Bosses and Workers: The Red-Collar (Self) Image in the Czechoslovak "Ur-Wave" Cinema

In 1953, during the filming of the socialist-realist movie *Frona* (*Sisters*), twenty-six-year-old assistant director Ladislav Helge was getting ready for a scene depicting the nationalization of private lands through the plowing of boundaries between fields under a red banner with a highly propagandistic tone. However, unexpectedly, the villagers, who were to play the extras, refused to participate in the scene, protesting that it bore no relation to what actually happened in real life and said: "We thought you were filming a novel, but you are filming politics."[138] No matter how hard Helge and the director Jiří Krejčík tried to convince the villagers, they did not change their minds. In the end, the filmmakers had to postpone the filming of the scene and bring in people from a nearby city.[139]

The refusal of villagers to participate in a scene, which claimed to depict the revolutionary changes in the countryside authentically, shook socialist Helge to the core and convinced him of the "conflict between the reality and the scenario" they were facing.[140] "You

[138] Petr Bilík, *Ladislav Helge : cesta za občanským filmem : kapitoly z dějin Československé kinematografie po roce 1945* (Brno: Host, 2011), 138. Peter Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 52; Antonín J. Liehm, *Closely Watched Films: The Czechoslovak Experience* (New York: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1974), 116
[139] Liehm, *Closely Watched Films*, 116.
[140] Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, 52; Bilík, *Ladislav Helge*, 138.

cannot just invent something and then force people to enact a plot that is contrary to the plot of their own lives," he said in an interview more than a decade after the event.[141] Two years after the incident, when the writer Ivan Kříž approached him to direct his scenario about the struggles of school teachers against corruption and indifference in the countryside, Helge had his first opportunity to realize his wish and depict socialist society without distortions. The resultant film, *The School for Fathers* (*Škola otců*, 1957), was one of the first serious looks in Czechoslovak cinema at the conflict between socialist ideals and the realities of socialism in practice. Between 1956 and 1968, the duo ended up making four films in total, exploring themes such as the unrecognized hopes of socialism, corruption in the Party apparatus, and individual responsibility amid societal indifference and systemic corruption.

Both the writer Ivan Kříž and the director Ladislav Helge were born into socialist working-class families, in 1922 and 1927, respectively. Like many of their peers, they were forced to discontinue their studies and work as blue-collar workers during the years of the German occupation. While Helge was sent to Eastern Bohemia to work as a forced laborer for German military efforts, Kříž went back to his small hometown to work as an apprentice at the carpentry shop.[142] After the war, both Kříž and Helge developed sympathies for communist ideology and eventually became members of the Party. Kříž enrolled in the Faculty of Law and began to work as a journalist and cultural critic in various communist magazines.[143] Helge, on the other hand, first found employment in the Czechoslovak Film archives and worked for

[141] Liehm, *Closely Watched Films*, 116.
[142] Bilík, *Ladislav Helg*e, 125; Vladimír Novotný, "Ivan Kríž," in *Slovník české literatury po roce 1945*, ed. Michal Přibáň, Eduard Burget et.al. (Brno: Host, 2002). http://www.slovnikceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=505&hl=ivan+kriy+
[143] Novotný, "Ivan Kríž."

almost ten years as an assistant director before getting an opportunity to make his directorial debut.[144]

The life trajectories of Helge and Kříž were typical of young filmmakers who found employment in the country's filmmaking industry during the 1950s. Many red-collars entered the country's recently nationalized film industry throughout the decade; born between the late 1910s and early 1930s, they had been accepted to the prestigious Film Academy in Prague (*FAMU*) largely thanks to their socialist and anti-fascistic credentials. Upon graduation, they were employed in film studios and worked on the sets of the socialist realist movies of the early 1950s. They made their directorial debuts after 1956 when de-Stalinization slowly took effect in the cultural sphere, allowing filmmakers to move away from the earlier, propagandistic texts and begin making critical visual commentaries about contemporary society and its recent revolutionary past.

Between 1956 and 1968, these red-collar filmmakers such as Ladislav Helge, Ján Kadár and Vojtěch Jasný opted out of the earlier, politically viable socialist-realist themes and explored subjects such as ideological demoralization, generational conflicts, bureaucratic inertia, or absurdities at the organizational level in the country. Whereas the socialist-realist cinema of the pre-1956 era focused mostly on the struggles of working-class people,[145] national resistance against feudal oppression,[146] or German occupation during the war,[147] the red-collar filmmakers shifted the cinematic focus and narrated stories about educated individuals caught up in

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[144] For a long interview with Helge about his life and career, see Bilík, *Ladislav Helg*e, 124-199.
[145] Some examples of the films, which emphasized the working class struggle against the bourgeoisie and rural gentry are *Pětistovka* (Martin Frič, 1949); *Anna proletářka* (Karel Steklý, 1952), *Přicházejí z tmy* (Václav Gajer, 1953), *Pole neorané* (Vladimír Bahna, 1953), *Olověný chléb* (Jiří Sequens st., 1953).
[146] Otakar Vávra's Hussite trilogy [*Jan Hus* (1954) *Proti všem* (1955) and *Jan Žižka* (1955)] is the most prominent example of such genre.
[147] See for instance, *Němá barikáda* (Otakar Vávra, 1949); *Boj sa skončí zajtra* (Miroslav Cikán, 1950); *Malý partyzán* (Pavel Blumenfeld, 1950), *Tanková brigáda* (Ivo Toman, 1955).

disillusionment, boredom, and alienation within socialist society. In other words, many of their films replaced the heroic partisans and communist workers of the socialist realist era with melancholy-ridden, idealistic red-collar characters struggling under the corruption of socialism in the country. Collectively referred to as "the Czechoslovak New Wave," these films put the country on the map of world cinema by winning numerous prestigious awards, including a Jury Prize and Best Director Award in Cannes, and two Oscars for Best Foreign Films.[148]

The historians of the Czechoslovak New Wave make a useful distinction between the New Wave films of the earlier post-1956 era and those made in the mid and late-1960s in terms of their visual style and thematic focus.[149] In this chapter, I will mostly discuss the content and reception of the earlier, so-called "First Wave" (alternatively called "Ur-Wave") films because, as I argue, the visual social commentary they made offers unique insights into the way in which red-collars viewed themselves and society around them in the aftermath of the Party's counter de-Stalinization campaign in late 1956. Many of the filmmakers of the "1956 generation", such as Ladislav Helge, Vojtěch Jasný, and Ján Kadár, were committed Party members, and their films were more "political" and confrontational than the ones of the later generation.[150]

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[148] Ján Kadár's *The Shop on Main Street* (*Obchod na korze* (1965) and Jiří Menzel's *Closely Watched Trains* (*Ostře sledované vlaky* (1967) won the Best Foreign Language Oscar in 1966 and 1967 respectively. Vojtech Jasný's *When the Cat Comes* (*Až přijde kocour*, 1963) won the Special Jury Prize in 1963. Jasný won Best Director Award with his *All My Compatriots* (*Všichni dobří rodáci*, 1968) in 1969.

[149] Josef Škvorecký, *All the Bright Young Men and Women: A Personal History of the Czech Cinema* (Toronto: Peter P.Martin Associates, 1972), 45-66; Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, 32-46.

[150] By contrast, the slightly younger "Second Wave" directors, such as Miloš Forman, Jiří Menzel or Jan Němec did not have the same level of ideological commitment to the party cause as the previous generation. Most of them were too young to participate in the 1948 revolution, and consequently, as writer Josef Škvorecký observed in his semiautobiographical study, for them, "socialism was not something new and desperately fought for. It was not the great divide of their lives, but rather the *status quo*." Despite their overall socialist convictions, their interest in party politics was lower than the earlier generation, and the majority of them never became party members. Consequently, the political commentary in their films was a lot more subtle than the earlier generation, and instead of party politics, they paid more attention to subjects like everyday interactions, sexuality, and generational conflicts during the 1960s. Škvorecký, *All the Bright*, 63.

The chapter will argue that the First Wave films and the way in which they were discussed in print media both reflected and communicated the red-collar sense of self-distinction and social isolation from not only the Party elites but also the country's working class. Here I use the terms "self-distinction" and "social isolation" deliberately even though they may seem contradictory as they convey voluntary and involuntary connotations respectively. Many of the First Wave films depict the "moments of interactions" of the red-collar protagonists with the Party authorities and "ordinary people" (e.g., peasants, workers, retirees), who either sided with the bosses or showed little sympathy with the protagonists' honorable feelings and actions. On the one hand, the idealist red-collar protagonists voluntarily distinguish themselves from the corrupt authority figures with their principled stance. On the other hand, however, their moral self-distinction leads to their social isolation as the country's "toiling masses" do not care about their idealism, and they remain either indifferent or ally themselves with the corrupt authority figures.

The chapter is built on the notion that film movements, like other major art forms, are intrinsically linked with and reflect the social, cultural, and political developments of a given space and time.[151] As Andrew Tudor has pointed out, major film movements, such as Soviet formalism, German expressionism, and Italian Neorealism, all emerged in the aftermath of "drastic sociocultural trauma."[152] Similarly, it was no coincidence that the first New Wave movies emerged shortly after Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956: it was "intimately bound up with the sociopolitical changes that took place in the country" in the 1950s and 1960s.[153] Like

[151] For a theoretical discussion about the impact of the political sphere on cultural products, see: Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981); Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).
[152] Andrew Tudor, *Image and Influence* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), 168. Also quoted in Peter Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 4.
[153] Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, 5.

many other red-collars, the forerunners of the New Wave movement experienced a massive shift of political sensibilities in the 1950s and reflected their sociopolitical observations and emotions through their films. Sharing a common generational background, cultural milieu, and political world-views, the pioneering First Wave filmmakers radically broke away from socialist realist aesthetic traditions and visually communicated red-collar subjectivity through cinema.

Following the cognitive theoretical framework provided by film scholars such as Murray Smith, Noël Carroll, and Kenneth Brannigan, I will pay particular attention to the narrative techniques employed in the character development of the red-collar protagonists in First Wave films.[154] The anthropological-cognitive school of film spectatorship emphasizes that the spectator is an active participant, and not the passive subject, of the cinematic text.[155] The audience members always engage in judgment calls, developing emotional bonds or antipathy for the characters. The affective identification with the main protagonist often coexists with negative feelings for the other characters, who stand in the way of the main protagonist. At the same time, as Noël Carroll and Edward Brannigan emphasize, filmmakers can guide the audience's emotional reactions through the foregrounding of salient technical details such as narrative structure, editing, lighting, the reactions of surrounding characters, music, performance,

[154] Rejecting the psychoanalytical model of film spectatorship, which regards watching films and identifying with the characters as the temporary "assimilation of the self," the proponents of the anthropological-cognitive school argue that the audience is under no illusion about the feature film being fiction, for they do not run away when the monster appears in a horror film. Instead of assimilation, they emphasize, what Murray Smith calls, the "affective relationship between an audience member and protagonist" as the center of film spectatorship. They focus on various narrative and camera techniques (e.g., point-of-view or reaction shots) to place spectators in a position to access the actions and feelings of the characters, and establish an "allegiance," a level of character engagement, through which the film marshals "our sympathies for or against the various characters in the world of fiction." Some of the key cognivist texts are Murray Smith, *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) for the quotations, see 6, 9 , 40 and 83-84; Noël Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Gregory Currie, *Image and Mind: Film, Philosophy and Cognitive Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
[155] Jane Stadler, "Emotion, Film and," *Encyclopedia of Film Theory*,154.

and cinematography.[156] In this regard, the films provide visible or not-so-obvious signposts to guide spectators in their engagement and identification with the characters. If delivered successfully, these signposts play a crucial role in the emotional effect of the film on the audience.

The red-collar filmmakers used plenty of such signposts in their development of red-collar protagonists. Through depictions of a character's modest living conditions, political idealism, sense of alienation, good-will gestures, moral dilemmas, or even honest mistakes, many of the First Wave films present multi-dimensional literary urban-class characters with whom the audience could easily identify and empathize with. In contrast, the Party bosses and working-class characters often lack any sympathetic qualities; they appear as self-centered, showing a lack of care for socialist ideals except parroting empty slogans or engaging in various amoral practices, such as nepotism, cronyism, or stealing from the public. Thus, based on differing modes of character development and depictions of different social classes in the First Wave movies, I will argue that the socio-political commentary made in these movies was not an impartial one. These movies represented how the red-collars viewed themselves within the broader socialist public and communicated their sense of self-distinction and social isolation vis-à-vis the elites and working people alike.

Moreover, through cinematic signposts, the films effectively communicated red-collars' anguish over the revolution's moral and institutional failures. Although the films depict the red-collar protagonists as lone figures standing against the wheels of corruption and the degeneration

[156] Stadler, "Emotion, Film and," *Encyclopedia of Film Theory*,154. Noël Carroll, "Film, Emotion, and Genre," in *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion* ed. By Carl Plantinga and Greg M.Smith (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 21-47; Edward Brannigan, *Point of View in the Cinema: a Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film* (New York: Mouton, 1984).

of the revolutionary values, cultural critics, as well as ordinary movie-goers, passionately argued in the press that the struggles and sorrows of the "wounded" heroes represented the problems, feelings, and suffering of a broad segment of society. In this regard, by depicting the loneliness and social isolation of their protagonists, the First Wave films paradoxically reinforced the emerging red-collar identity in the public sphere.

There have been only a few scholarly studies on the Czechoslovak New Wave, and none have primarily focused on the film representations of different social groups, classes, and generations. Peter Hames' 1985 study *The Czechoslovak New Wave* still stands as the most extensive and informative study on the subject in English.[157] While Hames' study provides an excellent analysis of the history, themes, and storylines of a large number of the New Wave films, it does not delve into a social or conceptual analysis of the movement as a whole. More theoretically inclined film scholars, such as Herbert Eagle, Jonathan Owen, and Bliss Cua Lim, devote their attention to reflections of the avant-garde, surrealist, or feminist ideas, techniques, and allegories employed in the experimental films of directors such as Věra Chytilová and Jan Švankmajer.[158] While these works provide a useful companion to the largely inaccessible films of the New Wave's more experimental wing, their primary focus is on special narration techniques, and they do not discuss the social representations or character development in these movies.

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[157] Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave*.
[158] See for instance Jonathan L.Owen, *Avant-garde to New Wave:Czechoslovak Cinema, Surrealism and the Sixties* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011); Herbert Eagle, "Dada and Structuralism in Chytilová's Daisies," *Crosscurrents 10* (1991) 223-234; Bliss Cua Lim, "Dolls in Fragments: Daisies as Feminist Allegory," *Camera Obscura 47* no. 16.2 (Fall, 2001): 37-77; Alfred Thomas, "Dada and its Afterlife in Czechoslovakia: Jan Švankmajer's The Flat and Věra Chytilová's Daisies," in *Avant-Garde Critical Studies, Dada and Beyond, Volume 2: Dada and its Legacies,* ed. by Elza Adamowicz and Eric Robertson (New York: Brill, 2012), 245-261.

In the last decade or so, especially among Czech film historians, the focus has seemingly been shifted from analysis of the films to their production, distribution, and consumption. Instead of working on the textual and technical analysis of the films, several historians such as Pavel Skopal, Lukáš Skupa, and Petr Szczepanik explored the artistic networks, film production, and censorship institutions under socialism.[159] Their studies collectively demonstrate that the Party, even during the Stalinist years after the revolution, did not have all-encompassing power over the production and censorship of films. The filmmakers, through their networks and membership in key institutions, had a high level of influence over the production, distribution, and censorship decisions.[160] Thus, the recent scholarship convincingly argues, semi-autonomous film institutions and filmmaking networks played a crucial role in the transformation of the country's cinema between 1948 and 1968.

Inspired by the findings of recent scholarship, this chapter pays close attention to how the red-collar networks in the film industry (e.g., filmmakers, reform-minded bureaucrats, and cultural commentators) produced and popularized the politically subversive films of the 1960s. Through a combination of content and network analysis (i.e., the relationship between the filmmakers, censors, and critics behind the making and promotion of the New Wave Films), the chapter will argue that film was one of the most popular visual apparatuses for the red-collars to publicly voice, communicate, and reflect upon their frustrations with the existing political predicament in the country.

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[159] Lukáš Skupa, *Vadí -- nevadí : česká filmová cenzura v 60. Letech* (Prague: NFH, 2016); Pavel Skopal, *Filmová kultura severního trojúhelníku : filmy, kina a diváci českých zemí, NDR a Polska 1945-1970* (Brno: Host, 2014); Petr Szczepanik, "'Veterans' and 'Dilettantes': Film Product Culture Vis-à-vis Top Down Political Changes, 1945-1962," in *Cinema in Service of the State: Perspectives on Film Culture in the GDR and Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960* ed. Lars Karl and Pavel Skopal (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 71-88.

[160] Petr Szczepanik, "The State-Socialist Mode of Production and the Political History of Produdction Culture," in *Behind the Screen: Inside European Production Cultures*, ed. P. Szczepanik and P. Vonderau (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 117-122.

Red-Collar Networks and Censorship as a Negotiation

In order to explain how red-collars came to dominate the film industry, a brief discussion of those different occupational groups who were responsible for the production (i.e., filmmakers), popularization (i.e., film-critics), and censoring (i.e., Party officials) of New Wave cinema is in order. As in other major cultural sectors, following the revolution in 1948, the Party implemented a large-scale purge of the ideologically hostile elements in the film industry and formed new institutions to direct and control filmmaking in the country. While the newly established Czechoslovak State Film (*Československý státní film,* ČSF) was responsible for the production of the films, the Film Council (*Filmová rada,* FR) of the Ministry of Information would supervise the actions of the so-called creative collectives.[161] Not surprisingly, the functionaries came to occupy the top managerial positions in these institutions and promptly forced many of the experienced practitioners, former private producers, and managers out of the industry.[162]

Soon, the new management launched an ambitious campaign to recruit members of the working class to the film industry. They established a special one-year school to provide accelerated training for the new generation of working-class filmmakers. In addition, as part of the recruitment campaign, they hired approximately one hundred young communist writers and journalists to replace the existing production units and establish the Party's ideological control over the personnel working in the film industry.[163] However, the top-down attempt to establish

[161] Petr Szczepanik, "Between Units and Producers: Organization of Creative Work in Czechoslovak State Cinema 1945–1990," in *Popular Cinemas in East Central Europe: Film Cultures and Histories*, ed. by Dorota Ostrowska, Francesco Pitassio (London: I.B.Tauris, 2017), 284-285.
[162] Petr Szczepanik, "'Veterans' and 'Dilettantes': Film Product Culture Vis-à-vis Top Down Political Changes, 1945-1962," in *Cinema in Service of the State: Perspectives on Film Culture in the GDR and Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960,* ed. by Lars Karl and Pavel Skopal (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 76.
[163] Szczepanik, "'Veterans' and 'Dilettantes'," 79.

strict ideological control and dominance over filmmakers met with significant resistance from experienced filmmakers, who were allowed to keep their positions due to their Party membership or "fellow-traveler status" in the eyes of the Party officials. These veteran directors and screenwriters, such as Otakar Vávra, Elmar Klos, Karel Plicka, and Jiří Weiss used their connections with top Party leaders to advocate for the "traditional standards of professionalism" in filmmaking, which were accordingly "impossible to learn from the state-planned crash courses."[164] The veterans considered the novices as mere dilettantes and regarded the mass recruitment as an attempt to destroy the qualified filmmaking community in the country.

The veterans were ultimately successful in their campaign against the Party's attempts at mass recruitment. In 1951, the Party aborted recruitment efforts and dismissed most of the new-comers from the industry.[165] The successful resistance of the veteran filmmakers prevented the replacement of personnel in creative units by the Party cadres and protected the relative autonomy of the film industry. Moreover, the prevention of mass recruitment meant that a large number of creative and administrative personnel, who had film experience from the First Republic era, kept their jobs and carried the country's vibrant film culture and traditions into the socialist era. As film historian Petr Szczepanik argues, the preservation of the country's film tradition, with its "everyday habits, working routines and rhythms, informal hierarchies and learning processes" formed the cultural environment within which the New Wave emerged in later decades.[166]

As the mass recruitment campaign came to a stop, the recently established Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts (*Filmová a televizní fakulta Akademie múzických*

[164] Szczepanik, "'Veterans' and 'Dilettantes'," 81.
[165] Szczepanik, "'Veterans' and 'Dilettantes'," 80.
[166] Szczepanik, "'Veterans' and 'Dilettantes'," 82.

umění v Praze - FAMU) remained the only source of recruitment for the film industry. Established in 1947, it was the only film academy in the country, and a school of choice for many artistically-inclined students.[167] After the revolution in 1948, as in the other universities, the communist student committee expelled known liberals, conservatives, and anti-communists from the faculty, while the new admission board began to give preference to applicants with working-class and anti-fascist family backgrounds.[168] In addition, in order to test their ideological reliability, applicants were now asked to provide commentary on socialist realist themes, plays, or novels.[169] These carefully selected students would become the directors, screenwriters, or cameramen of the Czechoslovak New Wave movement.[170]

Most of these young film directors had their first filmmaking experience during their assistantship in the socialist-realist movies of the early 1950s.[171] As we will see, similar to other red-collars in other sectors, these young socialist filmmakers became gradually disillusioned with what they later came to regard as the dogmatism and falsehoods of socialist-realist propaganda.

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[167] In 1947, the first year when the school began to accept admissions, it received 1156 applicants and admitted only 54. Petr Bednařík, "Filmová a televizní fakulta akademie múzických umění," in *Dějiny Akademie múzických umění v praze,* ed.by Martin Franc et.al. (Prague: Akademie múzických umění, 2017), 173 and 182.
[168] Petr Bednařík, "Filmová a televizní fakulta akademie," 179.
[169] During his talent evaluation, to his great surprise, the board asked Miloš Forman to dramatize a short play with the theme of "struggle for world peace". Not expecting such a broad and political theme, Forman failed in the entrance exam and was admitted on his next try. Miloš Forman, *Turnaround: A Memoir* (New York: Villard Books, 1994), 74-75.
[170] Despite the party's interventions in the student admission policies and course curriculum, the FAMU was instrumental in maintaining the country's rich film tradition and culture, which had been developed in the First Republic. Many of the film veterans were also teachers at the school and allowed the students to work as assistants in the making of the historical-epic or socialist-realist films they were directing in the early 1950s. Through such master and pupil interactions in both the classroom and film-set, the veterans transferred the filmmaking tradition of pre-war Czechoslovak cinema to the next generation. In this regard, the school served as an intergenerational bridge between the veteran filmmakers and those who would become the first genuinely socialist generation of the post-revolutionary era. Szczepanik, "'Veterans' and 'Dilettantes'", 80-84.
[171] In addition to their formal training at FAMU, many of the young directors had formative filmmaking experience through Army Film Studios, where they carried out their mandatory military service. The military studios provided young filmmakers the necessary technical equipment and freedom for experimentations. See Alice Lovejoy, *Army Film and the Avant-garde: Cinema and Experiment in the Czechoslovak Military* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

After 1956, encouraged by the Twentieth Congress and the rhetoric of de-Stalinization in the country, they made their directorial debuts with highly critical commentaries on the country's existing-socialism.

Besides the filmmakers, the second occupational group active in New Wave circles was the film critics. After 1956, a generation of young film critics, such as Antonín Liehm, František Vrba, Jaroslav Boček, and Agneša Kalinová, enthusiastically welcomed the subversive commentary embedded in New Wave films and used them to voice their own subtle political criticism. Many of these commentators were part of the same age group and milieu as the filmmakers and became part of the cultural intelligentsia thanks to their socialist convictions and Party memberships.[172] While the films represented and voiced red-collar subjectivity on screen, these "red-collar" critics praised and promoted the subversive films in print media, often providing a political companion piece to the visual criticism embedded in New Wave cinema.

In addition to the filmmakers and critics, the Party officials and bureaucrats constituted the third main occupational group in the film industry. Despite the relative liberalizations after 1956 and then after 1962, the Party had the ultimate authority in reviewing, suggesting changes or, if necessary, censoring the films. The members of the Central Committee themselves watched certain controversial films in order to decide their fate. Occasionally, as we will see, some of the Party leaders and members of the so-called review committees interpreted symbolism and allegory in the films as covert anti-communist attacks against the Party and stopped their

[172] The birthyears of the main film critics employed in the media as of 1963 reflected the generational character of the active film intelligentsia in the 1960s: Jaroslav Boček (*Kulturní tvorba*, 1932), Miloš Fiala (*Rudé právo*, 1930); František Goldscheider (*Kino*, 1923); Antonín J. Liehm (*Literární noviny*, 1924), František Vrba (*Plamen*, 1920); Agneša Kalinová (*Kultúrny život*, 1924). The only exception would be the slightly older Antonín Novák (*Film a Doba*) who was born in 1911.

distribution.[173] Yet, as in the case of the anti-mass-recruitment campaign, the filmmakers did not wait passively for the decision of the Party leaders. Using their networks and connections in top circles, they lobbied for favorable decisions during the review process of their films. Moreover, by the mid-1960s, some of the slightly older First Wave filmmakers had become active in the Party's cultural organs and fought against the hard-liners on behalf of their colleagues. For instance, when in 1963, the thirty-year-old Miloš Forman submitted the script of his first feature film (*Black Peter*) to the studio, he received approval only after another director, Vojtěch Jasný, who was—in the words of Forman—"a young man of strangely powerful influence" in the Party, intervened on his behalf.[174] Similarly, in the mid-1960s, at the height of their film-careers, the filmmakers Ladislav Helge and Jan Procházka[175] obtained leading positions at the Union of Czechoslovak Film and Television Artists (*Svaz filmových a televizních umělců*- FITES) and the Ideological Commission in the Central Committee of the Party (*Ideologická komise ÚV KSČ*), pushing for the deepening of liberalization in the film and television industry until the Warsaw Pact intervention in 1968.[176]

As film historian Lukáš Skupa demonstrated convincingly in a recent study, the censorship of the film industry is best understood as "a process negotiation" rather than a

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[173] Kaplan, *Kronika komunistického Československa : kořeny reformy*, 296-303.
[174] Forman, *Turnaround*, 137.
[175] Jan Procházka (1929-1971) was born to a small peasant family from Moravia and, after completing Agricultural School in 1949, he worked in the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Youth Union, where he took part in the organization of the work brigades of youth in the borderland regions. After 1959, he took up a job in the Barrandov Film Studios as a screen-writer and leader of one of the "creative groups." From 1963, as a member of the ideological commission of the Central Committee, he intervened on the behalf of many directors for the passing of their films through censorship and propagated for greater freedoms in the country's film scene within higher party circles. He was stripped of his position after the Warsaw Pact intervention due to his enthusiastic support for reform socialism during the Prague Spring. See Liehm, *Closely Watched Films*, 140-146, and
Blahoslav Dokupil, "Jan Procházka," *Slovník české literatury po roce 1945*, ed. Michal Přibáň, Eduard Burget et.al. (Brno: Host, 2002).
http://www.slovnikceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=846&hl=Jan+Proch%C3%A1zka+
[176] Bilík, *Ladislav Helge*, 101-103 and 166-167; Skupa, *Vadí -- nevadí*, 24.

"restrictive institution," which controls and prohibits artistic production.[177] Far from being passive receivers of censorship decisions, many of the New Wave filmmakers actively participated in the decision-making processes and lobbied for reduced ideological control and censorship in the film industry. Censorship was a multi-centered communication process and "the result of censorship negotiations usually did not depend solely on the initiative of censorship authorities, but also the activities of the filmmakers."[178] Anticipating possible censorship interventions, the red-collar filmmakers used their connections to secure the approval of their films by the review committees; and if this did not succeed, they made further alterations to their scripts and specific scenes. Thus, their films were the end results of these complex and multi-centered negotiation processes between filmmakers and the Party institutions on the limits of criticism and transgression in socialist film.

*School for Fathers (*1957) and the Birth of a Red-Collar Cinema

By the time Kříž and Helge met and began to work on the script of *School for Fathers*, Khrushchev's speech and the subsequent wave of de-Stalinization had led to a series of discussions about the negative impact of the "personality cult" in the country. Encouraged by the relatively free atmosphere of the era, Kříž and Helge decided to change the happy ending of the original script, in which the protagonist was successful in his didactic one-person crusade to bring honesty and egalitarianism to the school in the village. In the new version, they let the main protagonist lose the fight and leave the village in disappointment.[179] Thus, unlike the socialist-realist movies of the pre-1956 era, which had always ended with an optimistic

[177] Skupa, *Vadí -- nevadí*, 260.
[178] Skupa, *Vadí -- nevadí*, 260.
[179] Bilík, *Ladislav Helg*e, 140-141.

conclusion, the movie showed the alienation and powerlessness of the idealistic hero in the face of societal and administrative dishonesties.

The film begins with the arrival of the teacher Jindřich Pelikán, played by the actor Karel Höger, to a primary school in the small town of Milonice.[180] Very early on, the film makes it clear that the new teacher is not a dogmatist, for he vehemently opposes labeling one of the outcast students as "reactionary" or a "class enemy." Shortly after he begins teaching, he realizes that even though the pupils are not meeting the academic standards for their level, teachers continue awarding the students higher grades than they deserve. Once Pelikán begins teaching and grading students by the rules and regulations, he faces intense backlash from not only students but also parents, other teachers, and the headmaster of the school. The entire movie revolves around Pelikán's efforts to equip students with academic knowledge, evaluate them according to their merits without employing nepotism, and help one of the students who was cast out as reactionary by both the school administration and other students.

For the audience, the film does not leave any ambiguity as to which character one should establish "allegiance" with. Pelikán, the red-collar hero, emerges as the only genuinely compassionate and idealistic individual struggling against the corrupt power holders and widespread indifference in society. Unlike in other socialist-realist movies of the era, where "positive heroes" fight against feudal or capitalistic oppression, Pelikán's battle is against the injustices and corruption under communism. And the villains in the story are not the medieval landlords, Gestapo commanders, or factory owners, but Party officials and ordinary parents, who

[180] The movie was actually filmed in the southern Moravian town of Mikulov. Bilík, *Ladislav Helg*e, 140-141.

are more concerned with preserving their children's inflated grades than the pedagogical integrity of the school.

The headmaster and the wife of a district chairman represent power and privilege in the film. While Pelikán receives an old and neglected village house upon his arrival, the district secretary lives in a modern, comfortable and spacious flat. When Pelikán begins to treat, and grade, the son of the district secretary like everybody else, the headmaster informs him about the complaint he received from Comrade Janouchova, the wife of the district secretary, about the poor treatment and grades her son receives from the new teacher. He urges Pelikán to reconsider his teaching and grading principles because, after all, it is a rural school, and he should lower his expectations of his students. While Pelikán does not outwardly reject the headmaster's demands, he continues to grade students, including the son of the chairman, according to what they academically deserve.

Soon, facing pressure from the chairman's wife and other parents, the headmaster firmly tells Pelikán that the reputation of the school is at stake, and reminds him that one of the students receiving poor grades is, in fact, the son of the chairman, who, "did a lot for the school." Pelikán becomes visibly agitated and responds: "Grades are for the children, not the fathers." The ensuing dialogue captures the essence of the film's conflict between the idealistic red-collar hero against the careerist bureaucrat:

> "-Headmaster: Then, how do you explain, he (the secretary's son) had an 'A' last semester?
>
> -Pelikán: That is because my predecessor was afraid to have the discussion we are having now.
>
> -Headmaster: So, you will not help me with such a trifle?

> -Pelikán: This is not a trifle. This is a fundamental thing. You are expecting me to budge. You are used to having it your way so that you would be respected, so that you would be successful." [181]

As Pelikán refuses the headmaster's request on a moral basis, the camera takes a close-up shot of his face, emphasizing his anguish and disgust, captured elegantly by the actor Karel Höger. However, despite how hard and nobly he fights for his principles at the school, he eventually loses the fight. Not only the school administration but also the parents of the students punish him for his principled stance and force him to resign from his position in the town. Facing a formal expulsion from the school, he requests a transfer to a nearby city. In his departure, only one colleague comes to the train station to bid him farewell. "There are not always winners and losers. There might be wounded ones too," Pelikán enigmatically remarks in his goodbye to the friend.

School for Fathers was a polemic against wider socialist society as much as against the power-holders in the country. It depicted not only the nepotism and careerism among the government and Party officials, but also how the citizens supported these practices as long as it worked in their best interest. From the very onset of the film, we see Pelikán struggling against both the headmaster and the parents of the children, who do not forgive Pelikán's fight against grade inflation because it meant lowering the grades for their children. In the end, the parents collaborated with the headmaster to force the teacher to accept his transfer from the school. In this regard, the teacher Pelikán's struggle symbolized the red-collar sense of idealism and isolation in the face of political corruption and societal indifference in the country.

[181] *Škola otců*, Directed by Ladislav Helge. Prague: Barrandov, 1957.

While it is impossible to distinguish the audience member reactions to the film based on their social backgrounds, limited evidence suggests that the film became very popular among the young educated people, including the red-collars. In an extensive reader survey conducted by *Smena*, the cultural magazine of the Slovak Union of Youth, the film received 10,911 votes out of 18,450 and was chosen as the best Czechoslovak film of the year.[182] Some of the fan letters to the lead actor Karel Höger suggest that the film received a positive response, especially from the young and politically engaged part of the population. In one such letter, a viewer praised the film for its realistic display of problems within the education system. She informed Höger that the film was much-discussed in her social circle, and "each person, who is not indifferent towards the issue of how we raised the youth found at least some answers to the problematic questions of contemporary education."[183] Similarly, another audience member from the border town of Náchod wrote: "I would like to thank you for your (portrayal of) teacher Pelikán. Today many teachers, especially the young ones, are facing even worse situations than Pelikán, but they are alone, do not have enough experience as he does."[184] In total, almost one and a half million people (in a country with fourteen million inhabitants) watched the movie, making it one of the most commercially successful films of the 1950s.[185]

Remarkably, despite the ongoing "counter de-Stalinization" and official hard-lining position against "revisionism" in the country, many film critics, particularly the ones among the red-collar ranks, acknowledged and praised the critical social commentary offered in the film. For instance, in the film magazine, *Film a Doba*, a young critic Gustav Francl (b. 1920) praised

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[182] "Zajímavá Anketa a jejívýsledek," *Kino* 1 (January, 1959), 14.
[183] The excerpts from the letters were published in Eva Högerová, Ljuba Klosová, Vladimír Justl, *Faustovské srdce Karla Högera* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1994), 326- 327.
[184] Högerova et. al. *Faustovské srdce*, 327.
[185] Václav Březina, *Lexikon českého filmu : 2000 filmů 1930-1996* (Prague: Cinema, 1996), 405.

the film for having the audacity to let the teacher Pelikán lose the fight because otherwise, he argued, it would "not be truthful, it would just be expressing a false ideal."[186] For him, it was thanks to Helge's realism that the film "reached out to the heart of the viewer."[187] Similarly, a commentator in the cultural journal *Tvorba* stated that *School for Fathers* "revealed the consequences of careerism and dishonesty, preserving the deeply humane and heartfelt relations" of the idealist teacher Pelikán.[188] In *Literární noviny*, another young critic, František Vrba (b. 1920), dubbed the film "school of honesty" and commended Helge's desire to communicate his feelings and opinions about the contemporary problems of socialist society: "In the delays, in the stiffness of the substance, in the stuttering, we feel the pressure of the artist's will to express something, which makes him choke up (*zalykat se*) over what should be shared with the public."[189] Vrba added one would hope a similar level of will for honesty both in thought and emotions were observed by the "spokespeople of the various institutions across the country."[190] Echoing Pelikán's final words in his farewell to the village, he concluded: "in the inner struggles for the character of society, there are not always winners and losers, but the wounded ones too, and of these wounds, we shall heal towards a more aware society."[191]

Unfortunately, like the filmmakers Kríž and Helge, Vrba did not explicitly explain what actually constituted "the wound" or who were the "wounded" ones in society. Nevertheless, both the filmmakers and the commentator seemingly agree that there existed a group of people situated between the winners and losers of the revolution. Over the next decade, the struggles and social isolation of the wounded red-collar protagonists became one of the central themes of

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[186] Gustav Francl, "Dobrá Škola," *Film a doba* (November, 1957), 773.
[187] Francl, "Dobrá Škola."
[188] K.Czaban, "Škola otců," *Tvorba 46* (November 14, 1957), 23.
[189] František Vrba,"Snadný život a škola poctivosti," *Literární noviny*, October 26, 1957, 6.
[190] Vrba," Snadný život," 6.
[191] Vrba," Snadný život," 6.

Czechoslovak cinema. Encouraged by the success of *School for Fathers*, soon films like Elmar Klos and Ján Kadár's *Three Wishes* (*Tři přání*, 1958), Vaclav Hrska's *Hic sunt leones* (*Zde jsou lvi*,1958), and Zbyněk Brynych's *A Local Romance* (*Zizkovská romance*, 1958) shifted the "dramaturgical attention" from the past struggles of workers and peasants to the contemporary problems of the urban, idealistic red-collar individuals.[192] Like the teacher Pelikán in *School for Fathers*, the new films' main protagonists struggle against the malicious Party elites as well as the social indifference among the general public.

Kadár's *Three Wishes* (1958) and the Short Interregnum

Among the red-collar films of the post-1956 era, *Three Wishes*, a fairy tale comedy directed by Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos, was the most controversial and outspoken in its criticism of the political elites and ruling logic in the country. Like the other "red-collar" films, despite its attack on and mockery of the state of affairs under socialism, *Three Wishes* was criticism from inside the Party. The trio involved in the making of the film, namely the directors Ján Kadár (b. 1918), Vratislav Blažek (b. 1925), and slightly older Elmar Klos (b. 1910) were all long-term members of the Party and had been able to make careers in the film industry due in no small part to their Party credentials.[193] The film's main protagonist, Petr Holeček, is a well-intentioned

[192] Ivan Klimeš, "Filmaři a komunistická moc v Československu. Vzrušený rok 1959," *Iluminace* 16, vol. 4 (56), (2004), 133.

[193] Born in 1918 to Hungarian speaking Jewish parents, Kadár (1918-1979) was forced to quit his studies at the School of Industrial Arts in Bratislava during the war and was sent by the clero-fascist Slovak state to a labor camp due to his Jewish family origins. His parents, sister, and many of his relatives perished in Auschwitz, and he became a member of the Communist Party shortly after the end of the war. Following the revolution, he teamed up with Elmar Klos (1910-1993), a slightly older communist filmmaker with film experience from the First Republic era, and the two directed a number of propagandistic socialist realist films in the early 1950s. Like Kadár, the screenwriter Vratislav Blažek (1925-1973) too had to pause his studies during the war and joined the party shortly afterwards because communism's "dissident character appealed to him." Josef Škvorecký, *All the Bright Young Men and Women: A Personal History of the Czech Cinema* (Toronto: Peter P.Martin Associates, 1972), 45-66. For Kadár's membership in the party, see Václav Macek, *Ján Kadár* (Bratislava : Slovenský Filmový Ustav, 2008), 36 and 39.

lawyer who is experiencing marital problems with his wife Vera, mostly due to their lack of financial means. Despite working as a lawyer in a construction bureau, Petr is unable to find a flat of his own, and, together with his wife and a son, has to live with his parents in what appears to be a run-down apartment. His wife, Vera, who works as a clerk, is particularly unhappy about their living conditions and constant lack of money, which deprives her of her wish for better clothing, accommodation, and so forth. Nevertheless, in spite of their hardships, Petr, a barber's son, is a committed socialist, yet his sense of idealism is not shared, and is often ridiculed by Vera.

The argument scenes between the couple offer a glimpse of how the sense of dissatisfaction with their material conditions intertwined with their socialist beliefs and the doubts among the red-collars. In one of the earliest scenes, Vera makes ironic remarks about the discrepancy between Petr's high education (after all, he was a doctor of law) and their low living standards. In return, echoing the official "whataboutism" rhetoric, Petr claims "there are countries, where doctors of law have to live under bridges." Vera, maintaining her sarcastic tone, asks: "Really? Which one should we choose? I am for Jirásek Bridge… You see progress even in the waiting lines for onions." In a later scene, Petr, when reminded again by Vera that he is overqualified for his low-paying position, angrily exclaims:

> Petr: I have to be a miner to buy everything you want.
>
> Vera: Well, this is your socialism.
>
> Petr: Vera, how many times should I tell you? This is not socialism yet, but it will be. Then everyone will live happily and in abundance.
>
> Vera: Oh, by that time, I will be an old woman.

Petr's luck seemingly turns when he gives his seat to an older man out of courtesy on a streetcar. The old man offers him a magical bell in return, telling him that Petr should ring the bell, and he would fulfill any of Petr's three wishes. Skeptical at first, Petr wastes the first two wishes on trivial matters. Finally, understanding the magical power of the old man, Petr wishes for a "happy life" with his wife. The old man protests the vagueness of such a demand but reluctantly agrees to help Petr obtain a "happy life," which, in an ironic twist, quickly turns into a consumerist paradise: a modern, comfortable flat, a brand new car, and a high position at work.[194] The way the old man grants these wishes to Petr shows "the mechanisms of social corruption, cowardice, and hypocrisy" prevalent in the upper echelons of power.[195] Aside from magic, the old man manipulates the pandering and careerist tendencies among the power-holders. For instance, the old man enables Petr to receive a promotion at work only by pretending to be the chauffeur of the First Secretary of the Party, who comes to pick Petr up for "a friendly meeting." Surprised that one of his subordinates is a friend of the Secretary, the director of the bureau suddenly becomes extremely friendly towards Petr and shortly afterward gives him a comfortable managerial position.

As Petr rises up the social ladder, he becomes more aware of the nepotism and careerism among the high cadres, becoming visibly depressed and irritated during his interactions with his

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[194] The equation of "happy life" through luxury consumption in the film was a jab at official ideology and pointed to its lack of resonance among society. Unlike the later "normalization" era, during which consumer pleasures (and the availability of them for the masses) became the main showcase of political legitimacy, the party before 1968 regarded consumption and recreation as mechanisms for strengthening the "socialist collective;" in other words, consumption and recreation were not ends in themselves, but didactic tools to promote the idea of the collective and instill the socialist ethos among citizens. However, once Petr gains power, he seemingly forgets about his socialist idealism and demands materialistic possessions for his individual use. For a discussion about consumption and recreation in Czechoslovakia before and after 1968, See, Bren, *Greengrocer and His TV*, 85-87; Čornejová, *Dovolená s poukazem*; Petra Schindler-Wisten, *O chalupách a lidech. Chalupářství v českých zemích v období tzv. normalizace a transformace* (Prague: Karolinum, 2017).

[195] Mira Liehm and Antonín J. Liehm, *The Most Important Art: Eastern European Film after 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 226.

family. The chance for redemption appears when his idealist best friend and colleague, Karel, loses his job for pointing out a mistake in the construction of a factory on live television. Deciding to intervene on his friend's behalf, Petr rings the magical bell. The old man reappears and agrees to help but with one condition: Petr must publicly stand with his friend and thus risk losing everything that he recently acquired. In the last scene, we see Petr and his family contemplating about whether to accept the condition. The film ends without disclosing the conclusion of their dilemma.

Despite obtaining a higher position and a comfortable life, Petr cannot reach his ultimate wish to be "happy with his wife." Especially in the second half of the film, he becomes increasingly frustrated with the privileges he receives and the corruption he witnesses around him. He has an opportunity for inner redemption when his friend Karel gets into trouble because of his principled stance. Similar to the teacher Pelikán in *School for Fathers*, Karel's honesty and idealism cost him his job; Petr can interfere on behalf of his friend, but this may mean that he loses his own privileges. As Mira and Antonín Liehm argued, the film posed a fundamental question to the audience: "if you truly begin to fight a situation that is destroying honest people, you have to count on losing the advantages that this situation brought to you. Are you really willing to do it?"[196] Such a question was becoming increasingly relevant for the growing number of red-collar individuals, who had been slowly rising in the echelons of power.

The Three Wishes proved to be the last straw for the Party leaders and their tolerance for the ongoing subversion in the country's cinema. In February 1959, members of the Politburo came together to discuss the film and promptly decided that it was, in the words of the First

[196] Liehm and Liehm, *The Most Important Art*, 226-227.

Secretary Novotný, "revisionism in action."[197] The minutes of the discussions following the screening are revealing of the top politburo members' suspicions and anger toward the transgressive filmmakers:

> A. Novotný: I consider this a profound thing, it is revisionism in action, and it is affecting the cultural side of political life. It makes an irony out of our cultural politics, our hard-line, the artists do not take their duties seriously, and they have revisionist ideals.
>
> V. Kopecký: Novotny is right...It makes one feel sad, that we have serpents on our back…They got crazy. Kadar is a degenerate…(The filmmakers) are against our working class, (they are) against us.
>
> R. Barak: Kadar and Klos have long been under the influence of Valenta, and they are interpreting the leading role of the Central Committee through the Trotskyite line, wanting to increase the influence of intelligentsia in the leadership of the Party. The revisionist efforts have been revived in these circles. They are getting ready; they want to show—after the Twentieth Congress—that they are no longer afraid...[198]

Following the discussion, the Politburo decided to prohibit the *Three Wishes* from circulation and reprimanded Kadar and Klos with "two years distance from the practice."[199] Only a few days later, at the Festival of Czechoslovak Films in Banská Bystrica, the Party leaders sharply criticized the new trends in the film industry and blamed the filmmakers for spreading despair, "nihilistic moods, petit-bourgeois skepticism, and defeatism."[200] The Minister of Culture, František Kahuda argued that "in the chaos of ideas (*myšlenkový chaos*)" following the Twentieth Congress, "some parts of the society and artistic intelligentsia" became convinced that "art should be the reflection of the time and social hygienist of the society, a passive,

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[197] NA, f.1261/011. aj./bod 280/9, sv. 203, Zpráva o filmu "Tři přání", Schůze PB ÚV KSČ ze dne 10. února 1959.
[198] NA, f.1261/011. aj./bod 280/9, sv. 203, Zpráva o filmu "Tři přání", Schůze PB ÚV KSČ ze dne 10. února 1959.
[199] NA, f.1261/011. aj./bod 280/9, sv. 203, Zpráva o filmu "Tři přání", Schůze PB ÚV KSČ ze dne 10. února 1959.
[200] Kahuda's speech was reprinted in full in František Kahuda, "Za užsí sepětí filmové tvorby se životem lidu," *Iluminace 16*, vol. 4 (56), (2004), 178-185. See especially, 180 and 181. Also see, Kaplan, *Kronika komunistického Československa : kořeny reformy 1956-1968,* 301.

objectivist image of our life."[201] According to the minister, such a "petit-bourgeois" approach is "against the Marxist view on art and basic principles of the Party commitment (*straničkost*) in culture."[202] Each film under socialism, he reminded the filmmakers, must demonstrate a "connection with the (revolutionary) epoch" and commitment to the Party cause.[203]

Shortly after the Banská Bystrica Festival, besides the already banned *Three Wishes*, the Party banned some of the newly made transgressive films, made personnel changes in the State Film Institute, and gave the Ministry of Education and Culture "a more prominent role in censorship."[204] In the short-run, the Party measures had a certain intimidating effect on the directors as it unequivocally demonstrated that ideological control in the film industry was still in effect. Some of the filmmakers temporarily reverted back to the ideologically correct themes and narrated working-class or partisan stories.[205] Nevertheless, while the Party's intervention put a temporary end to the transgressive mode of filmmaking, it did not mean a return to the Stalinist model of the early 1950s. In fact, many of the "working-class" or "war-time (*válečný*)" films of the early 1960s, such as *Higher Principle* (*Vyšší princip*, 1960), *Black Dynasties* (*Černá dynastie*, 1962), or *Green Horizons* (*Zelené obzory*, 1962), were mostly free of ideological didacticism and propagandistic tone. Unlike the stoic heroes of the socialist realist films of the earlier decade, these films usually depicted the domestic situations, generational conflicts, or daily problems of ordinary working-class protagonists. Yet, unlike the New Wave films of later

[201] Kahuda, "Za užší sepětí," 179.
[202] Kahuda, "Za užší sepětí," 179.
[203] Kahuda, "Za užší sepětí," 179 and 180.
[204] Lovejoy, *Army Film*, 124.
[205] For instance, in the early 1960s, Ladislav Helge made two ideologically correct films on the partisan war against the Nazi occupation (*White Clouds*, 1962) and revolution of 1948 (*Spring Breeze*, 1961).

years, these films of the interregnum period portrayed society in an optimistic tone with happy endings.

The era of optimistic working-class films did not last long. After 1962, when the Party decided to implement full de-Stalinization and ease ideological control of cultural sectors, the educated urban protagonists returned to the country's cinema. [206] As we will see, some of the cult films of the early 1960s, such as Štefan Uher's *Sun in a Net (Slnko v Sieti*, 1962), Vojtěch Jasný's *When the Cat Comes* (*Až přijde kocour*, 1963) or Evald Schorms's *Everyday Courage* (*Každý den odvahu*, 1964) focused on the daily and existential struggles of the country's urban classes under socialism, depicting the main educated protagonists, some of them from the red-collar generation, in conflict with not only the Party elites but also the country's blue-collar workers.

When the Cat Comes (1963) and *Sun in a Net* (1963) : Working Men as Antagonists

In his "personal history" of the Czechoslovak New Wave, the writer Josef Škvorecký, who personally knew many of the actors and directors of Czechoslovak cinema during the 1960s, remembered that "as far as the advent of the young filmmakers in the early 1960s is concerned, the most important member of the Ur-Wave was Vojtěch Jasný; all of the young ones considered him an older brother."[207] Born in 1925, Jasný became a communist Party sympathizer at the age of thirteen because of the capitulation at Munich and took part in the Czech underground resistance during the war.[208] After graduating from FAMU, he first made various propagandistic

[206] As part of the broader de-Stalinization policy in the cultural sphere, the party entrusted censorship mechanisms to the so-called "creative units", which now consisted of large numbers of "dramaturgs, production managers and screenwriters." Szczepanik, "The State-Socialist Mode of Production," 121.
[207] Škvorecký, *All the Bright Young Men and Women*, 48.
[208] Liehm, *Closely Watched Films*, 132.

feature and documentary films in the early 1950s.[209] Like many other film directors, his film language drastically changed after 1956. His first post-1956 film, *September Nights* (*Zářijové noci*, 1957), openly targeted the "dogmatism, insensitivity, pettiness, and despotism" through a satirical story about the inhuman rules and abuse of power in the army.[210] A year later, in another unorthodox film titled *Desire* (*Touha*, 1958*)*, he depicted the peasant resistance to collectivization with a strictly neutral tone, narrating both the positive and painful sides of the revolution in the countryside.

Although *September Nights* and *Desire* established Jasný's importance inside the country, it was *When the Cat Comes* (*Až přijde kocour*, 1963) that attracted international attention and recognition when it won the Special Jury Prize at Cannes in 1963.[211] The name of this fairy-tale film derives from the Czech proverb "*když kocour není doma, myši mají pré*", which is roughly the equivalent of "when the cat is away, the mouse will play." As the name suggests, it depicts a society where the moral compass has gone off course, and hypocrisy is part of everyday life. The arrival of a circus troupe accompanied by a magical cat wearing glasses threatens the existing status quo and sense of normalcy in the town. When the cat's glasses are removed, its eyes transform people into different psychedelic colors reflecting their true selves. The unfaithful turn yellow, the lovers are red, the hypocrites and careerists are violet, and the crooks turn gray. As the cat reflects on the people's authentic selves and the slogans lose their rhetorical value, many of the town-dwellers, power-holders, and working-men alike are terrified with the cat's power. Soon they conspire to get rid of the cat.

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[209] Lovejoy, *Army Film*, 114.
[210] Liehm, *The Most Important Art*, 221. Together with Helge's *School for Fathers*, the film shared the Czechoslovak Film Critics Award in 1957.
[211] Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, 60.

Like in Helge's *School for Fathers*, the film engages in social commentary through the conflict between an idealistic school teacher, the red-collar protagonist Robert, and the headmaster of the school, played masterfully by Jiří Sovák, theatrically imitating the "diction, way of expressing and typical gestures" of the First Secretary Antonín Novotný.[212] Very early in the movie, a dramatic stork hunting scene sets the juxtaposition between the two characters. The scene depicts the two men at the town center, focusing on a pair of high-flying storks without noticing each other. First, the teacher Robert appears with a movie camera filming the birds. Then, we see the headmaster with a rifle aimed at them. After a minute-long tense standoff, the headmaster finally manages to shoot down one of the birds. When the bird falls to the ground, town residents gather around and comment on what happened. While many of the onlookers congratulate the headmaster for the skillful shot, Robert calls him a "murderer." Surprised by the reaction, the headmaster calls him a "fool" and informs him that he has special permission to shoot the stork so it can be stuffed and displayed in the town's museum. After all, he claims, a "stuffed animal is the best learning tool." Robert, still visibly agonized by the killing of the stork, murmurs a rhetorical question, which echoes the ongoing discussions about the show trials of the early 1950s: "Learning from the corpses, right?"

Yet Robert's open defiance does not last long. The unequal power relationship between him and the headmaster becomes apparent when they meet face-to-face in the school corridor:

> Headmaster: Listen, Robert, denoting your superior in public as a murderer does not seem like constructive criticism, or does it?
>
> Robert: Well…
>
> Headmaster: You see that it does not. Besides, I have never given up the idea of bringing you on the right path, which is the only one, as the truth, right?

[212] Jaroslav Pintas, "Proměny vztahu Vojtěcha Jasného k minulosti," *Paměť a dějiny 1* (January, 2012), 91-97.

> Robert: (with a very low voice, averting his eyes) Yes, especially if it is your truth.
>
> Headmaster: My truth? What do you mean by that? That everyone has his own truth. What kind of idea is that, young man? Caution!
>
> (the class ring bells)
>
> Robert: (looking helpless and trying to flee the situation) With your permission, comrade!

The stork shooting scene and the subsequent dialogue serves to depict the status quo and power relations before the arrival of the cat. It sets a clear contrast between the headmaster and the teacher. While both men want to capture the beauty of the birds, the headmaster does it by killing in the name of science and education. In fact, one of the real successes of *When the Cat Comes* is that while it directs the allegiance of the spectator to the teacher, it manages to depict the hypocrisies of the headmaster and townspeople without demonizing them. Unlike in *School for Fathers*, where the headmaster and the parents are cold and calculating, in *When the Cat Comes*, the hypocrisy and cruelty appear because they are part of everyday life and encouraged by the system. The headmaster kills the stork not because he is sadistic but because there is a museum of stuffed animals in the town. The teacher can protest, but he is ultimately powerless once he is confronted by the headmaster.

During the interactions between the headmaster and teacher, the school janitor and cleaner, the only working-class characters in the film, often appear in the background and unequivocally support their boss. They carry and clean the headmaster's gun, wax the dead animal, and conspire against the teacher. They are depicted as useful idiots for the headmaster, supporting his tyranny not for any immediate personal gain but out of their sheepish devotion to authority. Later in the movie, when the cat begins to reveal the true colors of people, the

headmaster appears in violet, which makes him a careerist and a hypocrite, and his chief allies, the school's janitor and cleaner, are in gray, the color for crooks.

The reveal of their authentic qualities is unbearable to many of the town residents, and soon the headmaster, with the help of the janitor and the cleaner, kidnaps the cat and hides it in a secret location. While the adults are seemingly relieved with the disappearance of the cat, the children leave the town in protest. The infant rebellion has the desired effect and forces the headmaster to return the cat back to the troupe, which leaves the town shortly afterward.

As in many other New Wave films, the film depicts the red-collar protagonist in social isolation and a powerless state. Despite his good intentions and apparent honesty, the teacher Robert is abandoned by the working men in his struggle against the authority figure. The working men in the film are merely mindless, cruel "boot-lickers," who follow orders even when there is no apparent advantage to them.[213] They have no sympathy for the teacher's high ideals and were the headmaster's main accomplices when he kidnaps the cat. Their unquestioning loyalty comes to an end only when their children leave the town after the kidnapping of the cat. Until then, they simply side with the corrupt headmaster.

A similar confrontation between the intelligentsia and the working class is depicted in Štefan Uher's *Sun in a Net* (*Slnko v sieti*, 1963). Often regarded as the first Slovak New Wave film, it represented a major "milestone" in Czechoslovak filmmaking in the 1960s.[214] A son of a

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[213] Towards the end of the film, in a rare moment of self-reflection, the janitor says: "Yes! It is all my fault. I wanted to kill the cat, I did most terrible things to Robert. And I was a bootlicker… Dear God, how many dirty tricks we plotted. Ask the headmaster!"

[214] Martin Votruba, "Historical and National Background of Slovak Filmmaking," *Kinokultura 3* (2005), 10; http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/2805/1/Martin_Votruba_Historical_and_National_Background_of_Slovak_Filmmaking.pdf. (accessed on September 20, 2020); Liehm, *Closely Watched Films*, 202; Peter Hames, *Czech and Slovak Cinema: Theme and Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 207.

butcher's assistant from Western Slovakia, Uher (b. 1930) became a Party member at the age of 18 shortly after the revolution in 1948. After completing his studies at FAMU, he first worked at the Documentary Film Studios in Bratislava, filming short documentaries about the daily lives of ordinary people (e.g. schoolchildren, teachers, farmers) in the mid-1950s.[215]

Uher's first and most significant success came with his second feature film *Sun in a Net*, which narrates the feelings of isolation and emotional discord among the young intelligentsia in a working-class environment. The main protagonist, the young Fajolo, is a cultivated young man with refined artistic tastes; he listens to jazz (he hates the light music played on the radio) and is an avid photographer. He involuntarily "volunteers" for the summer work brigade largely for the sake of his father's standing in the Party. In a significant contrast to the films of the earlier era, the film depicts the agricultural collective that Fajolo is sent to as a run-down workplace, where the farmers still rely on horse-drawn equipment to work in the fields while broken industrial machinery is rotting on the side. Almost immediately upon arrival, Fajolo comes into conflict with the foreman of the cooperative, accusing him of being negligent in his duties. The foreman seems to be irritated by an arrogant urban-dweller and accuses him of disrupting morale.

Yet soon the film makes clear that there is not much enthusiasm for work among either the young volunteers (*brigádnici*) or the farmers, who are mostly older men with tired faces working in the fields in the morning, and drinking alcohol later in the village pub. Observing the old men in the pub, some chatting, some snoozing on the table, Fajolo's inner voice, with ironic resignation, says, "I am here taking care of a good reputation. What reputation do these here need, working like Robinson [Crusoe]?" Back in the town, he observes a similar impassivity and

[215] Jana Mjartanová, *Štefan Uher* (Prague: Československý filmový ústav, 1988), 4-6.

indifference from the janitor of the apartment block. “What is it to do with me if the door is smashed? What can I do? I cannot do anything,” says the janitor. As he talks, the film cuts back to the foreman in the village for two seconds, from the present to Fojolo’s flashbacks, emphasizing for the audience the similarity between the foreman and the janitor in terms of mindset and attitude.

The voice of the working class is almost entirely missing in such scenes of confrontation between working-class and intellectual characters. Neither *Sun in a Net* nor *When The Cat Arrives* depicts the working-class version of events or portrays the opinions or emotions of working men or women. One can argue that the negative, almost caricatural portrayals of the country’s toiling masses had a subversive connotation in itself, serving to refute the official Party line about the “revolutionary character of the working class” and their unbending support for the socialist development of the country. However, then the question is, what made the working class indifferent to moral issues in a socialist state, which claims to represent their interests? Were they intrinsically incapable of the same sensibilities as the middle-class heroes because of their low education or blue-collar positions? Or, was it the result of the moral shortcomings of the political system, which channels the citizens to what Václav Havel called in a later decade “live within a lie”?[216] Tackling such questions would have required the filmmakers to go beyond caricatures and demonstrate the ideological exhaustion in the country. As the 1960s progressed and the power of censorship seemed less omnipresent, some of the New Wave films opted out of the portrayal of transgression through caricature (of the Party elites and working class) and

[216] Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” in *Open Letters: Selected Writings 1965-1990* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 135-136.

instead portrayed the human cost of the failed revolution in a more direct and confrontational manner.

Wounded in Revolution: *Everyday Courage* (1964)

One of the most well-known proponents of such an approach was the screenwriter and director Antonín Maša. Although he was born in 1935 and thus missed the revolutionary era of the postwar period, he was an active figure in the communist youth already in his teen years and wholeheartedly supported Stalinist undertakings in the early 1950s.[217] He enrolled at FAMU with the hope of becoming a writer because "it was the only school that promised guidance for the young writers."[218] By the time he graduated from FAMU in 1963, despite his membership in the Party, like many others, he was very critical of the ruling logic in the country. In the following five years, he wrote a number of highly transgressive novels and screenplays, such as *Everyday Courage* (*Každý den odvahu,* 1964), *Searching* (*Bloudění*, 1966) and *Looking Back* (*Ohlédnutí*, 1968), exploring the emotional side effects of disillusionment and the overall disappearance of revolutionary idealism on once honest believers of the revolution.

His first screenplay, *Everyday Courage*, co-scripted and directed by Evald Schorm, offered one of the most radical and clear-eyed portrayals of socialist society in its failed state. The main protagonist of the film, Jarda, participated in the building of communism in the early 1950s. At the start of the film, a representative at the factory, where Jarda works as a low-level Party agitator, introduces him to a visiting journalist as "one of the first shock-workers of socialism. So famous he was, comrade, that there were paintings of him. A huge canvas." However, the film quickly makes clear that the contemporary era (the 1960s) was fundamentally

[217] Liehm, *Closely Watched Films*, 258.
[218] Quoted in Fryš, *Antonín Máša*, 10.

different from a decade earlier. When Jarda reluctantly agrees to give an interview to the journalist and accompanying cameraman, the young workers began to loudly and mockingly applaud him. It is clear that his previous status as "shock worker" does not mean anything for the young workers, who are reluctant if not openly disobedient to Jarda's calls for work discipline.

Unlike the other films discussed in the chapter, *Everyday Courage* does not have a commanding authority figure. We see a suit-wearing local Party boss with a private car and a chauffeur in a few scenes, but far from being the villain, he seems to appreciate Jarda's honest idealism and informs Jarda that their "door is always open" for him, hinting that he could become a member of the ruling circles if he wanted to. However, Jarda declares himself to be an "unambitious one" and sticks with his factory job. He lives in a modest communal flat with his parents and seems to get along reasonably well with his girlfriend.

Unlike many other New Wave films, *Everyday Courage* does not make a social commentary through depictions of corrupt authority figures or indifferent individuals. Instead of villains or good-natured heroes, the film provides a social panorama of the failed revolution and the exhaustion of socialist ideology in the post-1956 predicament. The revolution lost its appeal, workers have no incentive for honest party work and look after consumerist pleasures instead, and the Party means power and high income for members. Jarda, the red-collar hero, is tormented by his realization that socialist idealism is a thing of the past, and he is unable to mobilize the workers for political action and active engagement.

Thus, despite having good political connections, a beautiful girlfriend, and a loving family, the film depicts Jarda as an unhappy man. As the film progresses, he becomes more frustrated and seems out of sync with society. Unlike in *When the Cat Comes*, the working-class characters are not amoral, but they seem to be committed cynics and individualists. Despite

Jarda's best efforts for mobilizing idealistic action, they seem to care more about drinking or playing cards. When a visiting journalist asks him to describe successful Party programs at the factory, he can only come up with the "program of raising Angora rabbits." In short, as film historian Jonathan Owen writes, Jarda "is the socialist realist hero cast out of time, forced to wrestle with his own apprehensions of a betrayed and discredited cause."[219] He suffers from depression and social alienation due to his realization that the socialist ideals, which he takes seriously, have become irrelevant in contemporary society.

In a powerful bar scene in the middle of the film, Jarda is drinking with the journalist and the photographer, who came to report about the work and "achievements" of the factory. All three are heavily intoxicated and voice their incoherent thoughts independent of each other. Jarda suddenly exclaims, "I am not feeling good. And I do not know what to do. All for yourself—that's how our workers think, right? We have all become petit-bourgeois." The journalist does not want to discuss politics with the "former shock worker" and evades his comments with silly jokes. A little later, Jarda, again out of context, says, "We knew how to fight for things even though most of them were silly. Take me, for instance. I was teaching the teachers." A few seconds later, Jarda suddenly sees two of the young workers engaging in a slapping contest while others are quietly spectating. Disgusted with what he sees, Jarda asks: "Why are you fooling around here? Or is this the culture of the masses now?" In return, one of the participants defiantly asks if the game is forbidden while the other says it is a game for friends and asks whether Jarda would play with him. In the last shots of the scene, we see Jarda punching the young worker in the stomach while someone in the audience shouts, "That's a foul."

[219] Jonathan Owen, " 'Heroes of the Working Class'? Work in Czechoslovak Films of the New-Wave and Postcommunist Years," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media 53,* no.1 (Spring 2012), 198.

In the second bar scene at the end of the film, Jarda seems to be more desperate and violent. Without apparent reason, he deliberately spills beer on some of the workers and is saved from their angry responses thanks to the intervention of one of his friends. Shortly afterward, a policeman arrives at the scene. Glad to see the policeman, he exclaims: "Shoot them all. Pigs. They betrayed the revolution…Nonsense? Can you see the way they live? They get fed and they shut up. They just eat and drink beer. That's all." He tries to grab the policeman's gun and the two begin to wrestle, while Jarda continues to shout: "Are you conspiring with them against me? *Avanti o popolo, alla riscossa*.[220] Shoot them all, pigs." Soon the people in the pub join the quarrel and beat Jarda. In the next and final scene of the movie, we see Jarda back in the factory with bruises on his face, his inner voice saying: "The one, who from the depth of his doubt can still see a ray of hope, will surely never say, 'I have lost.'" It is clear that similar to the teacher Pelikán in *School for Fathers*, Jarda is one of the "wounded ones" of the revolution.

Due to its uncompromising portrayal of socialist society, the film led to a "storm" in the cultural organs of the Party.[221] The top Party leadership initially pushed for the banning of the film. By contrast, however, the leadership of the centralized Film Institute (*ČSF-Československý film*) criticized the film's screenplay for "inaccurately portraying the psychology of the characters and not a complete assessment of historical events."[222] Accordingly, the film, in its current form, would make the audience feel "desperation" (*bezvýchodnost*) and "futility" (*márnost*).[223] By contrast, however, many of the reform-minded functionaries and film critics resisted the top-down pressure for censoring or editing the film. Ludvik Pacovský, who was a

[220] "Forward people, to the rescue." The first verse of the "Bandiera Rossa" (Red Flag), a popular song of the Italian labor movement.
[221] Liehm, *Closely Watched Films*, 258.
[222] Quoted in Skupa, *Vadí -- nevadí*, 105-106.
[223] Quoted in Skupa, *Vadí -- nevadí*, 105-106.

leading member and "in charge of film at the Party Secretariat," refused to condemn the film and "declared that, no matter what happened, he was convinced that the film was good and absolutely truthful."[224] Similarly, the head of Barrandov Film Studio, Vlastimil Harnach, stood with the film and said, "despite some issues, the film and the overall storyline shall pass (the censorship)."[225] Perhaps more crucially, the film critics defiantly awarded the film with the Film Critics Award in 1964 before the official decision on releasing the film.[226]

Eventually, the reformists in the film industry were able to convince the leaders to release the film because its censorship would "harmfully interfere with the current development of cinematography." [227] After its release, cultural commentators and moviegoers alike praised the film for its authenticity and discussed the political message embedded in the film. In a highly self-reflexive article, the red-collar critic Antonín J. Liehm (b. 1924)[228] defined the film's central theme and feel as a "hangover."

> What Maša and Schorm wrote is not a tale of morality, of settling of accounts (*vyřizování účtů*), nor of a tongue-in-cheek camouflage. It is a serious and honest effort to analyze the feelings of 'a segment of a generation,'… an analysis of a hangover, if you like. The hero of their film is wholly unprepared and almost desperately unequipped for this situation; out of nowhere, he falls from the world, in which everything is clear, everything is lined up, everything is reasonable and explainable with the basic formula... into the world of everyday reality, in which suddenly you are on your own. However, who are you

[224] Liehm, *Closely Watched Films*, 258.
[225] Quoted in Skupa, *Vadí -- nevadí*, 105-106.
[226] The party promptly banned the circulation of the news of the award in the press.
[227] In order to evaluate the audience reaction to the film, the Film Institute (ČSF) conducted surveys among filmgoers and reported that "the audience was extremely impressed with the film and spoke well about its sharp observations." Skupa, *Vadí – nevadí*, 107.
[228] Born into a middle class family, Antonín J. Liehm (1924-2020) took part in the communist underground resistance against the German occupation. He became the Deputy Head of the Press Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after 1948 but had to leave due to his sarcastic comments about Vítězslav Nezval, the revered communist poet of the era. Liehm then worked as editor and writer for various cultural magazines, writing film reviews and political commentary throughout the late 1950s and 1960s. After 1968, he emigrated to Paris. Přemysl Blažíček, "Antonín Jaroslav Liehm," in *Slovník české literatury po roce 1945*, ed. Michal Přibáň, Eduard Burget et.al. (Brno: Host, 2002), http://www.slovnikceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=48

> actually, and how do you deal with yourself, towards your girlfriend, towards your friends, relatives, and towards the people who are utterly unknown to you when suddenly they are not units divided into good, bad, and the middle but complex beings that live and die that are happy and unhappy and you cannot give up your responsibility?[229]

Liehm regarded Jarda as a prototype of the revolutionary youth of the 1948 era but, unlike the Party leaders, argued that despite the unresolved sorrows of the main character, the real message of the film is not a pessimistic one. Liehm interpreted Jarda's depression not as the pain of disillusionment but as a result of the "courage to look straight into all the facets of everydayness (*všednodennost*)… and to deal with them openly and without lousy compromises."[230] Similarly, the film critic Gustav Francl argued that "Jarda's tragedy is not closed…(because) his tragedy of grasping the crisis-hit situation does not lead to resignation to conformism, but towards searching for his own place in society."[231] Both Liehm and Francl emphasized that despite his depression and frustrations, Jarda does not give up his search for revolutionary ideas and morality in the contemporary era. Thus, they claimed, he is a tragic and authentic hero of their times, suffering from past disappointments but retaining hope for the future.

While the film critics were somewhat cautious in discussing the political implications of the film and interpreted Jarda's sorrows and struggles as a reflection of a will for the revitalization of socialist ideology, some of the ordinary filmgoers were more combative in their interpretation of the film. In October 1965, the cultural magazine *Film a Divadlo* held interviews with spectators following their viewing of the film and printed some of the critical political

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[229] A.J.Liehm, "Téma: Kocovina," *Film a doba 13* (December, 1964), 619-620.
[230] Liehm "Téma: Kocovina," 622.
[231] G.Francl, "Každý den odvahu," *Kino 20* (May, 1965), 6

commentary made by the interviewees. A thirty-one-year-old worker commented "the film is very good, one of the truthful and rightful works that depict our life as it is. I was once a functionary in ČSM and now a member of BSP. I know very well how it was and how it is."[232] Some of the audience members interpreted Jarda's character from a prism of ongoing de-Stalinization in the country and projected his sorrows as a reminder of why change was needed in the country. Similar to Liehm, who—as we have seen above—described the film as a reflection of a "generational hangover," one of the young audience members, an editor by profession, described what Jarda and himself were going through during the time as "sobering up":

> Jarda, it is my generation, bred on "hurrah-unionistic" (*hurásväzáckom*) optimism and volunteer brigades, which we considered as part of life. I admire the film's depiction of the transition period and its call for rehabilitation of socialist humanism. What's very important is we now have *the moment of sobering up* (*vytriezvenie*), which will be followed either by disillusionment and resignation, or renewal and regeneration of the will to continue in the new, or at least partially reformed conditions.[233]

The metaphors that Liehm and the young filmgoer used to describe the political feelings in *Everyday Courage* are symptomatic of the way in which red-collars felt toward existing-socialism and the status quo in the country. While "sobering up" or "hangover" suggested a sense of disorientation or an emotional twinge, they were less radical descriptors than, say, "waking up from a dream." For many of the red-collars, the issue was not the righteousness of the socialist cause but the disappointments that the ex-revolutionaries were experiencing in their daily lives. Thus while they regarded the "hurrah-unionism" of the late 1940s and early 1950s as

[232] Ján Dubeň "O odvahe inak," *Film a Divadlo 22* (October 23, 1965), 17.
[233] Dubeň, "O odvahe," 17. Emphasis is mine.

a period of intoxication, they still retained their belief in the possibility of forming humane socialism.

Conclusion

"Something has died, something was born," declared a young film critic Jaroslav Boček in January 1964. "Hopes and expectations, with which the (Czechoslovak) cinema entered 1957 and 1958, became a reality in 1963, but without illusions and hysteria of the period after the Twentieth Congress. The creativity and ideas (of the filmmakers) have matured."[234] Boček was celebrating that a number of newly released, highly experimental and unorthodox films, like *Sun in a Net* or *When the Cat Comes*, signaled a change in the dominant cinematic language in the country. For Boček, the new cinema, or "the cinematography of the individuals" as he called it, was a positive step toward "fulfilling the spirit" of the Twentieth Congress and its de-Stalinizing ethos.[235] Within a few years after the Banská Bystrica conference, the country's filmmakers were back making highly unorthodox films, critically commenting on the institutional and ideological issues they witnessed.

What made the revival of critical cinematic language possible was a new round of de-Stalinization that had been taking place in the country. In August 1962, due to a combination of renewed pressure from Moscow and increasing demands from within the Party, the KSČ leadership decided to "expose the excesses of Stalinism" and dismantle the legacy of "the personality cult."[236] Soon Stalin's colossal statue in Letná Park was demolished and the Central

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[234] Jaroslav Boček, "Malá Filmová úvaha po Novém roce," *Kulturní tvorba*, January, 1964, 4.
[235] Boček, "Malá Filmová," 4. For discussions among critics as well as party functionaries in the film industry following the successes of the films of 1963, see Skupa, *Vadí – nevadí*, 93-96.
[236] Kevin Mcdermott and Klára Pinerová, "The Rehabilitation Process in Czechoslovakia: Party and Popular Responses," in *De-Stalinising Eastern Europe: The Rehabilitation of Stalin's Victims after 1953*, ed. Kevin Mcdermott and Matthew Skibbe (London: Palgrave, 2015), 114.

Committee established a commission to reinvestigate the show trials of the early 1950s. As the signs of de-Stalinization became apparent, the red-collar literati resumed their emotion-laden discussion about the legacy of "the personality cult," declaring their remorse and angst about the past and present of socialism in the country. In the next chapter, I will focus on the "political melancholy" that fueled the desire for reform among red-collars throughout the 1960s.

Chapter Four:

Socialism with a Melancholy Heart: Feeling Remorse and Angst in the pre-Spring Era

On May Day of 1955, after years of careful planning and construction, Party leaders unveiled the gigantic statue of Stalin on Letná Hill overlooking Prague's Old Town. Made out of fourteen thousand tons of granite and with a height of 15.5 meters, it was the largest memorial site dedicated to Stalin in the world.[1] However, embarrassingly for the Party leadership, only a year after the completion of the statue, Khrushchev denounced his predecessor and began to push for a bloc-wide de-Stalinization. Nevertheless, while communist parties across East-Central Europe quickly toppled their Stalin statues, the one in Prague stood defiantly and outlived Khrushchev's speech by six years. Finally, in 1962, facing renewed pressure from Moscow for full de-Stalinization, the KSČ demolished the statue without any announcement or discussion in the media. For many citizens, despite the imposed silence about the event, the eradication of the statue symbolized the beginning of a new era.[2]

Three years after the demolition of the statue, Bohumil Hrabal, one of the most prominent and widely translated writers of twentieth-century Czech literature, wryly reflected on the

[1] Pichova, "The Lineup for Meat," 615 and 619.
[2] Pichova, "The Lineup for Meat," 624.

symbolism of the event in a short story titled "A Betrayal of Mirrors."[3] The story centers around a stonemason and a sculptor at the dawn of the country's impending de-Stalinization. The sculptor prepares intensively for the government-sponsored competition honoring the writer Alois Jirásek (1851-1930) with a statue of the Lučan warrior, a mythical figure in medieval Czech history and one of the figures from Jirásek's writings. However, unbeknownst to him and other participants, because Party censorship had reduced artistic choices to what was considered ideologically safe, Lučan figures had become clichés. When the sculptor submits his Lučan warrior to the competition, he realizes that hundreds of other participants have submitted the same figure. Devastated by the unoriginality of his work, he has a nervous breakdown, destroys his statue in anguish and drinks himself into further depression while hysterically repeating to himself, "can't stop now, must keep going."[4]

Just as the sculptor destroys his Lučan warrior with feelings of anguish and desperation, in a parallel storyline, a stonemason watches the destruction of the Stalin statue with similar emotions. He desperately watches the garbage trucks bring the statue pieces and the street plaques bearing the names of the Generalissimo to the scrap depot alongside the waste from the local meat processing plant and seven hundred kilograms of letters sent by Prague schoolchildren in response to an essay contest on "How to make the country an ever more beautiful place?" "Working men," the stonemason says quietly to himself, "it's been a terrible con."[5] The story ends with the stonemason thinking that "if he had any backbone at all," he would commit suicide

[3] The story first appeared in a collection of stories titled "The Ad-on for a room that I do not want to live anymore." See Bohumil Hrabal, *Inzerát na dům, ve kterém už nechci bydlet* (Prague: Mladá Fronta, 1965), 58-72. For the English translation, see Bohumil Hrabal, *Mr.Kafka and Other Tales from the Time of the Cult* (New York : New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2015), 77-100.
[4] Hrabal, *Mr.Kafka and Other Tales,* 99.
[5] Hrabal, *Mr.Kafka and Other Tales,* 99.

by skydiving into the scrap depot from the bell tower of the old church, where he was working on the renovation of the medieval statue of St. Thaddaeus, the patron saint of lost causes.[6]

Hrabal's story gives a snapshot of Czechoslovak society from the early to mid-1960s, in the aftermath of the official de-Stalinization decision in 1962. It is a tragic story, told from the perspective of dark comedy. In the preface, Hrabal writes that his stories express the "evolution" of not only himself but "part of society" through the "particular period referred to as 'the time of the cult of personality."[7] The social evolution he describes is not a happy affair; the iconoclasms take place without enthusiasm or cheer. Instead, the destruction of the cult leaves the people, particularly the believers in socialist ideals, with feelings of distaste and regret.

This chapter will focus on emotional pain and expressions of remorse in the Czechoslovak public sphere before the Prague Spring in 1968. I will trace the red-collars' emotional world in the 1960s by examining their "melancholic" political feelings amid the transformation that Czechoslovak society underwent in the decade. In particular, I will focus on the way in which feelings of remorse and angst, that is, a mixture of painful regret for the Stalinist past and deep anxiety over what was perceived as the retreat of socialist ideology among the youth, emerged and contributed to the making of reformist public opinion in the country.

By studying the painful political emotions of the 1960s and how they played a role in the demands for political change and the democratization of the socialist system, my aim is to contribute to an ongoing scholarly discussion about the "gray zones" between official ideology

[6] Hrabal, *Mr.Kafka and Other Tales,* 100.
[7] Hrabal, *Mr.Kafka and Other Tales,* xi.

and the political perceptions of citizens living within everyday socialist reality during the 1960s.[8] As in the historiographies of other Eastern bloc countries, the so-called "totalitarian school" in the literature about socialism in Czechoslovakia traditionally employed various dichotomies such as the state and society, official and unofficial cultures, and propaganda and everyday reality, to emphasize the methods of coercion and intimidation used to sustain the Party's power in the country. [9] In the last two decades, historians such as Paulina Bren, Muriel Blaive, and Peter Heumos shifted the attention from coercion to persuasion, analyzing the ways in which the Party negotiated with society to obtain complicity and domesticity through economic, cultural, and social policies.[10] The new scholarship offers a fresh look into the establishment of everyday normalcy beyond the binaries of coercion and resistance during communism in Czechoslovakia. However, arguably, because their focus is on the continuity of Party rule instead of political change, they do not pay much attention to the social or political conditions leading to upheavals like the Prague Spring in 1968 or the Velvet Revolution in 1989. The challenge, which this chapter—at least partially—aims to take up, is to trace the emotional roots of socio-political change, which sparked in 1968, within the relative normalcy of the pre-Spring era.

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[8] For a short discussion of the term "gray zone," see, Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV*, 8.

[9] For a discussion about the historiography on Czechoslovak socialism, see Pullman, "Sociální dějiny"; For examples of earlier scholarship on the history of socialism in Czechoslovakia, see Suda, *Zealots and Rebels*; Táborský, *Communism in Czechoslovakia*. After 1989, especially in the 1990s, dichotomous thinking still dominated the field. See for instance, Jan Pešek, *Štátna bezpečnosť na Slovensku 1948 – 1953* (Bratislava: Veda, 1996); Jan Pešek, *Odvrátená tvár totality* (Bratislava: Hist. ústav SAV, 1998); Jiří Pernes, *Takoví nám vládli* (Prague: Brána, 2003); Kaplan, *Kronika komunistického Československa*.

[10] As discussed in the second chapter, Blaive's study explains the societal calm in Czechoslovakia during 1956 through relatively high living standards in the country compared to Poland and Hungary. Paulina Bren focused on popular television series of the normalization era and analyzed the ways in which these series reinforced the domestic norms accepted by the political power. Peter Heumos looked at the history of labour in postwar Czechoslovakia and emphasized how the party implemented redistributive policies and constantly negotiated with workers to obtain their support (or at least complicity) for the system. Blaive, *Promarněná příležitost*; Bren, *Greengrocer and His TV*; Peter Heumos, *"Vyhrňme si rukávy, než se kola zastaví!": Dělníci a státní socialismus v Československu 1945-1968* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2006).

One inspiring study for such an endeavor is Alexey Yurchak's research into everyday life, discourse and ideology in late-socialist Soviet society, titled *Everything Was Forever until It Was No More*.[11] Writing against dichotomous categories such as "official culture and counterculture, totalitarian language and counter language, public self and private self," Yurchak emphasizes the "paradoxical mix of negative and positive values, of alienations and attachments" that "really existing socialism acquired in the lives of many of its citizens."[12] He argued while many of the Soviet citizens genuinely believed and internalized core socialist values (e.g., "equality, community, selflessness, altruism, friendship, ethical relations"), they simultaneously "transgressed, reinterpreted or refused norms and rules represented in the official ideology of the socialist state."[13] Accordingly, especially during the late-Brezhnev era, what Yurchak calls the "constative dimension" of the "authoritative discourse" increasingly became irrelevant; the Party ideology with its slogans, rituals, and commitments "acquired a strong performative role"; their meanings "were not necessarily determined" by the ideological discourse determined by the Party.[14] In other words, even though citizens remained nominal socialists and did not resist Party authority, the Party's "authoritative discourse" with its texts and rituals became "increasingly unanchored, indeterminate, and often irrelevant" for the general public.[15]

Yurchak's study is inspirational for demonstrating "how Soviet authoritative discourse had been hollowed out from within" before Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies took effect.[16] It was not that Soviet citizens rejected socialist ideals and became dissidents, but that the

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[11] Yurchak, *Everything was Forever*.
[12] Yurchak, *Everything was Forever,* 9.
[13] Yurchak, *Everything was Forever,* 8.
[14] Yurchak, *Everything was Forever,* 27.
[15] Yurchak, *Everything was Forever,* 25.
[16] This phrase is from the commentary of Kevin M.F. Platt and Benjamin Nathans on the findings of Yurchak. They wrote: "Like no other work before it, Yurchak's book shows how Soviet authoritative discourse had been hollowed out from within, becoming—in a kind of ironic twist on Bolshevik national policy—socialist in form, indeterminate

ideological meanings that the official discourse aimed to generate in society became "often irrelevant" among the public. One possible criticism, however, is that Yurchak does not delve into the question of if, or to what extent, the citizens themselves were aware of the increasing difference between performative and constative dimensions of their engagement with the official Party ideology. He seemingly portrays the weakening of the constative meanings of the official ideology as an unconscious process; the Soviet citizens, who participated in the required Party or Komsomol rituals to pay lip service, did not notice or pay attention to lack of ideological commitment in their performative actions.

Interestingly, as we will see, the red-collar literati in Czechoslovakia made similar observations to Yurchak throughout the 1960s and claimed that Marxist-Leninism had lost its moorings in society, particularly among members of the youth. At the same time, unlike some of the Party leaders and ideologues, the red-collars emphasized that this did not mean that citizens ceased to believe in socialism. They argued that although the great majority of the population still believed in the merits of socialism, due to the moral and institutional failures that took place in the recent past, they no longer paid attention to the Party ideology and lacked the same sense of idealism that the red-collars once had. Declaring remorse for their own Stalinist pasts and anxiety about the present state of socialist ideology, the red-collars called for the country to revitalize what they considered the humanistic essence of socialism.

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in content." Kevin M.F. Platt and Benjamin Nathans, "Socialist in Form, Indeterminate in Content: The Ins and Outs of Late Soviet Culture," *Ab Imperio* 2 (2011), 302.

"What Kind of Generation are We?"

In November 1962, only a month after the toppling of the Stalin monument in Prague, the literary historian and former partisan commander Juraj Špitzer (b. 1919) began writing an unusually self-reflexive article based on the accusatory question he received in one of his public talks. One of the young people in the audience reportedly asked:

> What kind of generation are you? You first loved *Les Poètes maudits* (*prekliati básnici*) then called them decadents. You called your own friends, who fought for a new, socialist humanity, as deviants. It is enough to look at the old magazines. Too scared to develop your arguments, you hid behind the thoughts and speeches of some eminent personalities… How do you now set an example for the young people, who would like to follow a solid role model fearlessly defending and standing by their own beliefs? [17]

As for Špitzer, the criticism of the young reader was hard to refute. In the early 1950s, he was a firm believer in and propagandist of Stalinist aesthetics, publishing a book and numerous papers against "bourgeois nationalism" and "cosmopolitanism."[18] He had become a Party member at the age of twenty in 1939, spent the majority of the war years in various concentration camps due to his Jewish origins, eventually escaped the camp, and commanded a partisan unit until liberation in 1945.[19] Like many other members of his generation, he had experienced a significant shift in his convictions by the early 1960s and now regarded his past support for

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[17] Juraj Špitzer, "Čo sme to za generáciu?," *Kultúrny život 47* (November 24, 1962), 1. The term *prekliati básnici* is a direct translation of the French term *poète maudit*, (French: "accursed poet"), which in literary criticism, refers to "the poet as an outcast of modern society, despised by its rulers who fear his penetrating insights into their spiritual emptiness." In this context, the readers seems to be referring to the avant-garde poets of the interwar era. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,s.v. "Poète maudit," last accessed on November 1, 2019, https://libguides.csuchico.edu/c.php?g=414275&p=2822611.

[18] For instance, see Juraj Špitzer, *Proti bržoáznemu nacionalizmu a kozmopolitizmu - za vyššiu ideovosť slovenskej literatúry* (Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ, 1951).

[19] See Juraj Špitzer, *Nechcel som byť žid* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 1994); also, TASR,"Pred 100 rokmi sa narodil spisovateľ a esejista Juraj Špitzer" Teraz.sk (August 19, 2019). https://www.teraz.sk/kultura/pred-100-rokmi-sa-narodil-spisovatel-a/412442-clanok.html

Stalinism as a grave mistake. Sensing hypocrisy in such a radical change of opinions in a relatively short period, the young reader reminded Špitzer of his personal past and indirectly questioned the sincerity of his arguments for combatting the "personality cult" in the country.

In his reply titled "Attempt at an Answer," Špitzer unequivocally admitted the mistakes of his past and declared his deep sense of remorse for his past actions. He argued that it was "the pure faith," which "occurs in rare moments and can easily be abused," that led members of his generation to blindly participate in the persecutions and smear campaigns of the Stalinist era.[20] Thus, he claimed, the dogmatism and harmful deeds of his generation were the side effects of their absolute belief and enthusiasm for the Party cause, which mobilized them and made the revolution possible in the first place. Crucially, however, Špitzer also emphasized that the naiveté and absolute belief do not absolve his generation from their personal responsibility for the crimes they supported in the decade earlier. He then made a clear distinction between sincere believers, who felt pain for their past mistakes, and the dishonest "people without pain," who wanted to "break away from the past without any serious self-reflection about themselves, burn like a miraculous Phoenix bird, and fly out of the ashes painlessly."[21] Thus, by emphasizing the emotional pain he felt for his past beliefs and actions, he attempted to demonstrate the authenticity of his political transformation from Stalinism to reformism.

The appearance of Špitzer's openly critical reflection of the socialist past in print media testified to the changing political atmosphere in the country. A few months earlier, facing pressure from Moscow, the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party had

[20] Špitzer, "Čo sme to za generáciu?," 3.
[21] "Teraz sa veľa hovorí o kulte osobnosti a mnohí ľudia sa chcú odtrhnúť od minulosti bez toho, aby sa vážne zamysleli nad sebou, chcú zhorieť ako zázračný vták Fénix a vyletieť z popola v čistých jagavých farbách. Vždy boli takí ľudia, ktorí bezbolestne, bez toho, aby sa postavili pred súd svojich vlastných myšlienok, chcú sa preniesť z jednej dejinnej situácie do druhej." Špitzer, "Čo sme to za generáciu?," 3.

decided to implement full de-Stalinization and established a commission to investigate the trials of the leading Party members in the early 1950s. The subsequent commission defined the trials as "fabrications" and rehabilitated some of the condemned Party members. While the commission's report did not assign individual responsibility to any of the ruling Party members, it was nevertheless a significant milestone as it represented the first official admission of criminal wrongdoings in the political trials, including the one of the scapegoated Slánský.[22] Similar to the policy about the contents of Khrushchev's "secret speech" six years earlier, the Party did not allow the circulation of the report in print media but allowed certain parts of its content to be divulged to members at the meetings. The Party leadership, for the first time, confirmed to its members that "no anti-state conspiracy had ever existed," and Party defendants admitted their own guilt in the show trials, which included the use of illegal methods of interrogation, such as torture.[23] A few months after the report, without any announcement or discussion in the media, the Central Committee demolished Stalin's monument in Prague, erasing one of the most iconic symbols of Stalinism. Almost simultaneously, encouraged by the recent signs of political change, some members of the socialist literati began to advocate for political, economic, and cultural reforms in the country.[24]

As in the period after 1956, most of the criticism of the existing predicament came from the "red-collars," a socio-emotional community, who came of age and became committed communists during the revolutionary postwar era. They had believed in and supported the Stalinist political experiment including its mass persecutions and purges, and in turn, were given

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[22] Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 401.
[23] Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 48.
[24] Kaplan, *Kronika komunistického Československa*, 590-597; 667. See for instance, Radoslav Selucký, "Ekonomika, Politika, Morálka," *Literární noviny*, October 20, 1962, 7; Miroslav Galuška, "Od nových myšlenek k novým činům," *Kulturní tvorba*, January 3, 1963, 1-2.

influential white-collar positions across the country by the Party for their loyalty. Alongside their condemnations of "the personality cult" and emphasis on the harmful impact of "dogmatism" in political, cultural, and economic spheres, the red-collars often reminisced about their own involvement and participation in bringing Stalinist ruling logic and aesthetic judgments to the country.

Špitzer's reply to the young reader, which came in such a political climate, demonstrates the dilemmatic nature of red-collar memory concerning the revolutionary era. On the one hand, as Špitzer emphasized, the "absolute belief" of his generation in the party and the Soviet Union made them join the socialist cause and participate in the revolution, in which they still believed. On the other hand, however, the same degree of belief and conviction led them to blindly support and join the smear campaigns and persecutions after the revolution. While Špitzer cherishes the memory of the former, he repents for the latter. Moreover, and most importantly, when confronted by the young reader for his involvement in bringing the "personality cult" to the country, he makes a distinction between those who face their past and feel pain about the revolutionary excesses and human sufferings they took part in, and the ones who refuse to take personal responsibility in their wrongdoings during the early years after the revolution. In other words, through critical self-reflection on his past, Špitzer distinguished himself from the Party leaders and conservatives, who evaded the question of personal involvement during the now condemned "era of personality cult." And he attempted to clear his name and the like-minded literati of his generation in the judgmental eyes of the younger audience. For Špitzer, feeling and declaring his pain over the tainted past was a sign of sincerity and authenticity in the new era.

The young reader's question and Špitzer's answer caused a considerable stir in the media and received additional commentary from other members of the red-collar literati. In the

magazine of the Czechoslovak Union of Writers, *Literární noviny*, another red-collar writer, Ján Rozner (b. 1922), joined Špitzer's criticism and targeted those who did not face their past and repeated the clichés and themes of the Stalinist era.[25] Like Špitzer, Rozner was forced to quit his studies during the war and joined the communist partisans against the German occupation. After liberation, he found employment in various communist journals and wrote highly charged think pieces unequivocally supporting Stalinist policies.[26] A decade later, looking back at his Stalinist past, he argued that the "intellectual and moral corruption" of his generation was the result of the "mystification" of words and ideas under Stalinism.[27] "The young friend of Špitzer ought to know," Rozner wrote a few months after Špitzer's article, "it was not enough to believe in socialism, learn the teachings of Marxism and work tirelessly for its realization"; the era of the cult demanded absolute belief and irrational devotion without any regard for "the truth" (*pravda*).[28] Accordingly, such mystification was against the teachings of Leninism, which Khrushchev was attempting to restore in the bloc. "The de-Stalinization above all meant de-mystification and rationalization," Rozner argued, and in order to achieve such a degree of intellectual maturity, the duty of the socialists was to face and "seek the truth" no matter how "painful" it was.[29] Thus, similarly to Špitzer, Rozner argued that feeling pain and remorse for the Stalinist past should be the starting point for correcting the course of the country's existing-socialism.

Rozner argued that because some people "were mystified to their core" (*mysticizování v krvi*), they were still not able to follow Khrushchev's de-mysticizing footsteps and clung to the

[25] Ján Rozner, "O mystice, rozumu a účelnosti pravdy," *Literární noviny*, February 23, 1963, 3.
[26] For instance, see Ján Rozner, "Neúnavný bojovník za mier," *Nové slovo* (1951), 67; "Zdroj sily a veľkosti sovietskeho umenia," *Nové slovo* (1951), 893.
[27] Rozner, "O mystice," 3.
[28] Rozner, "O mystice," 3.
[29] Rozner, "O mystice," 4.

official templates and clichés of the Stalinist era.[30] He individually targeted the recent socialist-realist poems by the poets Milan Lajčiak (b. 1926) and Krista Bendová (b. 1923) for repeating the language of mysticism and claimed that their verses were proof of the fact that the clichés and schematism of the Stalinist era were still alive in the hearts and minds of many. The accused poets harshly responded to Rozner's charges of dogmatism. Krista Bendová was outright unapologetic for her verses and did not see any reason why she should change her poetic language. She wrote, "in certain circles, it has become a silent norm to condemn a person, who speaks positively (and truthfully) about the Party, as dogmatic. Let me be absolutely clear: I was such a dogmatic yesterday, I am today, and I will be tomorrow."[31] Milan Lajčiak, the other accused poet, reminded Rozner of his own "dogmatism" in the past and brought up some of the articles Rozner wrote in the early 1950s condemning many of his fellow Slovak writers for "bourgeois nationalism" and "intellectualism."[32] Then, in a sudden twist, he warned Rozner, "to be careful" who his "harsh criticism" was pointed at, and reminded him that "many communists, as in Poland and Hungary, were blamed for blind fanaticism and mysticism after the Twentieth Congress."[33] Although Lajčiak does not explicitly explain what he means by this seemingly out-of-context statement, it was evident that he was warning, if not threatening, Rozner that his criticism was beyond what was then permissible in Czechoslovakia, which unlike Hungary and Poland, had long resisted de-Stalinization.

The responses by Bendová and Lajčiak to Rozner's criticism perfectly captures the dividing lines between the dissident red-collars and the Party loyalists in terms of how they viewed both the past and future of socialism in Czechoslovakia during the 1960s. The point of

[30] Rozner, "O mystice," 3.
[31] Krista Bendová, "O apriorismu a jiných věcech," *Literární noviny,* April 6, 1963, 3.
[32] Milan Lajčiak, "Odpověď Jánu Roznerovi," *Literární noviny,* April 6, 1963, 3.
[33] Lajčiak, "Odpověď Jánu Roznerovi," 3.

contention was not over the interpretation of Marxism or what political or economic model should be used in the new era. What they fundamentally disagreed about was what the "correct feelings" should be about the Stalinist past. On the one hand, people like Rozner and Špitzer emphasized their remorse for their involvement in Stalinist practices and regarded feeling pain as political authenticity and intellectual maturity. On the other hand, others like Lajčiak and Bendová portrayed the country's Stalinist era as a past mistake, a historical phenomenon, which the Party exposed and eliminated after the Twentieth Congress.[34] They were unapologetic for their beliefs and writings during the era of Stalinism, emphasizing that they were following Party directives and were uninformed about the true nature of events. Moreover, unlike Rozner and Špitzer, they claimed that it was the duty of the Party, not writers or individuals, to re-evaluate or judge the past. Thus, they neither declared any remorse for their past actions nor saw any reason to change their literary style in the new era.

In the period between the Party's official decision to de-Stalinize in 1962 and the end of the Prague Spring in 1968, similar discussions about the interpretation of the revolutionary past and personal responsibility regularly took place among members of the literati, reading public and politicians. As the criticisms and counter-criticisms between the literary critics (Špitzer and Rozner) and the poets (Lajčiak and Bendová) above demonstrate, repenting for the past became one of the main demarcation lines between the dissenting red-collars and the Party conservatives. While the responses from the socialist-realist poets were closer to the official Party stance, it soon became evident that their views were unpopular among the other members of the literati. Following the publication of their responses, *Literární noviny* published articles from other

[34] Lajčiak, "Odpověď Jánu Roznerovi," 3.

writers in support of Rozner, condemning Lajčiak and Bendová for their dogmatism.[35] In April 1963, the magazine informed its readers that the debate about the revolutionary past and individual responsibility had attracted significant public interest, and the discussion would continue in the coming Third Writer's Congress, which, as we will see, proved to be one of the crucial turning points in the creation of the country's reformist public discourse.[36]

Red-Collars in Remorse

The Third Writer's Congress, which took place between May 22 and 24, 1963, had far-reaching implications for the boundaries of what was permissible to express in the public sphere.[37] Organized for the first time since 1956, the Writers' Congress in 1963 provided a public platform for dissident members of the socialist literati to openly and collectively criticize what they regarded as "dogmatism" and a "personality cult" prevalent in both the past and present of socialism. A number of journals and cultural magazines published the critical speeches of the writers and provided a platform for further discussion through the publication of additional articles about the Stalinist past and its impact on the state of socialism in the country.[38] The media's extensive coverage transformed the congress from a high-brow literati event to a country-wide phenomenon and was crucial in making the dissident discourse mainstream again in the public sphere.[39]

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[35] Pavel Kameník, "Mystika a rozum," *Literární noviny,* April 20, 1963, 1 and 3; Miroslav Červenka, "Kulisy a kréda," *Literární noviny,* April 20, 1963, 3; Vlastislav Bartoněk, "Kdo věří na slovo...," *Literární noviny,* April 20, 1963, 3; Vladímir Blažek, "O Mystice, Rozumu a Účelnosti Pravdy," *Literární noviny,* April 27, 1963, 15; Rudolf Hoffman, "O polemicke metodé," *Literární noviny,* April 27, 1963, 15.
[36] "Co je Pravda v Literatuře," *Literární noviny,* May 18, 1963, 3.
[37] Golan, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement,* 39.
[38] In addition to speeches quoted below, see Dušan Pokorný, "Nejenom proti," *Literární noviny,* July 23, 1963, 6; V.Vávra and E.Čejka, "A historii a konkrétně," *Kulturní tvorba,* August 1, 1963, 4; Anton Hykisch, "My z roku 56," *Kultúrny život,* June 15, 1963, 4.
[39] For the importance of the congress in the wider context of de-Stalinization, see Jan Mervart, *Naděje a iluze,*28-59. See also Marci Shore, "Engineering in the Age of Innocence," 397-441.

Not surprisingly, during the congress, the bulk of the criticism for dogmatism came from members of the red-collar literati. Out of a total of 33 speakers, 22 were born between 1915 and 1930, and the majority of them had become part of the cultural establishment during the revolutionary euphoria, in no small part due to their enthusiastic support for the Party and its Stalinist policies and persecutions in the early 1950s.[40] At the congress, many of them expressed painful regret over their participation and past support for the policies and practices which, they now emphasized, had harmed the socialist cause and led to the suffering of innocent people.

"All of us who sit here—maybe except the ones who were then at their pioneer age—did condemn Slanský, London, Clementis, Novomeský," said Ladislav Mňačko in one of the most powerful speeches at the congress: "We all screamed in some kind of mad zeal—stone them to death!... This realization, this fact will remain a stain on the name of every one of us, and in this case, even the proposition is not valid that ignorance cannot commit sin."[41] Mňačko was not alone in his remorse over his actions in the past. Many other red-collar writers made similar speeches and expressed their regret and guilty conscience over their past actions, writings, and beliefs.[42] The poet and screenwriter Pavel Kohout, who, as we saw in the second chapter, had risen to prominence through his enthusiastic verses for class warfare and odes to Stalin in the early 1950s, disowned his earlier works and admitted that "while the sky of his verses remained blue," "the sky of real-life" took a wrong turn and led to the "exhaustion, skepticism, and often

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[40] The name of the speakers at the Third Writers' Congress and their birthdates are as follows in alphabetical order: Vratislav Blažek (1925), Michal Chorváth (1910), Miroslav Červenka (1932), Jiří Gruša (1938), Jiří Hájek (1919), Pavel Hanuš (1928), Josef Hanzlík (1938), Miroslav Holub (1923), Anton Hykisch (1932), Zora Jesenská (1909), Peter Karvaš (1920), Pavel Kohout (1928), Arnošt Lustig (1926), Alexander Matuška (1910), Vojtech Mihálik (1926), Vladimír Mináč (1922), Ladislav Mňačko (1919), Laco Novomeský (1904), Jan Pilař (1917), Alexej Pludek (1923), Karel Ptáčník (1921), Ján Rozner (1922), Josef Rybák (1904), Ivan Skála (1922), Karel Šiktanc (1928), Josef Škvorecký (1924), Jiří Šotola (1924), Jiří Procházka (1925), Jan Štern (1924), Ladislav Štoll (1902), Jan Trefulka (1929), Miroslav Válek (1927). For the speeches, see the 22nd and 23rd issues of *Literární noviny* in 1963.
[41] Ladislav Mňačko, "Pasca na Myši," *Kultúrny život,* June 1, 1963, 3. Some parts of the Mňačko's speech was translated and quoted in Hruby, *Fools and Heroes*, 22-23. I used Hrubý's translation when available.
[42] Karel Ptáčník, "Naše etické normy," *Literární noviny,* June 8, 1963, 6.

cynical denial of everything" among society.[43] The novelist Karel Ptáčník (b. 1921) regretted the fact that they "were not brave enough as writers and functionaries" to show interest in the trial process and had waited until a formal declaration from the Party before accepting the persecuted writers back into their circles.[44] Ptáčník noted that people, including himself, now fervently applaud the rehabilitated writers to "drown the shame" they are feeling for their lack of courage and complicity in the past.[45]

These declarations of guilt and remorse over the past created significant undertones for the political scene of the 1960s. Alongside their self-reflexive feelings about the Stalinist era, many red-collar writers depicted the acknowledgment of personal mistakes and misdeeds from the era of Stalinism as the essential moral requirement for eliminating the lasting impact of the "personality cult" in the country. Such emphasis on engaging in critical self-reflection about the past was an indirect attack against the Party elders and officials, who put the blame for the adoption of the "personality cult" on the previous leadership under the Gottwald and Slánský clique. The poet Karel Šiktanc (b. 1928), for instance, insisted that "keeping an accurate and honest memory" of the tainted past and "to think about yourself" (*přemýšlet o sobě*) "sternly, empathetically, without any compromise" as "the base" (*grund*) for removing the residues of "dogmatism" and "personality cult" in the country.[46] In a more confrontational manner, Mňačko individually targeted Ladislav Štoll (b. 1902), a literary critic and one of the leading

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[43] Pavel Kohout, "Pravda vždycky slouží nám," *Literární noviny*, June 1, 1963, 7.
[44] Karel Ptáčník, "Naše etické normy," *Literární noviny*, June 8, 1963, 6. Ptáčník was specifically referring to the rehabilitation of Laco Novomeský, a communist poet and former functionary, back into the Czechoslovak Writers' Union. Novomeský had been imprisoned alongside with Gustáv Husák and other high-level Slovak party members on the charges of "bourgeois nationalism" in 1950. He had been recently rehabilitated and was participating in the congress for the first time. He received a warm welcome from other writers; when his name was announced, there erupted thunderous applause in the hall. At the same time, some writers regarded the enthusiastic welcome that Novomeský received as a reflection of their guilty conscience for their silence in the past. See for instance, Ladislav Mňačko, *Oneskorené reportáže* (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1963), iv.
[45] Ptáčník, "Naše etické normy,"6.
[46] Karel Šiktanc, "Hodnota především," *Literární noviny*, June 8, 1963, 8-9.

functionaries in the cultural sphere, for destroying the careers and lives of writers and colleagues in the early 1950s. He invited Štoll to face his past and admit his mistakes before judging others for lacking socialist convictions: "All right, I too had written, at that time, that a certain man should die. But I found no peace and worked for ten years to make good my misdeed. Comrade Štoll keeps quiet. He already knows [everything], but he keeps quiet…"[47] At the end of his talk, Mňačko declared, "with a little sigh," that a big battle "between the new and… what happened in the past (*dejinne prekonané*)" had just started, and out of this battle, "socialist humanism would finally emerge."[48]

Similarly, the poet Kohout, after accepting personal responsibility for "insensitivity, mistakes, and wrongdoings" of the past, targeted "the people from various administrative positions" for not acknowledging the mistakes and misdemeanors of their past: "Sometimes a few heart attacks, depressions, financial deprivations, and lost years can be forgiven by the people who were affected (by the repressive policies). However, what I cannot forgive is the fact that not even one comrade (from the higher positions) would say: 'Comrades, we were wrong.'"[49] Likewise, another red-collar poet Miroslav Válek (b. 1927) suggested that the functionaries responsible for the past mistakes were cynically evading personal responsibility:

> Many functionaries, who were bearers of the cult, are still holding their positions, and have hardly changed any of their way of thinking. Perhaps they stand up now and proclaim, 'Away with the cult?' They raise a strict and critical finger and say 'Comrades, we have lived through a terrible time, in which you, too, have your share.' And, while doing this, they think: 'I shall get out of this somehow.'[50]

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[47] Mňačko, "Pasca na Myši."
[48] Mňačko, "Pasca na Myši."
[49] Kohout, "Pravda vždycky slouží nám", 7.
[50] Miroslav Válek, "Nebojovat jenom za sebe!" *Literární noviny*, June 8, 1963, 10. Also quoted in Golan, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement*, 40.

The open criticism and accompanying lamentations at the congress sent shockwaves among the socialist reading public in the country. The journals and cultural magazines not only published the critical speeches in full length in several consecutive issues, but they also continued the discussion of the Stalinist past and its detrimental effects through various articles, think pieces, and readers' letters.[51] In particular, largely thanks to the recent appointment of reform-minded Alexander Dubček as the First Secretary of the Slovak branch of the Party, the Slovak press gained a considerable degree of freedom in their coverage of the discussions taking place in the country.[52] Even *Pravda*, the official newspaper of the Slovak Communist Party, joined in the criticism and published articles individually targeting some of the high-ranking Party officials, such as Václav Kopecký and Viliam Široký, for their past actions and resistance to de-Stalinization even after 1956.[53]

This new wave of criticism put the Party leadership on the defensive. In an angry speech to Party members in Košice in June 1963, the First Secretary Novotný first enumerated the economic improvements and industrial achievements of the Party, then criticized the dissenters for exaggerating the mistakes of the past and ignoring the "revolutionary developments" in the country.[54] He repeated the official Party line, which placed the blame on Slánský and "petit-bourgeois elements" for the crimes of the past, and argued that discussions and exaggerations about the era of "personality" gave ammunition to the Western bourgeois press to attack the

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[51] Juraj Kánský, "Morálna zodpovednosť, svedomie a kult osobnosti," *Pravda*, June 14, 1963, 4; Ladislav Mňačko, "Na cintoríne," *Kultúrny život,* May 18, 1963, 6; "Úsmev," *Kultúrny život,* May 25, 1963, 11; "Vymyslený prejav vymysleného obhájcu pred vymysleným súdom," *Kultúrny život,* June 1, 1963, 7; "Nočný rozhovor," *Kultúrny život,* June 8, 1963, 7.
[52] Mervart, *Naděje a iluze,* 50-52. Mary Heimann, "The Scheming Apparatchik of the Prague Spring," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 10 (December, 2008), 1723-1725.
[53] Heimann, "The Scheming Apparatchik." 1724; Mervart, *Naděje a iluze,* 48-59.
[54] "Za rozkvět našich národů a další upevnění jednoty lidu: Z projevu soudruha Antonína Novotného," *Rudé právo,* June 13, 1963, 3.

Party. He invited citizens not to dwell on the past but to work for the socialist future.[55] For the First Secretary, the retroactive criticism and declarations of regret over the past were not constructive and instead helped the enemies of socialism.

Toward the end of his speech, Novotný denied the accusation that, even after 1956, the Party leadership did not commit itself to de-Stalinization and continued the legacy of the "personality cult." He asked: "Would you be able to publish the articles that you are writing now if nothing has changed? Would you be able to say the things that you are saying now during the era of a personality cult? "[56] Novotný's rhetorical questions had a point. Albeit grudgingly, as part of de-Stalinization, the Party had loosened its ideological control and allowed a degree of freedom of speech in the media. Over the next five years, through their transgressive articles, films, novels, plays, and short stories, members of the red-collar literati indirectly challenged the ruling logic and worldview of the Party elites and disseminated critical public opinions and emotions throughout the country.

Yet the question one may ask is, how did so-called ordinary people, or members of the reading public, react to such discussions and emotional statements? To what extent did the red-collars outside literati circles (e.g. "1948ers" among doctors, teachers, engineers, low and mid-level state officials) share the feeling of remorse voiced in the media? Unfortunately, as in the period after 1956, the absence of public opinion research from the era makes it difficult to answer such questions with certainty. Luckily, however, only a few months after the congress, the cultural magazine *Kultúrny život* audaciously published multiple letters from the wider reading public discussing the implications of the recent surge of criticism and contemplations

[55] "Za rozkvět našich národů," 4.
[56] "Za rozkvět našich národů," 4.

about the past. A close look at such messages indicates that while not everybody agreed with the validity and necessity of expressing regret for the past, the majority of the reading public, especially the red-collars, shared and defended the sentiments voiced by the dissenting writers.

An Emotional Schism

In July 1963, in an article published in *Pravda*, the official newspaper of the Slovak Communist Party, the writer observed that "whether already openly stated or gnawing inside," many people were asking questions such as: "'What was my own moral responsibility in the things that happened during the time of the cult? 'How could some people have such a conscience to carry on the anti-humanistic conduct? Who has a moral right today to criticize the negative phenomena of the [past] era?"[57] Although the author of the article, an obscure contributor by the name of Juraj Kánský, did not provide answers to such questions, he claimed that the act of asking the questions itself was a positive step toward eliminating the residues of the personality cult in the country. Moreover, he suggested that despite the fact that every member of the Party shared moral responsibility in one way or another, the degree of personal responsibility for the past would not be evenly distributed, as not everyone was equally aware of the nature and extent of the crimes committed: "If the common responsibility is not distributed based on the personal degree of shame [in the crimes of the past], then it would lead to mutual excuses and forgiveness." [58] Thus, similar to the writers at the congress, while accepting collective responsibility, Kánský hinted that the leading cadres of the Party had a higher burden for the mistakes of the Stalinist era.

[57] Juraj Kánský, "Morálna zodpovednosť, svedomie a kult osobnosti," *Pravda*, June 14, 1963, 4.
[58] Kanský, "Morálna zodpovednosť," 4.

The article appeared against the backdrop of the literary and cultural sensation triggered by the recent publication of Ladislav Mňačko's short journalistic stories titled *Delayed Reportages* (*Oneskorené reportáže*). The stories, first published in series by *Kultúrny život*, narrated the sorrows and injustices endured by the victims of the Stalinist persecutions and show trials, which Mňačko had followed and propagandistically reported for the Party newspaper a decade earlier. They gave a voice to the victims of the show trials, emphasizing their innocence and the Party's total lack of regard for the "truth" at the time. When the stories were published in a book later that year, it became an instant bestseller, selling 300,000 copies in one year.[59]

Delayed Reportages led to a passionate public discussion about the country's problematic revolutionary past, receiving both praise and criticism from readers.[60] Some of the working-class Party members were particularly outraged about what they regarded as defamations against the good name of the Party. In a letter to *Kultúrny život*, a technician from Zvolen by the name of Ištván accused Mňačko of "exaggerating" and "generalizing" the mistakes of the past "to defame the whole socialist establishment" and "rip off everything that the working class achieved with their blood."[61] He then speculated that Mňačko was "perhaps the son of a merchant or factory owner (*synom obchodníka alebo továrnika*), not a son of a small peasant or worker" to harbor

[59] One story in particular, titled "An Evening Interview" (*Nočný rozhovor*), caused the biggest controversy. Unlike the other stories, where the victims were honest and faithful communists who were unjustly persecuted by the party, the hero of the story is not a communist; he is a disabled war veteran, a former member of the Czechoslovak contingent within the Royal Air Force during the war. Because he fought in the Western army, the party labels him a "reactionary Westerner" and continuously harasses him. The story ends with a powerful tirade from the airman: "I am a disease, a cadre infection, everywhere they watch me and those who associate with me... I am just a reactionary Westerner ... but show me one human being who isn't fed up, intimidated or frightened, just one who has not been kicked, hurt, or insulted..." Frank Oswald, "The Case of Ladislav Mnacko," *Transition 19* (1965), 34; Mňačko, "Nočný," 7.
[60] Ladislav Mňačko, "Na cintoríne," *Kultúrny život,* May 18, 1963, 6; "Úsmev," *Kultúrny život,* May 25, 1963, 11; "Vymyslený prejav vymysleného obhájcu pred vymysleným súdom," *Kultúrny život,* June 1, 1963, 7; "Nočný rozhovor," *Kultúrny život,* June 8, 1963, 7.
[61] "Rozhovor o Nočnom Rozhovore," *Kultúrny život,* June 22, 1963, 12.

such enmity towards the rule of the working class in the country.[62] Although the reader accepted that "during the time of the personality cult, personal disputes have also been resolved and many guilty and unguilty people suffered," he emphasized that the era "was in the past and behind (them)" and the past mistakes did not give people like Mňačko, who had a questionable class background, the right to defame the achievements of the working-class rule in the country.[63]

Alongside the reader's letter, *Kultúrny život* published a short interview with Mňačko, asking his opinion about the criticism and accusations he had received. Expressing his distaste for the reader's ad-hominem attack, Mňačko said: "For long years, they have been handling people, who voice uncomfortable things like that: son of a merchant, son of a factory owner, etc."[64] He then clarified that his father was a postman, not a merchant or factory owner as the reader suggested, but argued that one's class background did not matter anymore: "Show me a person, who has not been poisoned, twisted or insulted whether he is a farmer, worker, scientist, politician, statesman, engineer or technician... All I did was to stand up with the people, who fought against fascism with honest intentions and commitment, and show what the vulgar and insensitive cadres did to them after the liberation."[65]

A few weeks after the heated exchange between Mňačko and the "comrade Ištván," *Kultúrny život* announced that "in the eighteen years of the magazine's existence, [they] have never received so many letters from the readers as [they did] in the last weeks and months."[66] The magazine further stated that they received forty-one letters about "comrade Ištván's letter"

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[62] "Rozhovor," 12.
[63] "Rozhovor," 12.
[64] "Rozhovor," 12.
[65] "Rozhovor," 12.
[66] "Listy pre súdruha Ištvána a nielen pre neho," *Kultúrny život 29,* July 20, 1963, 6.

alone, and the clear majority of letters, all but four of them, were in favor of Mňačko.[67] Despite the overwhelming support for the writer, "for the sake of complete objectivity," the magazine published excerpts from all the critical letters they received against the *Reportages*, providing a small window of opportunity to look into how hard-line communists among the rank-and-file perceived the recent surge of public declarations of regret.[68]

The letters against the *Reportages* show that the outrage against the frequent condemnations and regrets was not confined to the power elites. A worker from Prague criticized Mňačko for neglecting to acknowledge the job and education opportunities the Party provided to people from all walks of life, and challenged him to "show one person, despite being wronged, who did not have an opportunity to find honest work."[69] A reader from Trenčin expressed his doubts about the accuracy of the *Reportages* and argued that it was "not correct that everyone in our country lived in fear. It is a lie from bourgeois propaganda, intended to black-mouth, and discredit our establishment."[70] Another reader from rural Žiar nad Hronom angrily wrote that he is not sure whether to call the writer a "comrade or mister." He continued, "after reading your *Evening Interview*, I came to the conclusion that you are not writing about the past, but about the contemporary era just like the poet K.H Borovský wrote about King Lávra but actually meant Franz Joseph."[71] The reader claimed that "Twentieth Congress has already put an end to the influence of the personality cult" in the country, and argued that "constantly reminding and

[67] "Listy pre súdruha," 6.
[68] "Listy pre súdruha," 6.
[69] "Listy pre súdruha," 6.
[70] "Listy pre súdruha," 6.
[71] "Listy pre súdruha," 6. Karel Havlíček Borovský (1821-1856), a Czech author and journalist, who wrote satirical poems criticizing the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria.

returning back to the painful past is not acceptable (*únosné*), because it only hurts us, our entire society."[72]

In addition to the criticism, the magazine published many letters of support defending the validity of the testimonies in the *Reportages* and the necessity of confronting the crimes of the revolutionary past. An engineer and former resistance fighter against German occupation from Prague declared his support for the writer and that he "was under the impression that Mňačko will be attacked for the article… if that happens, let him know he can count that I would be on his side."[73] A reader from Trebišov, a small Eastern Slovak town located near the Soviet border, reported that they had discussed *Delayed Reportages* with other fellow "employees" (*zamestnanci*—a term usually used for non-manual, office workers), and nobody, whether a Party member or not, disagreed with the accuracy of the stories. He asked: "Is it not the fact that, while some people are fighting for the construction of socialism and construction of communist society—and some live already in communism? I think our writers are taking part in the cleansing of unhealthy tendencies, which to a greater or lesser extent exist in each and every one of us."[74]

The stark contrast in reactions to *Delayed Reportages* indicates that the divide in the socialist public went beyond a small number of writers and politicians. Not only the Party elites but some portion of the socialist reading public seemingly disagreed with the accuracy and value of the constant lamentations about the Stalinist past. On the opposing side, there were those who completely agreed with Mňačko and shared the sense of pain voiced by the members of the literati in the public sphere. While it is impossible to make a definite social class or generation

[72] "Listy pre súdruha," 6.
[73] "Listy pre súdruha," 6.
[74] "Listy pre súdruha," 6.

analysis based on the fragmented evidence, the overwhelming support for *Delayed Reportages* among the readers of *Kultúrny život* suggests that the majority of educated socialists, who presumably constituted the bulk of the readership of the magazine, belonged to the latter category.[75]

Amidst the public discussions and controversy over *Delayed Reportages*, Juraj Špitzer, who, as we saw, had been one of the first initiators of the discussion about the past with a controversial article titled "What Kind of Generation are We?", wrote a long and expressive addendum to his original article. Commenting eight months later, Špitzer recalled his controversial article as a "little melancholic yet at the same time optimistic reflection about a chat with a person from a younger generation about our generation, which experienced so many concussions."[76] He now emphasized that the Party's recent commitment to de-Stalinization, as well as the sudden surge of criticism and regrets, amounted to a new beginning for socialism in the country. For Špitzer, despite the changes, the members of his generation were still experiencing emotional flashbacks due to the gravity of the past and its memory:

> Now we are all talking about the end of the era, in which the values were eroded. The storm is already over the horizon, moving away, but sometimes it still gives flashes and gets hot. For this reason, there is still so much emotion and outrage in our way of thinking, for only a heartless person can rationally transcend (*prenášať*) the tragedies that took place… We are often afraid to look sternly at ourselves; we desire the new, but still, have old prison balls on our feet.[77]

[75] While there is no statistical data about the readership of the magazine, the editors of the magazine themselves observed that the intelligentsia (teachers, academics, doctors etc.) constituted the bulk of their readership. See Jana Holková, *Kultúrny život a slovenská jar 60. rokov* (Bratislava: Národné literárne centrum, 1998).
[76] Juraj Špitzer, "Záznamy," *Kultúrny život*, June 29, 1963, 3.
[77] Špitzer, "Záznamy," 3.

Špitzer claimed that the people "with heart," who "feel pain" for the victims of the show trials and the "horrible tragedies" in which they took part in the name of revolution and communism, were the main force behind the recent struggle for the "eradication of dogmatic thinking" and revitalization of Marxism and Leninism in the country.[78] In opposition to them, there were the "guardians with the raised fingers," clinging to an old dogmatic way of thinking, not due to their purity of ideals, but because of their "conservative fear, an inability to give up on stubborn fantasies."[79] Thus, he argued, the divide between those he labelled as "progressives" and "conservatives" was not only based on political convictions, but also on their ability or willingness to "feel pain" for the cruelties of the past, instead of avoiding facing the past for "fear" of the possible consequences for their identity and future standing in the society.[80]

At the same time, the emotional divide between the empathetic "progressives" and fearful "conservatives" was not the only axis of societal division. While emphasizing the emotional schism between the progressives and conservatives, Špitzer refers to "the youth" as an independent social group displaying cynicism for the sincerity of the red-collar regrets and their efforts at self-distinction from the unyielding Party line. He wrote: "The young people are looking at us and thinking to themselves: 'They said this yesterday, today something else, what will they say tomorrow?'"[81] Against such sentiments from the youth, he defined the change as part of "human nature" and emphasized that his "generation" supported and took part in the building of the "dogma" unknowingly, out of their sincere and naïve convictions in socialist ideals, not with the aim of personal gain. Moreover, despite his regret for his past actions, Špitzer still believed in the righteousness of the socialist revolution that his generation participated in.

[78] Špitzer, "Záznamy," 3.
[79] Špitzer, "Záznamy," 3.
[80] Špitzer, "Záznamy," 3.
[81] Špitzer, "Záznamy," 3.

With an apparent sense of nostalgia, he concluded: "the young people may then [rightfully] say about us, because of their great faith, they hurt each other, they did the things that were contrary to common sense, but it was also a generation, which did not hesitate to shed their blood for the sake of truth and justice, for the sake of communism."[82]

Throughout the 1960s, similar to Špitzer, many red-collars addressed what they regarded as the skepticism and disappearance of socialist idealism, especially visible among the country's youth. They attempted to convince young people of the sincerity of their generation's ideological transformation and emphasized their painful regret over Stalinism. While regretting some of their past actions and beliefs, they vehemently defended the main tenets of socialist ideology and emphasized that the revolution they participated in was worth fighting for. Because their remorse for the past was intertwined with socialist idealism for the future, they reacted to the perceived cynicism of young people with a sense of anxiety. They repeatedly pointed out the waning of the "socialist consciousness" among youth and blamed the dogmatism and ruling logic of the Party for the increasing irrelevance of ideology in the coming generations. Thus, the youth and their supposed political apathy became a significant source of anxiety among the red-collars, becoming an essential part of the argument for reforming socialism.

Angst Over Exhaustion

As elsewhere in the Eastern bloc, the new lifestyle and cultural consumption practices of the 1960s youth had caused a considerable level of apprehension and moral panic among many of the Czechoslovak Party officials and ideologues.[83] The Party conservatives viewed the new

[82] Špitzer, "Záznamy," 3.
[83] For a discussion on how the party and its ideologues reacted toward youth cultures of the 1960s, see Zdeněk Nebřenský, *Marx, Engels, Beatles.*

cultural forms and preferences (e.g., long hair, blue jeans, big beat music) with suspicion as an existential threat to socialism. Jaroslav Rybář, the principal deputy director of Public Security of the Central Administration, summarized hard-liners' views in his proposal against the "long-hairs" (*máničky*) in July 1966:

> And that's why the large majority of 'long-hairs' consider long hair to be part of their lifestyle—after the model of various Western groups like the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, and the Kinks. This copying is something foreign to us, a way of life contrary to our principles. It is a form of penetration of foreign ideology into our society, aimed at our youth and to a certain extent supported by a portion of our press.[84]

For the most part, the red-collar literati opposed this sense of apprehension among the Party officials for the new cultural forms of the 1960s. As the deputy director alluded, red-collar writers frequently promoted, and defended the new youth culture against the attacks of hard-liners.[85] At the same time, while supporting youth and their new culture, many of the red-collars agreed that there was indeed political skepticism and indifference for the Party cause among young people. Unlike the Party officials, the red-collars argued that even though most young people were still socialists by conviction, due to the moral collapse during the Stalinist era, the Party was no longer able to inspire them into revolutionary idealism. Frequently voicing their angst over the waning of socialist idealism among younger generations, the red-collars regarded the youth's apathy as proof of the exhaustion and weariness of the Party ideology in the country. Thus, together with the personal remorse for the revolutionary Stalinist past, the feeling of angst

[84] Cited in Czech Museum of Music, *Publication on the Occasion of the Exhibition 'Beatlemania!'* (Klatovy: Dragon Press, 2010), 34.
[85] See for instance, Miroslav Jodl, "Mládež hodnoty politika," *Literární noviny*, October 10, 1964,1; "Čo je to big-beat?," *Kultúrny život*, February 29, 1964, 12; Karel Tomášek, "Big-Beat," *Kulturni Tvorba*, April 29, 1965, 6-7.

within existing socialism became part of the affective counter-hegemonic discourse against the ruling logic in the country.

In a lengthy article titled "What today is about" (*Oč Dnes Jde*), Čestmír Císař (b. 1920), a prominent "red-collar" functionary with reformist leanings, evaluated the meanings of socialism and the Party for his generation and the youth of the 1960s.[86] First, Císař reflected on "the revolutionary romanticism" of his generation following the liberation in 1945 and emphasized that the mistakes of the Stalinist era could neither delegitimize socialist ideology nor should it "erase the enthusiasm, revolutionary pathos, and self-sacrificing toil" from Party history. [87] "When we became aware of the mistakes after we lived through the repercussions (*otřesy*) from the feeling of responsibility, we worked hard to clear the name of revolution," he wrote.[88] However, despite his continued belief in socialist ideology, Císař was concerned about the societal "human inertia, passivity, indifference to the fate of mankind, towards the land of the nation."[89] He singled out contemporary youth as a case study for the waning of Party idealism from the hearts and minds of the coming generations. Unlike the conservative officials and Party leaders, however, Císař's tone was friendly rather than combative. He began his observations about the country's youth with praise: "I am one of those, who understand even the youngest, at least I would like to think that way. I admire their passion for truth, for knowledge, for justice and for the purity of socialism. I like their openness, fighting spirit (*bojovnost*), stubbornness in polemics."[90] Yet it is also clear that his admiration for the vitality of young people was intertwined with an anxiety for what he believed was their disrespect for the Party and its values:

[86] Čestmír Císař, "Oč Dnes Jde," *Kulturní tvorba 24,* June 11, 1964, 1-3.
[87] Císař, "Oč Dnes," 1.
[88] Císař, "Oč Dnes," 1.
[89] Císař, "Oč Dnes," 1.
[90] Císař, "Oč Dnes," 3.

"But I cannot agree with the individuals among their ranks, who—at the age of twenty—arrogantly throw manure at the things that our fathers and we doggedly fought for."[91] Switching to the first person plural and writing from the perspective of "the Party intelligentsia" (*stranická inteligence*) of his generation, he declared: "We want and demand a mutual trust without [empty] phrases, without hypocrisy, but also without ideological desertion, without escaping from socialism. Surrendering to the bourgeois view is not an option for us; we will not hesitate to fight against it." [92]

Císař's article seemingly resonated among the red-collar audience as it attracted several responses from readers. "The worst is the lack of interest, the youth without higher interests…it is a catastrophe," complained one reader from the "[older] generation with old socialist ideals."[93] Unlike the hard-line officials, the reader opposed the criminalization of new youth cultures and suggested that the apathy among youths was a problem of social psychology, not security. He argued that the ideological tediousness among the youth was the result of the deformation of existing socialist society: "The youth grows out of something, they do not live in a vacuum, they see around them the thriving of the deformation of the lifestyle, whether it is the cult of personal cars and weekend cottages or frivolous marriages etc. *(kult osobních aut a víkendových chat nebo lehovážné uzavíraní manželství aj*.)"[94] With a melancholy tone, the reader argued that young people were reflecting what they were experiencing in contemporary socialist society, which had lost its "vitality, heroism and romanticism."[95] For the reader, the cultural and political

[91] Císař, "Oč Dnes," 3.
[92] Císař, "Oč Dnes," 3.
[93] "O pionýrech a mládeži," *Kulturní tvorba,* July 30, 1964, 10.
[94] "O pionýrech," 10.
[95] "O pionýrech," 10.

apathy of the youth was indicative of the ideological failure of the country's socialism; it was a reflection of deteriorating social relations and overall morale of socialist society.

The view that linked the youth's ideological indifference to the deficiency of the Party's ruling logic was a common point of many of the letters sent by readers. Commenting on the letters they received in *Literární noviny*, the editor of the magazine, Ivan Klíma (b. 1931) reported that many of the readers "engaged with the issue of politicality (*političnost*) or apoliticalness (*nepolitičnost*) of the youth and commented on their indifference or at least alleged indifference to the public or even 'sacred' matters."[96] Klíma approvingly wrote that the majority of letters the magazine received regarded "the so-called apoliticalness or 'cynical indifference'" among the youth as a side effect of the empty forms and discourses of political life.[97] One reader, who worked as a functionary in the Union of Youth in the late 1950s, wrote that the root cause of the "disorientation" among youth lay "in the mistakes in (the Party's) relationship to youth, in the mistakes of our political work… Who among us, the functionaries, has a clear conscience in this manner?"[98] The former functionary criticized the Party's over-formalism (*nadformálnost*) and excessive suspicion of new youth cultures and argued that although the number of honest and class-conscious young people far outnumbered the troublemakers (*výtržníci*), they were discouraged from engaging in Party politics. He concluded: "the young people like truth and courage, they like technology, modern art, jazz, love, they like the new excitements and liberty… but many of the things they like, are regarded—to say the very least—in a very cautious manner."[99]

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[96] Ivan Klíma, "O Mládeži," *Literární noviny*, June 27, 1964, 7.
[97] Klíma, "O Mládeži," 7.
[98] Klíma, "O Mládeži," 7.
[99] Klíma, "O Mládeži," 7.

The discussions among red-collars about the perceived political consciousness (or lack thereof) among youth often revealed a cocktail of emotions; the sense of remorse for the unjust persecutions of the show trials was mixed with the melancholic nostalgia for the revolutionary élan of the times. Many of the "1948ers" made the distinction between the two phenomena and demanded respect for the revolutionary mobilization of their own youth, which they believed was based on the core values of socialism. When the twenty-six years old poet Jiří Gruša (b. 1938) criticized the revolutionary verses of the revered and already dead communist poets, such as S.K. Neumann and Vítězslav Nezval, for "mythicization" and for being "disconnected from the reality of their times" in *Literární noviny*, a reader from Ostrava by the name of F. Kolař angrily called it an "exaggeration and obstruction" of the confessions of the older generation.[100] "I gave eleven years of my life to the personality cult and deformation of socialist legality (*socialistické zakonnosti*)," he wrote with an apparent sense of regret. However, the reader argued, the past "repression of the communists by the communists" did not justify denigrating the revolutionaries. At the end of his letter, the reader observed that many people from his generation tolerated and became accustomed to the disrespectful attitude from youth because they had "egg on their face" (*mají máslo na hlavě*).[101] Instead of avoiding the confrontation, the reader urged the old revolutionaries to "explain things, argue against their argument, confess your own mistakes, but do not play the role of ruined grandfather because of them."[102]

A few months later, in an open letter addressed to young people, the journalist and film critic Antonín J. Liehm similarly voiced his angst about the disappearance of socialist ideals among new generations. The opening sentences of his letter perfectly capture the nature of the

[100] "Diskuse ve ohlasech čtenářů," *Literární noviny*, March 7, 1964, 5.
[101] "Diskuse ve ohlasech," 5.
[102] "Diskuse ve ohlasech," 5.

dialogue between the red-collar "1948ers" and members of the "1960s youth" about the past and present of socialism in the country:

> I have long intended to write to you and I have postponed it over and over again, as a person longs to procrastinate everything which is difficult and not very pleasant. One night, over two or three years ago, you asked me with all the arrogance of your twenty years: 'What in the world happened to you people in those days?'…This question came at the end of a discussion about contemporary events, about present-day socialism, about our present convictions and how they were arrived at, about ways of presenting the mistakes of the past from recurring. And your question started a new dialogue, which lasts to this day and won't be finished for a long time to come.[103]

Similar to Špitzer before, Liehm emphasized that the experiences of the occupation, the war and subsequent liberation by the Red Army transformed the political sensibilities of many people of his generation and created the conditions for their "blind faith" in the Party and Stalin. Like many red-collars, he was perplexed about the legacy of the revolutionary era. While on the one hand, he accepted the ideological bankruptcy and regretted the human cost of their revolutionary ideals and activism of his generation during the late 1940s and early 1950s, on the other hand, he urged young people not to give up altogether on the merits of socialism. In other words, he opposed the dogmatism of Party hard-liners as well as the skepticism of youths. After all, he argued, despite its cruelties and deformations, "the socialism of the past" also signified "a radical change in the class structure of society which served as the basis for everything that followed and without which we would not be in a position to devote ourselves [to the question of] what kind of socialism we now wish to construct."[104] For Liehm, the only political system capable of achieving the "maximum development of the human society" remained socialism and

[103] A.J. Liehm, "Pokus o odpověd," *Literární noviny*, May 23, 1964, 3. The article was later translated to English in full in Antonín J. Liehm, *The Politics of Culture* (New York: Groove Press, 1973), 49. I use the English translation provided in the book.
[104] Liehm, *The Politics*, 57.

"it is possible to build such a socialist society *here* and *now* only in close cooperation with the Party."[105] The conclusion to his letter was a plea to young people to believe in and build a "real socialism" (actually-existed and practiced socialism, as opposed to socialism that remained in theory) that would not give any shame to its makers:

> Real socialism is still history's avant-garde movement. To explore unknown territory under the conditions of the contemporary world when so many things still hang in the balance is a very difficult task. But this is our lot in life, a task assigned to us by the demands of history and of our own country. In external terms, there is little difference between those who consciously wish to live this life and those who complain that they must. But let us live it to the full, knowing our task; let us live it in such a way that we must never be ashamed of the results. My own generation, and yours, too.[106]

Liehm's open letter captured the essence of how the reformist impulse, a conviction that existing socialism had not been "real socialism" and needed to be reformed, emerged and was communicated among the red-collars. When he wrote about the failures of socialism, he did not refer to economic bottlenecks, living standards, or level of consumer satisfaction in the country. He was primarily concerned and anxious about the increasing irrelevance of socialist ideology among young people. Like many others, in his open letter, Liehm linked the ongoing skepticism and indifference of youth to the past mistakes and injustices committed in the name of revolution and socialism. At the same time, he crucially regarded the present de-Stalinizing era as a potential turning point and urged young people to take part in the efforts to build "real socialism" in the country. Thus his sense of regret for the revolutionary past and angst for the present state of socialism did not destroy his hopeful idealism for the future. On the contrary, his negative

[105] Liehm. *The Politics*, 57.
[106] Liehm, *The Politics*, 57-58,

feelings, his disappointments with the past and present of socialism, fueled his desire to correct past mistakes and bring a humane way to the system.

Vaculík's *The Axe* and the Paradox of Red-Collar Memory

Such juxtaposition between the negative emotions (remorse for the past and angst with the present) and tender hope for the future was perhaps the most forcefully emphasized by the so-called "period novels," which became popular in the 1960s.[107] As the Party lessened ideological control in the cultural sphere following official de-Stalinization in 1962, a number of red-collar writers such as Ludvík Vaculík (b. 1926), Milan Kundera (b. 1929), Vladimír Mináč (b. 1922) and Rudolf Sloboda (b. 1938) wrote highly successful semi-autobiographical novels, reflecting on the generational traumas of the 1950s and their meanings for the existing socialism of the 1960s.[108] Moving beyond the immediate political polemics and language of the era, these novels offer rich glimpses into the dynamics underlying the red-collar transformation from Stalinism to reformism.

Ludvík Vaculík's *The Axe* (*Sekyra*) was arguably one of the most powerful and influential of the era's "period novels." Published in 1966, the novel is mostly comprised of the recollections of the narrator, a Prague-based journalist, before his planned visit to his younger brother in his native Moravian village. The recollections are not in chronological order; the events from different times and different contexts are woven together in a stream-of-consciousness style based on the narrator's emotional connections. The narrator's childhood

[107] For a discussion on the autobiographical period novels of the era, see Pavel Janoušek et.al *Dějiny české literatury III (1958-1969)* (Prague: Academia, 2008), 353-356 and 360-364.
[108] Ludvík Vaculík, *Sekyra* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1966). For the English translation, see Ludvík Vaculík, *The Axe* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994); Milan Kundera, *Žert* (Prague: : Československý spisovatel, 1967); Vladimír Mináč, *Nikdy nie si sama* (Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ, 1962); Milan Kundera, *Žert* (Prague: : Československý spisovatel, 1967); Rudolf Sloboda, *Narcis* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1968).

memories with his father are suddenly followed by an image of the latter lying in a hospital morgue thirty-five years later. The reminiscences about the agricultural confiscation under German occupation are cut short with a discussion in the editorial office of the magazine, which the narrator was working in at the time, about the place of journalists in the state-controlled media. As Herbert Eagle comments, Vaculík's protagonist remembers his childhood, youth years, and the present time almost simultaneously, keeping the "past, present and future constantly in view, constantly in juxtaposition."[109]

The Axe is first and foremost a memory novel about the author's relationship with his father, a village carpenter, who became a Party official after the revolution and participated in collectivization in their region. The narrator confronts the legacy of his now-deceased father, contemplating his political actions and the toll that his dedication to the Party cause had on his human relationships. Aside from the present time, which is narrated only in the epilogue, there are three main memory layers in the novel. First, in his earliest childhood memories, the narrator fondly remembers the expeditions he took with his father to the woods and forests of Moravia. Memories of this era are filled with the romantic love the narrator and his father had for the valleys and forests of the countryside. The second layer serves as the antithesis of the idyllic childhood, as the narrator remembers the early years after the revolution and the destruction it brought to human relationships as well as the nature of the countryside. His father, an idealist working-class communist, was now chairman of a collective farm responsible for bringing socialism to his village. One evening, when the narrator, who is now a university student in Prague, is home on a visit, the good-hearted brother-in-law, Uncle Balej, comes to their house to

[109] Herbert Eagle, "Ludvík Vaculík's *The Axe*: A Quest for Human Dignity," *Books Abroad* 49, no.1 (Winter 1975), 7-8.

ask for help against the harassment he receives from the collective. After the uncle's plea to the father, the narrator suddenly remembers that during his childhood, when he and his father had set out to gather dandelions but failed to do so because of the anticipated downpour, they stopped at Uncle Balej's field and picked clovers from his field without asking for permission. Uncle Balej caught them in action but pretended that nothing happened, and he never mentioned the incident. Now the narrator (as well as the reader) expects the father to show some sympathy for the good-hearted and generous brother-in-law. However, the father is uncompromising in his dedication to socialism and towards Uncle Balej, who—as a rich peasant—is now branded a class enemy: "We are building a socialist order of society and you, dear Brother-in-law, should realize in good time, where you stand as a working man."[110]

Following the memory of the father`s refusal, the narrator reverts back to the present time (fifteen years later) and realizes that it was a seminal event in the "crystallization of his own inner conflict."[111] The father that he loved and adored suddenly became a figure of doubt and incomprehension. His dedication to the cause takes the lyrical humanism out of the father, causing a deterioration of the emotional bonds within his family and his surroundings:

> "When work starts on the drainage, the lindens will go west," he pointed his cigarette at the trees, which within two years had gone west… "We'll have to regulate the stream again," Dad said, and as he spoke, the fish vanished; "and straighten that path," and the line of apple trees toppled to the ground; "and one day, maybe, we'll lay a branch line on the other side to the factory," he said, and a hideous embankment of slag bulged over the mill-race. "Many tasks await us," he frowned, "and we have many enemies," he said, and Mother died.[112]

[110] Vaculík, *The Axe*, 86.
[111] Eagle, "Ludvík Vaculík," 9.
[112] Vaculík, *The Axe*, 91.

Yet, despite his apparent sense of regret with what was lost during the revolutionary period, the irony was that the narrator had clearly been on the winning side. While the narrator himself could study at university and eventually found a prestigious white-collar job in Prague, Uncle Balej's children were not admitted to higher education and one of the children, bright cousin Karel, now works as a hired laborer. Even years later, when the narrator meets with cousin Karel in the village, he still feels a "clinging sense of shame" for the past.[113]

In addition to childhood and the revolutionary era, the reminiscences about the recent past, the post-Stalinist 1960s-era, constituted the third layer of the narrator's memory structure. The remorse for the revolutionary past and angst about ideological exhaustion is the most evident in this layer. The narrator visits his village and realizes that it had been transformed almost beyond recognition. There was new asphalt, "uniform fences, a public garden hemmed by concrete kerbstones and iron railings… people now find they are getting the kind they used to want."[114] However, for him, the planning and technological advancements did not bring happiness and joy to the citizens. The narrator complains that the "dumb devotion to planning… tie the hands of the younger generation" because they were left out of the entire process and cherish a completely different image of the community than what had been planned.[115] He contemplates, as he walks through the village: "A generation as strong as a bull in its prime, impetuous, and horribly jealous too, because in its youth it was never given a proper chance to do anything." [116]

[113] Vaculík, *The Axe*, 38.
[114] Vaculík, *The Axe*, 30.
[115] Vaculík, *The Axe*, 30.
[116] Vaculík, *The Axe*, 30.

After the midpoint in the novel, the reader becomes aware that the narrator is a journalist responsible for answering the letters from readers. In one of the letters, a young reader complains that she had been excluded from high school for ideological rather than academic reasons. He investigates the situation and exposes it by publishing an article in the newspaper. The controversy caused by his article resulted in the young girl's suicide and the dismissal of the newspaper's editor. The narrator, saddened and disgusted with the level of insensitivity and corruption in the country, makes a shocking speech in front of his colleagues, criticizing his now-deceased father and his role in collectivization. "I took the freedom to walk on in the person of my father," the narrator says in one of the flashbacks of the recent past.[117]

The name and "central leitmotif" of the novel comes from one of the childhood excursions that the narrator took with his father.[118] The father and son embark on an illegal wood-cutting journey in the forested hills near their village. They spend long hours sawing the giant fallen tree into smaller logs, but before they can return to collect the logs, they realize that they have been stolen by someone else. "Their experience is more than just contact with nature and with each other, it is more than exhausting and redeeming labor; it is an act of defiance, a Robin Hood-like theft from the rich, who do not care for or use their wealth."[119] Looking back at the experience amid the controversy surrounding his article, the narrator suddenly realizes that his father's main legacy is not collectivization or Stalinism but his determination, creative energy, and defiance when facing adversity, regardless of whether these honorable qualities

[117] Vaculík, *The Axe*, 30.
[118] Eagle, "Ludvík Vaculík's *The Axe*," 11.
[119] Cited in Eagle, "Ludvík Vaculík's *The Axe*," 11. The sentence is from Eagle's own translation of the text from the original. See Vaculík, *Sekyra*, 118,

yielded the desired results or not. Through the memory of the failed excursion, the narrator reconciles with his father and appreciates the honesty and dedication of his legacy.

Vaculík's novel conveys the paradoxes of red-collar memory with the conflicting emotions and thoughts they evoked in the 1960s. Through the tragic father figure, the novel encapsulates both the romantic selfless dedication and harmful deeds of the revolution and revolutionaries. While the narrator does not mention his own beliefs and actions during the era of confiscations and collectivizations, it is obvious that he now regrets his father's actions during the period. Yet at the same time, the narrator does not entirely disavow the legacy of his father and socialism. On the contrary, his father's legacy, his energy and dedication, inspires him to speak up against the injustice and censorship in his workplace.

The redemption of the father and his memory was reinforced in the epilogue of the novel. The narrator visits one of his brothers, who works as a bus driver in the countryside. The brother complains about the unfair working conditions the bus drivers endure and asks the narrator to write a complaint on their behalf in the magazine. The narrator agrees, but to keep his brother's expectations low, tells him about the recent problems he has been facing at work. Shocked by the state of affairs in Prague, the brother declares that he will leave the Party. "Not just yet. Not till I say so," replies the narrator.[120] The sister-in-law shakes her head doubtfully and hesitantly declares: "Yet but... it's an end to socialism anyhow."[121] The narrator neither confirms nor rejects the assertion but suggests that instead of writing the article, they could collect the large fallen beech tree that the brother had mentioned earlier. Repeating the narrator's adventure with the father decades ago, the brothers go on an illegal wood-cutting mission early in the morning

[120] Vaculík, *The Axe*, 215.
[121] Vaculík, *The Axe*, 215.

and, unlike the earlier experience with the father, they succeed in getting the logs, outwitting the pursuing forest warden. After all, the novel concludes, the past, despite its pains and disappointments, could be an inspiration for new creative energy and does not have to repeat itself.

The autobiographical nature of *the Axe* is evident. Like the narrator, Vaculík had a rural working-class family background from Moravia; his father was a village carpenter and a committed Party member, and after studying and working as a shoemaker in the Baťa shoe factory during the German occupation, he was able to study at university and eventually found employment as a journalist taking part in the creation of the Party's optimistic myths, which he came to regret later. *The Axe* was his first public display of "walking on his father," as well as his former political self, and the success of the novel made him one of the most popular red-collar writers.

In many ways, his novel and subsequent rise to literary and political prominence was the embodiment of the Party's failure to create a loyal intelligentsia after the revolution. Like many other red-collars, Vaculík's working-class background and long-standing Party affiliation did not prevent him from becoming a fervent critic of the ruling logic of the Party in the 1960s. As we will see in the next chapter, when in June 1968, the Soviet leadership and Party conservatives began to threaten an intervention against Alexander Dubček's reform rule in the country, Vaculík wrote his infamous "Two-Thousand Words," an affective manifesto, which proved to be one of the seminal events in transforming reform socialism from being the movement of the intelligentsia to a mass movement for national sovereignty.

Conclusion

The retroactive discussions and emotional declarations about the Stalinist past continued to be an essential part of the reformist discourse during the Prague Spring in 1968. That is why the Czech-born British historian, Zbyněk Zeman, dubbed the period a "retrospective revolution," a period in which "the politics and past came together and formed an explosive blend."[122] During the eight months between January and August 1968, the injustices of the early 1950s became a national topic, and the red-collar writers and politicians constantly returned to their past, tried to make sense of their actions, and expressed their sense of guilt and responsibility toward the victims of the Stalinist period.[123] However, by 1968, the overemphasis on the past turned into a cliche for some of the citizens. Zeman, who went to Prague to witness the ongoing political changes during the Dubček era, came upon a student during his nightly stroll in Prague's Malá Strana district making a mocking speech from a balcony above the door to a wine-cellar: "I too admit to having made dreadful mistakes in the past..."[124] In a public opinion survey conducted in May 1968, almost half of the respondents agreed with the claim that "too much is said about the mistakes of the past and not enough (about) what to do in the future." [125]

In fact, for the general public, reformism remained mostly a criticism and repudiation of Stalinism and what was perceived as its continuing legacy in the country. At the same time, however, although Czechoslovak reform socialism lacked a comprehensive political and

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[122] Z.A.B. Zeman, *Prague Spring* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), 130 and 138.
[123] See for instance, Gustáv Husák, "Odkaz o program," *Kultúrny Život*, February 23, 1968,3; Dušan Hamšík, "Procesy, Které Dělaly Dějiny," *Literární noviny*, March 28, 1968, 1-3; Alexandr Kliment, "Koho se to týká," *Literární noviny*, April 11, 1968, 1; Pavol Števček, "Po prvé, úp druhé," *Kultúrny Život*, April 12, 1968, 1; Zdenka Neumannová, "Pláč generací," *Literární noviny*, June 20, 1968, 1-2.
[124] Zeman, *Prague Spring*, 17.
[125] 35 percent agreed with "I think that correct attention is paid to the analysis of mistakes of the past as well as to the analysis of tasks for the immediate future;" and only 12 percent opted for "Not enough is said about the mistakes of the past; they are too occupied with current problems." Piekalkiewicz, *Public Opinion Polling*, 87.

economic program, there was a plethora of policy suggestions and visions for creating a humane socialism. The next chapter will analyze the key texts, manifestos, and official plans for reform socialism before and during the Prague Spring, and will discuss how the red-collar desire for reviving the revolutionary ethos intertwined with their social and material discontents, playing a significant role in the making of the reformist visions for the future.

Chapter Five:

Prague Spring: A Red-Collar Rebellion

In the summer of 1967, a little more than a decade after his first feature film *School for Fathers*, Ladislav Helge went back to South Moravia to make another film on the state of socialism and its impact on citizens. Unbeknownst to him at the time, the resultant film *Shame* (*Stud*) would be the last film of his directing career. Shortly after the Warsaw Pact intervention in August 1968, *Shame* would become one of the so-called "shelved films" (*trezorové filmy*), banned from screening for the next two decades. Moreover, the film and Helge's subsequent uncompromising attitude towards the post-invasion regime would cost him his position in the film industry, forcing him to eventually find employment at a post office.[1]

The radical element of Helge's last film was its critical depiction of the conflict between the Party leadership and the new intelligentsia before the country's period of dramatic reform. The film centers around the moral dilemmas and frustrations of Arnošt Pánek, the all-powerful Chairman of an unspecified regional committee in Moravia, regarding the rapidly changing social and political environment of the late 1960s. In the beginning, the film introduces the Chairman as a model functionary. He is a decent family man and a hard-working Party official,

[1] Bilík, *Ladislav Helge*, 186-187.

commanding respect from citizens as well as his subordinates at the office. However, the surprise prosecution of one of his trusted associates for sexually harassing an underage village girl suddenly puts Pánek on the defensive, and strips him of his sympathetic outlook. While he cannot deny the gravity of the alleged crime, he desperately tries to protect his corrupt associate and, by extension, his own reputation and power. However, when later Pánek personally investigates the issue, he realizes that not only is the allegation real, but his own negligence of the true conditions in his district allowed this kind of corruption and sexual abuse to continue unchecked for many years.

Early on, the film establishes the antagonism between the older Party elites and the relatively younger officials. The new prosecutor insists on criminally charging the accused functionary despite the apparent anger and frustration of the Chairman. In a heated moment, Pánek tells the prosecutor that "there are a lot of new people around" making important decisions without consulting him, adding with a sense of pride that he had been "working in the district for twenty years." In the village, the young agricultural engineer courageously criticizes Pánek and the rest of the Party leadership for their blindness, stating that the only reason ordinary people put up with the years of corruption and abuse was because "they got used to it. They started to believe that this was true socialism." Pánek quickly dismisses such criticism as "envy and intellectual prejudice speaking." Later, another old-timer, the secretary of the local collective, declares a similar suspicion against people like the young engineer, and warns Pánek that "the new people with proper school training" keep arriving and threatening "the cause." He claims that people like himself and the Chairman, who "have been hanging on for twenty years," should stick together and defend themselves against newcomers like the engineer and the prosecutor.

However, although the Chairman is inclined to side with the old-timers, he cannot help but notice the ideological demoralization and extensive corruption in his district. The local officials are corrupt, and the agricultural workers simply do not care about socialism, ongoing corruption, or sexual abuse, as long as their material interests are protected. Toward the end of the film, realizing the institutional and moral failures of socialism in his district, Pánek seemingly accepts his own shortcomings. In a drunken state, he accepts that he is not up for his position and contemplates resigning. But, after a moment of painful hesitation, he refuses to be thrown into the "old metal junkyard." In the epilogue, we see that he did not resign. He is again an authority figure, dressed in an elegant suit, walking into his spacious office, where his secretary serves him coffee.

By emphasizing the tensions and relationships between the protagonists from different social classes, *Shame* portrayed Czechoslovak society at a boiling point. Although the old-power elites, represented by Pánek and the Chairman of the local agricultural collective, still hold onto power, the members of the young intelligentsia, like the prosecutor and the engineer, effectively challenge their authority and legitimacy, causing frustration and confusion among the power-holders. The idealists regret the growing irrelevance of socialist ideology within society, blaming the Chairman, the stereotypical Party bureaucrat, for his complicity in the corruption of socialist principles in the collective. Only three months after completing filming, the social tension described in the movie came into full play. In January 1968, with the ascendence of Alexander Dubček to leadership, the Party launched a reform program with ramifications for the Party's leading cadres at both the national and regional levels. In many ways, what came to be known as the Prague Spring was first and foremost a rebellion of the relatively young and educated

socialist class (whom I dubbed the "the red-collars" in the previous chapters) against the country's power elites.

At the same time, however, despite its powerful social observations, *Shame* is mostly silent about the motivations of the rebellious intelligentsia, who seemingly act based only on their pure idealism against institutional corruption. Although the film shows that the young agricultural engineer is forced to live in a run-down village house without running water, he is stoic about his living quarters and does not, at least outwardly, complain. Neither does he complain about the fact that he does not have any real power in the management of the collective, even though he is seemingly the only university-educated person on the board. Instead of his personal grievances, the engineer, the selfless figure, appears to be motivated to stand up against the establishment because of his idealism. As the audience, we do not see whether or how his poor material conditions and lack of political power (contrary to his superior academic qualifications) influence his motivation to take action against the corrupt official.

In this last chapter of my dissertation, I will investigate how the red-collars' social aspirations intertwined with their desire to revive the revolutionary ethos played a role in the creation of reformist ideals and policies before and during the Prague Spring. As discussed in the last chapter, "melancholic" emotions, namely regret for the past and angst for the present state of socialism in the country, fueled the red-collar desire for revitalizing its revolutionary spirit in the rapidly changing cultural environment of the 1960s. Alongside and sometimes intertwining with this desire, this chapter will argue, the red-collars' discontent with their low salaries and social rank was a vital part of the reformist critique of the Party's ruling logic throughout the 1960s. Criticizing the unqualified top Party cadres for their moral and administrative blindness in leading socialism, the red-collar representatives, as holders of educational capital and communist

credentials, demanded a better socio-political position for the educated cadres (like themselves, conveniently) in order to implement the rules of scientific and efficient management in the country. However, the red-collars' self-serving emphasis on the interests of the educated workforce soon created a conflict with the Party elites as well as blue-collar workers, many of whom, with justification, came to regard the project of building "socialism with a human face" as a movement of the intelligentsia.

As early as 1966, H.G. Skilling suggested that an interest-groups approach would be profitable in analyzing communist systems, yet such an approach, at least in the Czechoslovak context, was rarely extended to the collective emotions and class aspirations of the reformist intelligentsia of the 1960s.[2] During the 1970s, the scholars Ivan Svitak and Vladimir V. Kusin, both living in exile, made inspiring group-based analyses, studying how different social groups positioned themselves vis-à-vis the reform movement.[3] However, they conceptualized the

[2] H. Gordon Skilling, "Interest Groups and Communist Politics," *World Politics 18,* no.3 (Apr 1966), 435-451.
[3] For instance, in 1971, the philosopher and dissident Ivan Svitak made one of the earliest scholarly analyses of the various social groups behind the reform socialist movement. He identified three main social groups with differing aims and interests: (i) the top one hundred thousand power-elites, comprised of the top cadres of the Communist Party, military and state organs, (ii) the middle class, composed of white-collar workers, constituting roughly one-third of the population, (iii) the working class, employed in industrial and agricultural enterprises and constituting the majority of society. For Svitak, each group had different expectations from the Prague Spring government. The elites aimed to bring effective management and tried to preserve the political status quo; the middle class demanded broader political reforms and greater pluralism; and the working class expressed overall support for the reform attempts but did not have the instrumentalism of the elites and middle-class. Somewhat similarly, Vladimir V. Kusin identified seven major groups (workers, farmers, intelligentsia, youth, nationalities, political organizations, the Church) and argued that the post-1948 experience of each group played a decisive role in their level of support (or disapproval) for the Prague Spring. Whereas intelligentsia, youth, and church organizations were behind the reform attempts, workers and small farmers, who experienced an overall improvement in their quality of lives after the revolution, were less inclined to be in favor of the reform.
Unfortunately, despite their contributions in terms of identifying differing group priorities behind the Prague Spring, neither Kusin nor Svitak provide substantial information about the emotions and motivations of the reformist intelligentsia. Instead, they conceptualized the country's intelligentsia as an idealistic group, striving for democratic principles after their disillusionment with Stalinism. Ivan Svitak, *The Czechoslovak Experiment 1968-1968* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); Kusin, *Political Grouping;* See also Jan Moravec and František Janáček, "Leden 1968 a spor o jeho smysl" in *Československo roku 1968*, ed. Václav Kural (Prague: Parta, 1993), 27-61; Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 131-133; For a discussion on different explanations of different group perspectives on the eve of the Prague Spring, see Pat Lyons, *Mass and Elite Attitudes during the Prague Spring Era: Importance and Legacy* (Prague: Institute of Sociology, 2009), 112-122.

reformist intelligentsia, the group that they themselves belonged to, as a materially, professionally, and emotionally disinterested social group, idealistically motivated to end the dictatorial practices and merge the country's democratic heritage with socialist principles. Although some recent works have studied the "technocratic vision" among the reformist intelligentsia, focusing solely on the intellectual history of the concept (i.e., discussions among experts and intellectuals regarding the effective management of the economy), they do not discuss whether or to what extent collective emotions and aspirations played a role in the emergence of the technocratic vision of the reformist movement.[4]

The only study that has paid some attention to the relationship between class interests of the intelligentsia and the Czechoslovak reform movement was Jaroslav Krejčí's 1972 survey of social change and stratification in postwar Czechoslovakia.[5] Krejčí suggested that, by the 1960s, the ever-growing number of people with technical skills and higher education transformed the country's intelligentsia into a strong "social vector" against the Party elites. Unfortunately, however, because Krejčí focused only on the statistical growth of the intelligentsia and did not demonstrate the actual impact of such societal transformation on political discussions during the 1960s, his claim about the link between the growth of the intelligentsia and their growing political self-confidence lacks evidence and remains suggestive.

By studying how red-collar social aspirations and political emotions were reflected in the discussions, manifestos, and programs of reform socialism, the chapter aims to offer a socio-emotional perspective on the history of the Prague Spring. I will first look at the debates about

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[4] See for instance, Vítězslav Sommer, *Řídit socialismus jako firmu: technokratické vládnutí v Československu, 1956-1989* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2019); Jiří Suk, "Utopian Rationalism of the Prague Spring," *The American Historical Review 123*, no.3 (2018), 764-768.
[5] Krejčí, *Social Change and Stratification*.

the position of the educated cadres in the "era of mature socialism" and demonstrate how the red-collar literati, emphasizing the value of the educated cadres for the socialist system, effectively argued for better career opportunities and salaries before and during the Prague Spring. Then I will delve into the Dubček era and discuss the content of and public reaction to the seminal texts of the Prague Spring such as the "Action Program" and "The Two Thousand Words" manifesto, emphasizing the push and pull between the "technocratic" and "democratic" impulses within the reformist camp before the Warsaw Pact intervention in August 1968. Building on earlier chapters, the chapter will argue that the group identity, social grievances and political emotions of the red-collars culminated into the project of reform socialism and played a crucial role in the ideological making of the Prague Spring in 1968.

"Are We Still Behaving as Revolutionaries?"

In July 1960, the Czechoslovak National Assembly announced that the country was the first in the socialist world after the Soviet Union "to achieve socialist production relations and to root its achievement" in a new, socialist constitution.[6] Around the same time, the First Secretary Antonín Novotný proudly declared that the socialist production relations had prevailed in all branches of the economy, and the capitalist "exploiters as a class" had been eliminated.[7] However, neither the new constitution nor the First Secretary made clear how the successful elimination of capitalistic relations would impact the ruling logic in the coming decades. The constitution defined the political system as a "socialist state founded upon a firm alliance of workers, peasants, and intelligentsia, with the working class at its head."[8] "All power in the

[6] Josef Kalvoda, "Czechoslovakia's Socialist Constitution," *The American Slavic and East European Review* 20, no.2 (April 1961): 220.
[7] Kalvoda, "Czechoslovakia's Socialist Constitution," 234.
[8] Kalvoda, "Czechoslovakia's Socialist Constitution," 221.

Czechoslovak Socialist Republic" belonged to the working people and the Communist Party was the "vanguard of the working class" and "the leading force in society and the state."[9] In other words, Czechoslovak socialism, despite advancing to the mature state, at least in official terms, retained its Leninist ideology and political practice; that is, the Party, in the name of the working class, still had a total monopoly of power.

In the following decade, many citizens gradually came to question what or who the working class was in the new, advanced stage of socialism. After all, if capitalistic relations of production, and by extension, the "exploitive bourgeoisie," had been eliminated, what did the "dictatorship of the proletariat" mean in the new era of advanced socialism? Should non-manual workers be considered part of the working class, or did the honor of being a "worker" still reside solely with blue-collar workers? And crucially, why should the proletariat, if understood as manual workers, still rule over the educated class, whose technical/scientific expertise would be key to the success of socialism in the competition against capitalism?[10] Throughout the 1960s, a significant number of red-collar journalists, officials, and academics tackled such questions, and the answers they provided, aside from their analytical value, offer invaluable insights into how they viewed and positioned themselves in society.

Sociology, which had emerged as a key academic discipline to "scientifically" analyze the societal relations and position of the educated class under mature socialism, was at the forefront of discussions about the place of educated people (whom they mainly referred to as the intelligentsia) in a "mature socialist society." By the mid-1960s, the Party leadership had come to

[9] Kalvoda, "Czechoslovakia's Socialist Constitution," 221.
[10] The sociological discussion revolving around these questions is covered below. In addition to the books and articles quoted in the following pages, see also Jan Brejcha, "Demokracie a elita v socialismu," *Literární noviny,* November 18, 1967, 1 and 3; Jaroslav Klofáč, "O co jde?" *Rudé právo,* January 17, 1968, 3; Jan Macků, "Marxismus a teorie elity," *Rudé právo,* March 13, 1968.

regard the Marxist sociologists, many of whom had been committed Party members themselves, as trusted authority figures on various socio-cultural issues, giving them advisory positions on a wide range of socio-political issues, from inefficiencies at workplaces to youth delinquency.[11] Among the leading sociological works of the decade, Radovan Richta's treatise on the "scientific-technological revolution" was arguably the most influential and frequently discussed academic work in political and cultural spheres. As we will see, the research conclusions and policy suggestions of Richta and his team became highly popular among red-collar circles and had a direct impact on the official "Action Program" of the Prague Spring.

In many ways, Radovan Richta's (b. 1924) life story was typical of the red-collars.[12] As a teenager during the war, he joined the communist underground against German occupation and eventually was imprisoned in Terezín concentration camp, where he acquired life-threatening tuberculosis. He was saved from almost certain death by the Swiss Red Cross, whom the Germans permitted to rescue seriously ill patients as a gesture of good-will. Many members of his resistance group, including his best friend, were executed shortly before the end of the war. After 1945, as an active member of the "radical Stalinist wing" of the Communist Party, he supported the Moscow line against the "national road to socialism," writing articles and eventually his doctoral thesis about the pitfalls of "Czech bourgeois philosophy" and political traditions. In 1948, at the age of twenty-four, he was made the chief editor of the Party's cultural and political journal *Tvorba*, eventually becoming the head of the Marxism-Leninism department

[11] For an excellent study on the Czechoslovak sociologists of the 1960s and their generational characteristics, identity and ideas, see Voříšek, *Reform Generation*, especially 276-299.
[12] The biographical information provided in this paragraph is from the following sources: Karel Ondryáš, "Akademik Radovan Richta K 75. výročí narození Radovana Richty" *Marathon 4* (July, 1999), 10-13; Michael Voříšek, "Richta Radovan," in *Sociologická Encyklopedie* ed. Zdeněk R. Nešpor, last modified December 8, 2018, https://encyklopedie.soc.cas.cz/w/Richta_Radovan (accessed on January 30, 2021).

at the Ministry of Education. Due to his persistent tuberculosis, he had to quit his job, and following a lengthy stay in a sanatorium, he found an academic position at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in the early 1960s.

In 1965, as part of an effort to scientifically analyze the new social structure and societal relationships under mature socialism, the Party headquarters tasked Richta and his interdisciplinary research team at the Institute of Philosophy with the assessment of the impact of modern science and technology on socialist society and the individual. After almost a full year of research and writing, Richta and his team submitted their analysis alongside a series of policy recommendations to the Thirteenth Party Congress in June 1966.[13] Their study, which was published as a book with the title of *Civilizace na rozcestí* (*Civilization at the Crossroads)* shortly after the Congress, proved to be one of the most important theoretical texts of Czechoslovak reformism in the 1960s.[14]

The central theme of *Civilization at the Crossroads*, as well as Richta's other works throughout the 1960s, was the concept of "scientific-technological revolution" and its impact on existing socialism and its dissipating revolutionary ethos in the country.[15] He argued that "in the technologically advanced countries," the industrial revolution had been superseded by the "scientific-technological revolution,[which] is beginning to… manifold facets of life, going beyond and transforming it." [16] And because communism "failed to recognize the scientific

[13] Voříšek, *Reform Generation*, 210-211.
[14] Radovan Richta, *Civilizace na rozcestí Spoločenské a lidské souvislosti vědeckotechnické revoluce* (Prague: Svaboda, 1966). For the English translation, see Radovan Richta et.al. *Civilization at the Crossroads: Social and Human Implications of the Scientific and Technological Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2018).
[15] Vítězslav Sommer, "'Are we still behaving as revolutionaries?': Radovan Richta, theory of revolution and dilemmas of reform communism in Czechoslovakia," *Studies in East European Thought 69* (March 2017): 104.
[16] Richta, *Civilization at the Crossroads*, 19.

revolution," the revolution had run "into the blind alley of the personality cult and will always run into a blind alley wherever it is applied."[17]

Criticizing Stalinism for bringing bureaucratic dictatorship, Richta regretted that the revolutionary ethos of the postwar era had disappeared in society. "Are we still behaving as revolutionaries?" Richta asked rhetorically.[18] To reverse the situation, Richta proposed a new type of revolution, not one in which the workers mobilize to violently overthrow the ruling elites, but one that takes place "in research institutes, laboratories, and classrooms occurring as a long-term process structured around science and technology, culture, and the `cultivation of relationships among people.'"[19] As Richta wrote in one of his earlier books:

> In this stage of the communist revolution, the thousands of pioneers manifest their heroism by their fierce, daily and fearless ascent to the peaks of science, technology and culture. This kind of heroism is no less heroic than the bravery of fighters in the revolutionary armies in the class struggles of the past. On the contrary, the contemporary heroes follow them and in some sense even overcome them—because their struggle requires rather silent, hidden and discreet victories over their own passivity and personal limits.[20]

In *Civilization at the Crossroads*, Richta and his team challenged the emphasis of traditional Marxism-Leninism on the leading role of the urban proletariat within the relations of production. Instead, they suggested that the scientific-technological revolution rendered non-manual, intellectual labor the pillar of a future socialist society and key for its success in the peaceful competition against capitalism. In other words, in Richta's new revolutionary

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[17] Richta, *Civilization at the Crossroads*, 88.
[18] Quoted in Sommer, "'Are we still behaving as revolutionaries?', " 104. The quotation is from a book that Richta wrote three years prior to *Civilization at the Crossroads*. Radovan Richta, *Člověk a technika v revoluci našich dnů* (Prague: Čs. společ., 1963), 80.
[19] Sommer, "'Are we still behaving as revolutionaries?'," 103-104.
[20] Translated and quoted in Sommer, "'Are we still behaving as revolutionaries?'," 104. The quotation is from Radovan Richta, *Člověk a technika v revoluci našich dnů*, 80.

framework, the educated cadres would replace blue-collar workers as the agents of the revolution and backbone of socialist society.

Alongside their theoretical analysis of the social relations under socialism, Richta's team made a series of policy suggestions. First, they recommended the Party jettison the emphasis on extensive economic growth, and instead divert investment to science, technology, and education. The report showed that the percentage of university-educated personnel in "science-research" enterprises in Czechoslovakia was significantly lower compared to Western countries, and claimed that a "lack of qualified staff" was one of the major obstacles to the country's development.[21] Second, and perhaps more controversially, the team suggested that to motivate more people to study and release the full potential of the socialist intelligentsia, the income differentiation between the non-manual (intellectual) employees and manual, blue-collar workers needed to be increased.[22] "In some socialist countries," their study claimed, "the healthy equalizing of living standards among workers and intellectuals that occurred during socialist construction has degenerated from time to time into a general 'averaging out,' which is incompatible with remuneration according to work, and with the significance of science in society."[23] They complained that the salary of a university graduate working in a research facility caught up to the average wage of a worker in heavy industry only when the former reached the age of forty-six to forty-seven, a medical doctor reached the same point when he or she became fifty-two to fifty-three, and a teacher's salary never caught up.[24] Accordingly, the materially disadvantageous position of the educated workforce had an adverse effect on the "atmosphere of respect for learning as the accumulated wealth of society, confidence in this 'universal labour' as

[21] Richta et.al. *Civilization at the Crossroads*, 223-226. Voříšek, *Reform Generation*, 210.
[22] Voříšek, *Reform Generation*, 210.
[23] Richta et.al. *Civilization at the Crossroads*, 232.
[24] Richta et.al. *Civilization at the Crossroads*, 232.

Marx termed it, encouragement for creative initiative."[25] To reverse the situation and restore the social respect of the intelligentsia in society, Richta's team urged the authorities to provide better income for the educated workforce.

Richta's analysis and policy recommendations built upon the already widely expressed grievances and misgivings of red-collars about their low income level and status in society. Throughout the 1960s, there were frequent and increasingly combative complaints in print media about the pervasive disregard at workplaces for education and educated personnel. As for the other transgressive declarations throughout the decade, popular cultural magazines were the main media apparatus for disseminating the discontent about the social positions and incomes of the educated cadres in the country. In November 1964, on the front page of the cultural journal *Literární noviny*, a young cultural official argued that the leading Party cadres, whom he dubbed "good souls," regarded "higher education" not as "one of the essential needs of modern society," but as a "charity conducted out of [their] good-will."[26] "The university graduates are seen as debtors for life," the official complained, and argued that the Party perceived education as a "one-sided commitment," demanding that university graduates repay their debt for having received an education by not asking any questions and obeying orders.[27] In contrast to this perception, the official affirmed the value of education and qualified experts "for the scientific management of modern society" and called for a change in the existing policy of wage leveling (*nivelizace*) and overall "lack of differentiation between qualified and unqualified people" to motivate more young people to seek higher education and training.[28]

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[25] Richta et.al. *Civilization at the Crossroads*, 232-233.
[26] Svatopluk Pekárek, "Kvalifikace," *Literární noviny*, November 7, 1964, 1.
[27] Pekárek, "Kvalifikace."
[28] Pekárek, "Kvalifikace."

Aside from wage leveling, there were frequent complaints about unqualified cadres occupying higher positions in the structures of power.[29] In a typical article from the early period after official de-Stalinization in 1963, the journalist and film critic, Ludvík Pacovský,[30] reported with a pronounced sense of disbelief that "only 18 out of 169 inspectors employed in the Educational (*osvetové*) departments of the Regional and District National Committees (ONV and KNV)", and "16 out of 109 directors of the cultural centers" had a university education. Pacovský observed that leading functionaries, "especially if they do not have a higher qualification themselves," looked at the educated employees with contempt, and their attitudes were reflected in the "cadre policy" (*kádrová politika*) at workplaces.[31] Accordingly, the situation at hand was a residue of the practices of the early 1950s, when there was an urgent need "to get as many people committed to the socialist establishment as possible."[32] Because the revolutionary era demanded a new set of values and criteria in hiring policies, sometimes "people without education, who could not study for social reasons, were [regarded as] more reliable" and preferrable than those with a proper education.[33] While Pacovský seemingly agreed with the rationale behind such a policy in the early 1950s, he claimed that, because almost everyone now had the opportunity to obtain an education, carrying the policy into the 1960s was "completely wrong."[34] Moreover, he argued, a disregard for education was leading to intellectual

[29] See for instance Jan Frýdl, "O kvalifikaci z různých stran," *Kulturní tvorba*, May 21, 1964, 3; Ludvík Pacovský, "Vzdélavatelé?," *Kulturní tvorba* 22, May 28, 1964, 3; Radoslav Selucký, "Je to rozumné," *Literární noviny*, October, 1965,1; Jozef Čellar, "... na najvyššiu úroveň," *Kultúrny život*, June 24,1966, 3; Zdeněk Kalenský, "Čo Čech, to výzkumník!," *Literární noviny*, May 27, 1967, 1.
[30] A graduate of FAMU, Pacovský (1930-2000) was first a member of the Party Secreteriat and then became the Secretary of the Union of Film and Television Artists. He often interfered on behalf of directors to ease censorship in the film industry. After 1968, he lost his position and earned a living as a cab driver. Liehm, *Closely Watched Films*, 258.
[31] Pacovský, "Vzdélavatelé?," 3.
[32] Pacovský, "Vzdélavatelé?," 3.
[33] Pacovský, "Vzdélavatelé?," 3.
[34] Pacovský, "Vzdélavatelé?," 3.

apathy and a reduced political consciousness among "the old practitioners" (*stari praktici*), as none of them "cared to acquire deep knowledge about Marxism-Leninism."[35] Thus, Pacovský argued, in order to ensure that those people employed in critical public positions have a high level of political consciousness, the "cadre policy" should be based on academic qualifications, instead of the old principle of "class purity" (*třídní ryzosti*).

Not surprisingly, Pacovský's unusual level of open criticism and demands for change in the cadre policy led to further commentary from the reading public. One functionary from Ostrava, who belonged to the university-educated minority among the ranks of the cultural officials, confirmed Pacovský's observation about the low regard for education and educated people among many of his colleagues. The reader criticized the unqualified cadres in the cultural-educational sector "for propagating education for the broad masses but are not willing to study themselves."[36] In a more argumentative tone, another cultural official by the name of Karel Klíma reported that the problem of the unqualified cadres was the worst among the employees of museums.[37] "A decade of experience in four different regions qualifies me to argue," he wrote, "national committees and social organizations responsible for the work in museums consistently and systematically disregard the qualification requirement and thus violate the established regulations."[38] He argued that the socialist intelligentsia was unjustly excluded in the hiring process, and the so-called "political employees" (*politické pracovnici*), many of whom did "not even have a high-school diploma," had been filling the ranks despite their lack of qualifications:[39]

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[35] Pacovský, "Vzdélavatelé?," 3.
[36] "Dopisy- Osvětáři a vzdělání," *Kulturní tvorba,* June 25, 1964, 10.
[37] Karel Klíma, "Průchodní dům nebo závětří," *Kulturní tvorba,* August 13, 1964, 5.
[38] Klíma, "Průchodní," 5.
[39] Klíma, "Průchodní," 5.

> National committees justify this (hiring of the unqualified cadres) by emphasizing their political maturity. However, the experience shows that after their placement in the museums, the real political employee is nowhere to be found. What, in fact, takes place is that fictional political maturity is used as a shield for hiding work-related shortcomings. The label "political employee" provides something akin to untouchability, protection against criticism at work.[40]

Like Pacovský, Klíma argued that the lack of education has a detrimental impact not only on professionalism in the workplace but also on employees' ideological knowledge, leading to the vulgarization of Marxist principles. He claimed that the "political employees" at the museums did not possess knowledge about art history ("they condemn the restoration of the world jewels of the sacred architecture as 'promotion of religion'") nor about the main premises of socialist ideology ("they have a more nebulous notion about the basic questions and concepts of Marxism than elementary school children").[41]

At a more ideological level, the core question was how to interpret the Leninist concept of "proletarian dictatorship" in the new era of mature socialism. Throughout the 1950s, Party officials and ideologues repeatedly used the phrases "interests of the working class" and "dictatorship of the proletariat" to justify the persecutions and purges against suspected class enemies. However, with the official demise of Stalinism, some of the red-collar intellectuals and functionaries began to argue that the Party needed to respect the interests of other social groups and classes, as well. In his memoirs, Zdeněk Mlynář who, in the mid-1960s, was one of the leading functionaries of the working group advising the Party leadership on problems of law and legality, remembers that, during the time, he openly declared the end of class struggle in his

[40] Klíma, "Průchodní," 5.
[41] Klíma, "Průchodní," 5.

reports and training courses for the cadres. [42] He argued that as there was "no one left to repress as a class and the dictatorship of the proletariat transformed into an all people's state, the main problem becomes how to give proper expression to the needs and interests of the whole of society."[43] Similar to Richta, Mlynář's solution to the problem was to "allow specialists to make their opinions felt" as he perceived that education and expertise were the prerequisites for scientifically determining the interests of society as a whole.[44]

The red-collar frustrations with the position of the educated cadres found its most comprehensive and scientific expression in the so-called "stratification research" conducted by Pavel Machonin and his research team at Charles University's Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Like Richta, Pavel Machonin (b. 1927) joined the Party ranks shortly after the war and enthusiastically took part in the persecutions and purges after 1948.[45] Following his graduation, he first worked as a political instructor in the army between 1950 and 1958, then became a member of the Marxism-Leninism Institute at Charles University (Prague), eventually taking over as its director.[46] In 1967, he launched an ambitious sociological research project to understand the nature of stratification in socialist society. The resultant work, titled *Československá společnost* (*Czechoslovak Society*), was by far the most detailed and empirically rich study on the social structure of society on the eve of the Prague Spring.[47]

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[42] Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 61.
[43] Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*,61.
[44] Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 61
[45] As mentioned in the second chapter, as a twenty-one-year-old undergraduate student, Machonin became the director of the Organization Department of the Higher Education Committee, responsible for recruiting drive to the party as well as the expulsion of students whom the party regarded as "reactionary" elements at the universities. (See page 48.)
[46] For Machonin's revolutionary student activism in the late 1940s, see Connelly, *Captive University*, 249. For broader biographical information, see Michael Voříšek, "Machonin Pavel" in *Sociologická Encyklopedie* ed. Zdeněk R. Nešpor, last modified December 8, 2018, https://encyklopedie.soc.cas.cz/w/Machonin_Pavel
[47] Pavel Machonin et.al, *Československá společnost: sociologická analýza sociální stratifikace* (Bratislava: Epocha, 1969).

As in Richta's *Civilization at the Crossroads*, Machonin's stratification research first tackled what went wrong in the revolution. Early on, the study stated matter of factly that, during the era of the personality cult, there was a "vulgarization of Marxist principles in theory and errors in practice," leading to the bureaucratization of society "behind the back of the revolution."[48] The study suggested one of the chief reasons why such a development took place was the Stalinist view that the capitalistic classes (e.g., wealthy peasants, high and petit bourgeoisie) would continue to dominate the social structure long after the revolution. This view led to an obsession with detecting "class struggle wherever there was any clash of opinions or tactical-political conflict in society," thus serving as a justification for terror and unjust persecutions, eventually leading to a moral crisis and the disappearance of revolutionary energy in the country.[49] In addition, Machonin and his team argued, the Stalinist perception of class warfare led to the glorification of unskilled labor and the underappreciation of mental work, thus leading to a shortage of dedicated qualified personnel in the country.[50] To overcome the moral and economic shortcomings that Party rule was facing in the country, they proposed a new, decidedly post-Stalinist way of thinking about social stratification under socialism.

Similar to Richa's earlier study, Machonin's stratification research criticized the radical leveling (*nivelizace*) policy of the Stalinist era and argued for the need for advantageous wage differentiation for educated personnel. Due to the low ceiling salary policy, there was very little space and motivation for highly educated people to advance, train, and develop themselves for more complicated tasks. The surveys revealed that those people employed in the manufacturing and services sectors were earning almost identical wages, even though the latter typically

[48] Machonin et.al, *Československá společnost*, 35. Also cited in Hruby, *Fools and Heroes*, 136-137.
[49] Vořišek, *Reform Generation*, 211; Machonin et.al, *Československá společnost*, 35.
[50] Machonin et.al., *Československá společnost*, 59.

required a better education and involved more complex work. Workers in the highest wage-category were often significantly better paid than engineers and technical personnel.[51] There were cases where individuals with university education kept their degrees a secret in order to find employment in those jobs with lower qualifications but better pay. Consequently, Machonin et al. argued that income levelization was eroding the potential of the socialist intelligentsia and was harmful to morale among the country's educated people. Thus, Machonin's team urged the Party to implement income differentiation and higher ceilings in the salary structure (in favor of the educated workforce) to increase productivity and to achieve a social structure which was aligned with the needs of advanced industrialization.[52]

As was the common practice of sociology at the time, both Richta's *Civilization at the Crossroads* and Machonin's *Czechoslovak Society* used highly positivist language, presenting their finding and arguments as if from a disinterested social science perspective. They did not engage in any self-reflexive discussion about their personal relationship to the socialist revolution, nor did they seem to pay attention to the potential conflict of interest in their research and policy suggestions. However, one can argue that their social analysis and policy suggestions closely reflected the red-collar political sensitivities and class interests of the mid-to-late 1960s. As active participants in the Stalinist revolution of the late 1940s, they aimed to identify and find solutions for social problems, which they regarded as originating from the now-condemned Stalinist era. To remedy the mistakes of the past, they suggested a new type of revolution with a distinctive ethos, which would replace the existing bureaucratic rule with "scientific management." At the same time, while never stated openly, the fact was that if implemented, the

[51] Machonin et.al, *Československá společnost*, 35; Voříšek, *Reform Generation*, 218.
[52] Voříšek, *Reform Generation*, 224.

suggested changes for achieving "scientific management" (i.e., income differentiation and higher salary ceilings) would end the privileged status of manual workers and benefit the red-collar "anti-levelers," such as Machonin and Richta, both in terms of income and status.[53] As we will see, when in January 1968 the reformists came to power, the Party officially adopted many of the viewpoints suggested by Richta and Machonin and declared its commitment to increasing the relative income, social status, and career opportunities of university-educated people in the workforce. However, such a technocratic vision did not go unnoticed and created friction between the reform government and workers in the Party ranks.

The Prague Spring and its Action Programme

The exact reason for the government crisis, which eventually led to the overthrow of First Secretary Novotný and the ascendence of reformist rule, is difficult to pinpoint. Except for a minor demonstration by Prague university students protesting poor dormitory conditions in October 1967, the country was socially stable, seemingly unaffected by the active protest movements of the decade. The economic recession of 1962-1965 was over, and living standards were significantly better than the decade earlier.[54] As Vladimír Kusin stressed, on the eve of the Prague Spring, "Czechoslovakia was not on the verge of collapse, economically or otherwise."[55] In terms of the immediate political perspective, Kusin argued, what initially led to the demise of Novotný was not the collective feeling of impending doom nor a desire for a profound political change, but a power struggle among the feuding forces in the top Party circles.[56]

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[53] Ernest Gellner, "Pluralist Anti Levelers of Prague," *Government and Oppositon 7* no.1 (Winter 1972): 20-37.
[54] For the economic bottlenecks that the country faced in the early 1960s, see Miloslav Bernasek, "The Czechoslovak Economic Recession, 1962-65," *Soviet Studies* 20, no.4 (April, 1969): 444-461.
[55] Kusin, *Political Grouping,* 2; also quoted in Lyons, *Mass and Elite Attitudes*, 111.
[56] Kusin, *Political Grouping*, 2; Janáček and Moravec, "Leden 1968 a spor o jeho smysl," especially 29-31; Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution,* 186-191.

The bulk of the anti-Novotný clique in the top Party circles was comprised of the old Party hard-liners, such as Jiří Hendrych, Jaromír Dolanský, and Drahomír Kolder, and they seemingly acted out of their personal dislike for the First Secretary and his *modus operandi*, instead of their convictions about reforming the system.[57] It took Dubček and reformists in the top Party circles careful political maneuvering and mass social mobilization to transform the seemingly mundane change of leadership, which initially had the approval of Moscow, into a radical attempt for redefining the main tenets of socialism. Although reformists never constituted a majority in the Central Committee, the end of censorship and subsequent public pressure for political change forced the Committee members to approve the reformist decisions and declarations made by a liberal faction of the "incumbent political elite."[58]

The democratization of the public space began in earnest with the sudden collapse of the censorship mechanism in the media in March 1968. With the new leadership, the Central Committee simply ceased to provide guidelines for editorial policy and, consequently, "failed to establish at the outset the limits" of discussions in the media.[59] After a brief period of confusion and hesitation, the publishers, editors, and journalists in the media realized that the institutional censorship they had been subjected to had come to an unofficial end. Soon, as Dubček and the other reformists in top circles began to propagate the need for political change and reform in the

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[57] For the ideological orientation of the Central Committee members, see Williams, *The Prague Spring*, 47-48; Jan Pauer, "Sovětská vojenská intervence a restaurace byrokraticko-centralistického systému v Československu 1968-1971," in *Proměny Pražského jara 1968-1969. Sborník studií a dokumentů o nekapitulantských postojích v československé společnosti*, ed. Jindřich Pecka and Vilém Prečan (Brno: Doplněk, 1993), 174. With regard to the ousting of Novotný by the Central Committe, Zdeněk Mlynář wrote in his memoirs that "There were several issues involved, but the main points of contention were the party's working methods and chiefly those of Novotný himself." Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 91.

[58] Williams, *The Prague Spring*, 10.

[59] Williams, *The Prague Spring*, 67-69; For the end of censorship and its importance, see Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 190-191, 204-208; Jiří Hoppe, "Pokusy o obnovu české občanské společnosti v roce 1968. Sociální demokracie, Klub angažovaných nestraníků a K 231 - Sdružení bývalých politických vězňů," PhD. dissertation, (Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 2008), 46-47.

existing system, radical discussions began about previously-taboo subjects in the media, such as the democratic heritage of Masaryk, the limits of Prague-centralism, and the possibility of multi-Party socialism.[60]

Meanwhile, the new Party leadership openly accepted the co-existence of different interest groups under socialism and recognized the independence of the various social, cultural, or political movements, interest groups, and organizations outside of the Party. Dubček himself spoke positively about the "open confrontation of interests and standpoints" under socialism and proposed that that Party needed to provide "institutional guarantees for the expression of interests, of their evaluation and solution."[61] The Party granted autonomy to various social organizations such as the workers' trade union (ROH), the youth movement (ČSM), and the peasants' agricultural union, and perhaps more controversially, allowed the formation of new, distinctly non-communist political associations, such as the Club of the Politically Persecuted (*Klub politických väzňov*, K-231) and the Club for Committed Non-Party Members (*Klub angažovaných nestraníků*, KAN).[62] For the first time since the revolution, the political public sphere suddenly became open to previously sidelined socio-political groups such as rebellious university students, liberal democrats, or conservative Catholics.

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[60] For a comprehensive summary and analysis of the discussions during the Prague Spring, see Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 489. See also Golan, *Reform Rule in Czechoslovakia*, 186-199 and 211-217.

[61] "Z vystoupení soudruha A.Dubčeka v Bratislavě," *Rudé právo*, April 21, 1968, 2. Also quoted in Golan, *Reform Rule in Czechoslovakia*, 57-58.

[62] The Club of Politically Persecuted (K-231) aimed at representing and securing the rehabilitation of those victims who were tried and sentenced under the 1948 law for defense of the Republic (no. 231). The Club for Committed Non-Party Members was formed to provide a platform for non-party members (in other words, non-communists) to participate in political life. Both groups were disbanded after the Warsaw Pact intervention. Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 202, For a general discussion about both groups and their activities during the Prague Spring, see Hoppe, "Pokusy o obnovu."

Nevertheless, despite the proliferation of organized groups with differing political leanings, the actual power behind the democratization wave lay in the hands of the reform communists, and among those reformists, the red-collars constituted the most active and influential group. Shortly after coming to power, Dubček promoted many of the reform-minded red-collar cadres, such as Zdeněk Mlynář, Ota Šik and Čestmír Císař to key positions in the critical institutions responsible for planning and executing the intended democratization program. Likewise, in the cultural sphere, red-collar writers like Ludvík Vaculík (b. 1926), Jan Procházka (b. 1929), Milan Kundera (b. 1929) and Dušan Hamšík (b. 1930) came to play important roles at the cultural institutions (such as the Writer's Union) and editorial boards of the leading publications, playing a vital role in communicating the reformist agenda in the media.

This is surely not to suggest that the red-collars constituted a uniform political bloc. Although they agreed on the urgent need for the democratization of the system, there were significant disagreements about the methods and pace of the intended changes. On the one side, there were radical intellectuals who formed around the journals and magazines such as *Literárne listy* and *Kultúrny život* and pushed for both the creation of independent political parties and an overall purge of the old-Stalinist cadres in the central and local Party organs. On the other side stood the so-called centrists, who—while agreeing on the rightfulness of the radicals' demands on principle—opted for a slower, more moderate approach in order to avoid Soviet intervention.[63] Members of the moderate wing dominated the influential Party ranks during the Dubček era and participated in drawing reform plans.

[63] For the differentiation within the reformist camp, See Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 496-498.

Arguably one of the best illustrations of how the moderate wing of the red-collars inserted their political emotions and social aspirations into the reformism of 1968 was the "Action Program," which was the only official plan adopted by the Central Committee during the Dubček era. Shortly after Novotný's ousting, the Party commissioned an expert team comprised of "200 Party functionaries, lawyers, social scientists, and intellectuals" to outline the overall goals and plans for the forthcoming changes.[64] All eight leading members of the working groups responsible for different subjects belonged to the red-collar generation (the oldest was born in 1920 and the youngest in 1931), and the program they wrote, despite its ambiguities and compromises, was a clear demonstration to the internal public as well as to the socialist world that a major revision of the country's model of socialism was in order.[65]

The Action Program started with an analysis of the country's history of socialism since the revolution. While praising the historic success of eliminating capitalistic exploitation, it unequivocally condemned the "grave shortcomings, unsolved problems, and deformations of socialist principles which are known as the personality cult."[66] To emphasize the difference of the current leadership from the earlier era, the document declared that "the leading bodies and institutes of the Party and the State of that time are fully responsible" for the implementation of the various grave mistakes such as "sectarianism, suppression of democratic rights and freedom of the people, violation of laws."[67] In addition to economic bottlenecks and social injustices, the

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[64] Williams, *The Prague Spring*, 15.
[65] The main members of the working groups responsible for the writing of the Action Program were: Jan Fojtík (b.1928), Karel Kaplan (b.1928), Radovan Richta (b.1924), Zdeněk Mlynář (b.1930), Bohumil Šimon (b.1920), Antonín Červinka (b.1926); Stanislav Provazník (b.1933), Pavel Auersperg (b.1926). All members of the team became party members and obtained university education during the immediate postwar years. Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 87-88.
[66] For the English translation of the Action Program, see R.A. Remington (ed.), "The Action Program of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia," in *Winter in Prague: Documents on Czechoslovak Communism in Crisis* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1969), 90.
[67] Remington (ed.), "The Action Program," 90.

program claimed that one of the most enduring harmful legacies of the "deformations of socialist principles" was the negative emotional toll that it had on the people:

> Embitterness grew among the people and a feeling that despite all successes which had been achieved and despite all efforts exerted, the socialist society was making headway with great difficulty, with fateful delay and with moral political defects in human relations. Quite naturally, apprehensions arose about socialism, about its human mission, about its human features. Some people became demoralized, others lost perspective.[68]

In short, the program claimed with an alarming tone, people were losing their faith in the revolution. To reverse the situation and bring a "revival of socialist efforts" in the country, the program proposed various loosely-defined policy plans for both the short and medium term to make a course correction.[69] As both Richta and Machonin took an active role in the preparation of the Action Program, their influence is evident in the analysis and policy plans provided in the text.[70] In addition to the modernization of the management of the economy and the overall democratization of the social sphere, the program emphasized, with italics, that (i)"*antagonistic classes no longer exist and the main feature of internal development is becoming the process of bringing all socialist groupings in the society closer together*;" (ii) "*it will be necessary to prepare the country for joining in the scientific-technical revolution in the world... which will place high demands upon the knowledge and qualifications of people, on the application of science.*" [71] Thus echoing the research conclusions of Machonin and Richta, the text suggested that the theory of class warfare was no longer valid for society and proposed a type of

[68] Remington (ed.), "The Action Program," 90.
[69] Remington (ed.), "The Action Program," 90.
[70] For the participation of Richta and Machonin in the Action Program, see Emil Voráček, "Mozky za kulisami," *Mladá fronta DNES*, August 14, 2018, http://www.hiu.cas.cz/cs/download/20180814_mfd_ii.dil-mozky-za-kulisami.pdf
[71] Remington (ed.), "The Action Program," 94. Italics are in the original.

technocratic governance in which the experts, not Party officials, would be responsible for implementing the rules of scientific management in the country.

In line with its overall technocratic vision, the program gave significant and preferential attention to the intelligentsia and their social interests. Although a main goal of the plan was to allow different social groups (e.g., workers, youth, Slovaks) to democratically represent and advocate for their differing interests in the political arena, the program did not specify, with the exception of Slovaks and the intelligentsia, what these interests were exactly and how the Party would address them in the future.[72] While it promised autonomous trade unions for the workers and better representation for youth in the new system, it did not include any concrete plans for how these groups would benefit from the change. At the same time, however, the report made specific mention of the grievances of the "socialist intelligentsia" and put forward concrete proposals to address them in the future. As the antagonistic class relationships no longer existed, the program claimed, the country's intelligentsia had become an "intelligentsia of the people, a socialist intelligentsia," and the main aim of internal development was to deepen the "intensive cooperation" between them and the working class.[73] It criticized the previous era for failing to forge such cooperation and "for underestimation of the role of the intelligentsia in this society," declaring that the new leadership would "strive for just remuneration of complex and creative mental labor."[74] Then, a few paragraphs later, perhaps with surprising clarity, the program detailed how "the mental labor" would be rewarded in the new era:

> ... (income) leveling has spread to an unheard of extent and become one of the impediments to an intensive development of the economy and raising the living standard. The harmfulness of equalitarianism lies in the fact that it

[72] The program promised constitutional changes and a federal arrangement which would allow Slovaks to have increased autonomy from Prague. Remington (ed.), "The Action Program," 106-109.
[73] Remington (ed.), "The Action Program," 95.
[74] Remington (ed.), "The Action Program," 95.

> gives careless, idle, and irresponsible people an advantage over dedicated and diligent workers, the unqualified over the qualified, the technically backward over the talented and initiative-oriented...
>
> One of the key conditions of the present and future scientific, technical and social development is to bring about a substantial increase in the qualifications of managers and experts at all levels of economic and social life. *If the leading posts are not to be filled by capable, educated socialist expert cadres, socialism will be unable to hold its own in competition with capitalism*. This fact will call for a basic change in the existing cadre policy, in which education, qualifications and ability have been underrated for years.[75]

Thus the Action Program unequivocally declared a commitment to address two main red-collar grievances in the late 1960s: (i) increasing the social status and income of the educated class, (ii) replacing the unqualified cadres at the higher echelons of managerial/administrative positions with the educated cadres. Although not stated explicitly, the propositions in the program were not only an apparent snub at the members of the old ruling elite, many of whom came to a position of power thanks to their ideological loyalty and in spite of their lack of formal education, but also indirectly indicated that the relatively high-income of the blue-collar workers over the educated cadres would come to an end. While the program presented the plans to improve the pay and conditions for the educated cadres as a scientific necessity to enhance the effectiveness and productivity of workplaces, it was not clear to what extent the Party functionaries without higher education or the unqualified blue-collar workers, who would be in a disadvantageous position if the suggested reforms were implemented, accepted such a rationale.

[75] Remington (ed.), "The Action Program," 97-98. Italics are mine.

"Should we throw you out of here, egghead?"

Available evidence suggests that a large portion of the high-level Party functionaries and, to a lesser extent, blue-collar workers, especially the ones in the Party ranks, were suspicious, if not outright critical, of the suggested changes in the country.[76] An open confrontation between the reformist leadership and the local Party bosses at a meeting of the "leading regional and district secretaries" on May 12 and 13 clearly revealed the disdain of the latter group for the ongoing political changes. In his opening speech, presumably anticipating the backlash to the revisionism in the ongoing discussions and plans, Alexander Dubček made a cautious, if not conservative, speech, warning the audience about the recent emergence of the "rightist opposition... with anti-communist and anti-socialist orientation" and declared the leadership's commitment to combat the development of the "counter-revolutionary platforms" in the country.[77] Following his speech, the district functionaries expressed their relief at his acknowledgment of the rightist deviation.

Many higher-level local Party officials complained that the Central Committee was not providing a clear policy line, and claimed the Action Program was "a definite disappointment" for its failure to address the problems of the working class and, consequently, its inability to gain attention from the workers.[78] One official from Pilsen reported that the program was largely unknown at the Škoda car factory and elsewhere in the West Bohemian region. Another official from Pardubice argued that members have a hard time understanding the program and regretted that the Party leadership did not consult the regional committees in the preparation of the

[76] For a useful discussion about the suspicions of the party functionaries and workers about the suggested reforms, see Skilling, *The Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 503-505 and 579-581. See also Williams, *The Prague Spring*, 79-80.
[77] Quoted in Williams, *The Prague Spring*, 80.
[78] Quoted in Williams, *The Prague Spring*, 80.

document. There was an overall consensus among local Party bosses that the Party leadership was excluding them from the decision-making process and, consequently, suggested that the plans did not arouse much interest and enthusiasm among the rank-and-file members and working-class individuals.

To support their argument against reform politics, the skeptical functionaries projected a contrast and opposition between the reformist intelligentsia in Prague and the blue-collar workers, blaming the former group for tolerating the right-wing deviationists and accepting them into their ranks. The Central Committee member, Vasil Bílak, who had been emerging as the spokesperson for the hard-liners in the Party leadership, received thunderous applause from the regional leaders when he appealed for working-class mobilization against the rightist and anti-socialist platforms. In contrast, reformist František Kriegel's optimist depiction of the Party's growing popularity ("What forces are there that could really oust us?") led to shouts of disagreement, and his was the only speech that did not receive any applause from the audience.[79]

Although not stated openly in the meetings, one can reasonably speculate that an important part of the reason why the high-level local functionaries were critical of the Action Program and reform socialist experiment, in general, was due to the fact that the suggested reforms would directly endanger their positions in the power hierarchy. As we have seen, while emphasizing the importance of higher education and educated cadres for improving the scientific management of the country, the reformist intelligentsia had suggested that academic qualifications should matter more than supposed ideological loyalty in the hiring process and Party assignments. Consequently, as Zdeněk Mlynář observed in his memoirs, "employees in the

[79] Quoted in Williams, *The Prague Spring*, 80.

political apparatus from the top to bottom were understandably insecure and confused about how to handle themselves in their work."[80] Therefore, it is not a surprise that many of them may have been fearful about the direction that the country's socialist system was seemingly heading.[81]

The red-collars also had a hard time convincing working-class Party members that the suggested reforms would benefit them, as well. Already before the Dubček era, some of the functionaries reported resentment among the workers regarding the demands of the intelligentsia. At the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1966, one functionary stated that they were facing complaints from workers that the Party "had stopped doing worker politics" and that "in place of the leading role of the Party, a leading role was being introduced for technical-economic staff."[82] Another functionary, discussing the conflicting interests of workers and the cultural intelligentsia (or, in his words, "the artists"), complained that the Party was coming under a crossfire from both groups:

> ... workers in some (Party) organizations consider that remuneration for artistic performances is exaggerated, pointing to the excessive living standard of top artists: the artists themselves, conversely, denounce the leveling of rewards, pointing to the fact that to date the conditions for the adequate evaluation of extraordinary artistic performance are lacking.[83]

Two public opinion surveys conducted in April and May 1968 indicate that overall working-class suspicions of the demands by the intelligentsia continued at least into the first months of the reform experiment. The surveys showed that while the majority of workers agreed

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[80] Mlynář, *Night-Frost in Prague*, 98.
[81] As Skilling wrote, "the body of bureaucrats, recruited and trained under Novotný...had a strong vested interest in the status quo, to which they owed their power, prestige, and relative affluence, and feared meaningful changes, especially in the economic sphere, which might make their positions useless and unnecessary. Many, or perhaps most, were workers in origin, but, long removed from factory work, they possessed no industrial skills and, if dismissed, faced a difficult employment problem." Skilling, *The Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 504.
[82] Quoted in Voříšek, *Reform Generation*, 227.
[83] Quoted in Voříšek, *Reform Generation*, 227.

on the need for reforming the system, a significant portion of them regarded the suggested changes as being beneficial only to the intelligentsia. According to one survey, 76 percent of the total population and 77 percent of the workers in the Czech Lands either "strongly approved" or "rather approved" of the "contemporary policies" of the Party.[84] At the same time, however, according to another survey, only 53 percent of the respondents regarded the "present process of democratization" to be beneficial to all social classes. 21 percent stated that democratization would "not be very beneficial to the common people (workers, peasants), but is beneficial to the intelligentsia (technical, educational, and scientific personnel);" 19 percent stated that it would be "ineffective in changing anything;" and four percent regarded the movement as "beneficial to no one and rather hurts everyone."[85] Only 3 percent of the respondents thought that democratization would be "rather beneficial to the common people and is not beneficial to the intelligentsia."[86] While far from being conclusive, these percentages indicate that a statistically significant number of people, at least more than the people who disapproved of the ongoing changes, perceived the movement to be beneficial only to the intelligentsia.[87]

The red-collar literati themselves reported about and discussed the suspicions and occasional hostility of the workers towards the reformist intelligentsia. One of the most revealing articles on the working-class reaction to reform socialism was Ludvík Vaculík's quasi-ethnographic field notes from a meeting with workers at Škoda locomotive factory in Pilsen in

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[84] Piekalkiewicz, *Public Opinion Polling*, 21.
[85] Piekalkiewicz, *Public Opinion Polling*, 15 and 95.
[86] Piekalkiewicz, *Public Opinion Polling*, 95.
[87] A short reply from a waiter working in a coffeehouse in Malostranské náměstí in Prague to a question about the ongoing political development demonstrated the callous support of the workers for reform socialism:
"I would define the democratic way of social living, which is currently developing with high hopes, as progressive; I hope it will bring better material conditions for everybody. I am of the opinion that the progressive era that we are now experiencing is largely shaped by the intelligentsia and some Slovak communists." "Anketa KN, Josef Hrnčiřík," *Kulturní Noviny*, March, 1968, 9.

April 1968. Commenting on the overall impression that he received from the workers, Vaculík regretted the "strange fact that the average uninformed worker considers the bad condition of our state to be the work of intellectuals, [but] as intellectuals know, this bad condition was due to the professional revolutionaries acting on behalf of the workers."[88] He then reported the workers' arguments against how the reform movement was taking shape in the country. "It all gives me an impression of a conspiracy against the working-class," said one older worker commenting on the recent public meeting in favor of the reforms. "When in radio, if one worker is participating in the discussion, there would be immediately six others [arguing] against him."[89] Another worker added, "They want to create democracy with anti-democratic methods;" "we can also organize manifestations," said one woman; and an older worker shouted: "we can go on a general strike." Another worker, who was not a Party member, complained that unlike students, the workers were not capable of resistance because they were not organized, and the trade union organization (ROH) "was just a subset of KSČ (*béčko KSČ*.)"[90] At least to some workers, the extra-Party opposition began to appear as a plausible option to protect working-class interests in the new era.

Vaculík observed that the perceived "leading role of the intellectuals" in the new era was the root cause of the working-class discontent, as many workers perceived the ongoing democratization as favoring only the intellectuals at the expense of working-class interests. Some workers blamed the earlier Party leadership for their current disadvantageous position, as well: "Ever since Novotný came to power, they have just been taking and taking from us, our norms, our salaries, but we endured it because it was supposed to be helping socialism. And now? Intellectuals are full of shit! (*Intelektuálové jsou mrvové!*)," one worker said, blaming both

[88] Ludvík Vaculík, "A co dělníci," *Literarni listy* 6 (April 4, 1968), 5.
[89] Vaculík,"A co dělníci," 5.
[90] Vaculík,"A co dělníci," 5.

old and new Party leadership for allowing intellectuals to benefit from their heavy manual work.[91] "Whoever works in the office, can be happy [now]. But those who do the actual work are getting the minimum."[92]

A month after Vaculík`s encounter with the workers in Plzeň, the lawyer and political scientist Josef Pokštefl witnessed similar anger among the working-class Party members toward the intelligentsia during city council elections in Prague. "I find it almost unbelievable what we witnessed a while ago," he wrote: "It was enough for an academic degree or title of the cultural worker to appear before the name of the candidate for the city committee, and we could be sure that this candidate would receive several dozen fewer votes than the other candidates."[93] He complained that some workers even tried to physically assault "one of the candidates of Prague's communist intelligentsia," shouting "we should throw you out of here, egghead" (*abychom tě inteligente, odsud nevynesli!*) for disagreeing with one of their delegates.[94]

Aside from the disdain among the working class for the intelligentsia, Pokštefl's observation from the council elections is telling in terms of demonstrating the reformist concern for their precarious position in the power struggle for the control of the Party. By May 1968, the reformist intelligentsia realized that there was growing opposition to their plans, and the conservative wing was actively trying to block their appointments to influential positions in the Party. In the election for the Czech National Council by the assembly in early July, for example, some of the well-known progressives, including the famous reformist writers Jiří Hanzelka and Pavel Kohout, were defeated, and Ota Šik, the chief architect of the suggested reforms in the

[91] Vaculík,"A co dělníci," 5.
[92] Vaculík,"A co dělníci," 5.
[93] Josef Pokštefl, "Neproslovený diskusní příspěvek na městské konferenci KSČ," *Literární listy,* May 2, 1968, 3.
[94] Pokštefl, "Neproslovený diskusní," 3; translation of the phrase is from Voříšek, *Reform Generation*, 228.

economic sphere, only narrowly won a seat.[95] Meanwhile, Moscow was increasing its pressure on the Czechoslovak leadership to put an end to the ongoing experiment and re-establish control in the country.

These domestic and foreign threats made the active support of the workers, whom the communist movement sought to represent, crucial for the movement. Both Pokštefl and Vaculík suggested a didactic approach to inspire the workers and garner their support for democratic socialism. Accordingly, even though the majority of the workers felt threatened by the ongoing talks about reform, it was evident that their concerns and fears were not based on reality but on the illusion that they were the ruling class. Pokštefl urged reformists to establish a direct dialogue with the workers and win them over to the cause by "patiently explaining" to them the principles of democratic socialism.[96] Vaculík, in more colorful terms, argued that it would take a rightful "social industrialist," to inspire the workers and garner their support for democratic socialism.[97] A few months after his field trip to Pilsen, as the threat of "counter-reformation" significantly grew, Vaculík undertook one of the most significant and consequential initiatives for attracting broader public support for the country's reform socialist experiment.

"Seven Thousand Tanks for Two-Thousand Words"

Already three months after Dubček came to power, the leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries harshly criticized the developments in Czechoslovakia, branding the ongoing process as a "counterrevolution" at a conference in Dresden in late March 1968.[98] Urged by the hard-

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[95] Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 274.
[96] Pokštefl,"Neproslovený diskusní," 3.
[97] Vaculík,"A co dělníci," 5.
[98] Stenographic Account of the Dresden Meeting, March 23, 1968 (Excerpts) in *The Prague Spring 1968 : A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, ed. Jaromír Navrátil (New York: Central European University Press, 1998), 57-59.

liner members of the Czechoslovak Central Committee, the leaders of international communism gradually increased pressure on the reformist leadership, asking them to re-establish "control" (or, in other words, censorship) of the media and halt the discussions about two-party or multi-party elections. By early June, while the hard-liners in the Central Committee as well as in various media outlets were in open rebellion against the suggested changes and plans, Warsaw Pact troops entered the country to execute "military maneuvers" in the Moravian countryside.[99] By the early summer of 1968, for many Czech and Slovaks, the possibility of Soviet intervention, similar to the one in Hungary twelve years earlier, became a real possibility.

Moreover, as the Warsaw Pact increased pressure, the Czechoslovak leadership began to show signs of wavering on the implementation of the reformist program. In a trade union meeting in mid-June, Prime Minister Oldřich Černík called for "realism" in expectations, emphasizing that the changes would take place "not at months but years ahead."[100] Josef Smrkovský, head of the National Assembly, went for a lengthy trip to Moscow, where, much to the dismay of the reformist intelligentsia, he talked about the dangers of "anti-socialist tendencies" in the country.[101] Meanwhile, Dubček appeared at the conference of the People's Militia, which was considered the bastion of the Party hard-liners, praising the unit's dedication to the Party cause.[102]

Not surprisingly, these developments concerned the reformist intelligentsia about the future of the movement in the country. On June 6th, 1968, some of the scientists in the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, such as chemist Otto Wichterle, immunologist Miroslav

[99] Williams, *The Prague Spring*, 117; Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 272-274.
[100] Quoted in Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 274.
[101] Quoted in Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 274.
[102] Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 274.

Holub, and physiologist Otakar Poupa, asked Ludvík Vaculík to draw up a manifesto to galvanize public pressure for carrying out the reforms.[103] Vaculík accepted, and the resultant document titled "Two-Thousand Words" was published simultaneously on June 27th in *Literární listy*, *Práce*, *Zemědělské Noviny* and *Mladá Fronta* with a total circulation of 1.3 million copies.[104] Initially signed by over sixty individuals, including prominent public figures such as Olympic gold medalists Emil Zátopek, Věra Čáslavská, actor Jan Werich, and poet Jaroslav Seifert, the manifesto was a clear public display of defiance against the implicit threats from Moscow.

Due to its confrontational content and the immense public interest and support it gathered, it proved to be one of the major milestones leading up to the Warsaw Pact intervention, as it strengthened the suspicion in Moscow that the Dubček government had lost control of the situation. In 1970, Karel Douděra, an anti-reformist journalist, exaggerated only slightly the impact of the manifesto when he wrote: "There used to be a joke about how it was a great deal to get seven thousand tanks for two thousand words. The joke is a joke, but the truth is, that the pogromistic appeal (*pogromistická výzva*) called Two Thousand Words… played an important role in aggravating the situation two years ago."[105]

Addressed to "workers, farmers, officials, scientists, artists, and everybody," "Two-Thousand Words" was essentially a plea to the citizens to defend the ongoing experiment against its internal and external enemies. While it appealed to all social groups and classes, the text was written from the perspective of the red-collar, who had participated in the revolution and

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[103] Jakub Končelík, "Dva tisíce slov: Zrod a důsledky nečekaně vlivného provolání," *Soudobé dějiny XV* no.3-4, (2008): 491.
[104] Končelík, "Dva tisíce slov," 494.
[105] Karel Douděra, "Platforma kontrarevoluce," *Rudé právo*, June 26, 1970, 3. Also quoted in Končelík, "Dva tisíce slovo," 485.

witnessed its demise. The manifesto started with an analysis of why the revolution failed to deliver its promises, and similar to the Action Program and the sociological texts discussed earlier in the chapter, regretted that the revolutionary enthusiasm of the postwar era had disappeared in pre-1968 society. "Most people accordingly lost interest in public affairs, worrying only about themselves and about money... Personal relations were ruined, there was no more joy in work, and the nation, in short, entered a period that endangered its spiritual well-being and its character."[106] Vaculík argued that the chief aim of the ongoing "regenerative process of democratization" was redressing past wrongdoings and reviving ideas and topics which had long been repressed by the power-holders.

For Vaculík, the root cause of the presently deteriorating state of socialism was not the defects in state ideology (that is Marxism-Leninism) but the personal defects of people, whom the Party had entrusted with ruling the country. Accordingly, "the wrong people" obtained power after the revolution, the people who not only lacked adequate qualifications but also, and more importantly, were unwilling to be replaced when the cadres with proper qualifications and knowledge were ready to be hired:

> The first threat to our national life was from the war. Then came other evil days and events that endangered the nation's spiritual well-being and character. Most of the nation welcomed the socialist program with high hopes. But it fell into the hands of the wrong people. *It would not have mattered so much that they lacked adequate experience in affairs of state, factual knowledge, or philosophical education, if only they had enough common prudence and decency to listen to the opinion of others and agree to being gradually replaced by more able people.*[107]

[106] "The 'Two Thousand Words' Manifesto, June 27, 1968" in *The Prague Spring 1968 : A National Security Archive Documents Reader,* ed. Jaromír Navrátil (New York: Central European University Press, 1998), 174. Italics are mine.
[107] "The 'Two Thousand Words'," 171-172.

He claimed that the ultimate success of the efforts for forming "socialism with a human face" lay in the replacement of the unqualified, morally tainted cadres with new people. He warned that there were still many such people among the higher ranks, particularly among those who were in powerful positions in local communities, who opposed the changes and produced a struggle "over the content and formulation of the laws and over the scope of practical measures."[108] To boost the power of reformists, the manifesto made a plea to previously "sidelined" citizens to participate in the reform movement and "compel" the conservative elites, who "abused their power, damaged public property, and acted dishonorably or brutally," to resign from their positions through civic actions. "Ways must be found to compel them to resign," Vaculík urged: "To mention a few: public criticism, resolutions, demonstrations, demonstrative work brigades, collections to buy presents for them on their retirement, strikes, and picketing at their front doors."[109] And once "the old-forces" left the scene, "the new people," who had already been emerging in power positions, would have a freer space to correct the mistakes of the past.

Unlike the "Action Program," "Two Thousand Words" was decidedly free of technocratic undertones. The manifesto did not mention the low salaries or status of the qualified people and devoted most of its attention to the workers and their grievances. And, more crucially, it depicted the workers, not the intelligentsia, as the agent of change and overall democratization. "Let us not overestimate the effects of the writers' and students' criticisms," the text claimed, "the everyday quality of our future democracy depends on what happens in the factories, and only on what happens to the factories."[110] In the first twenty years of the

[108] "The 'Two Thousand Words,'" 174.
[109] "The 'Two Thousand Words,'" 174.
[110] "The 'Two Thousand Words,'" 172.

revolution, while the elites dominated all aspects of economic life, the workers were cut out of all political and managerial decision-making processes. And, "the chief sin and deception" of the ruling elites was to explain their "own whims" as the "will of the working-class" while the workers had no power or interest in their actions.[111] "While many workers imagined they were the rulers, it was a specially trained stratum of Party and state officials who actually ruled in their name."[112] Against the unchecked power of the rulers, Vaculík called for real worker representation (to be elected by the actual workers) in the management of the factories and other decision-making processes concerning the economy. In this way, the manifesto explained, the workers would have a real say in the management of the country.

The most controversial part of the manifesto was its conclusion. After listing grievances of the past and suggestions for the future, it called for national unity against the danger of foreign intervention. More crucially, it left open the possibility of resisting the intervention "with weapons, if need be."[113] The poetic and eerily prophetic ending paragraph revealed how the red-collar sense of regret with the past fueled the reformist aspirations for the future:

> This Spring a great opportunity was given to us once again, as it was after the end of the war. Again we have the chance to take into our own hands our common cause, which for working purposes we call socialism, and give it a form more appropriate to our once-good reputation and to the fairly good opinion we used to have of ourselves. The Spring is over and will never return. By winter, we will know all.[114]

The simultaneous publication of the manifesto and high profile of its signatories came as an organized show of force against hard-liners at home and abroad. To prevent a harsh backlash

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[111] "The 'Two Thousand Words,' " 174.
[112] "The 'Two Thousand Words,' " 172.
[113] "The 'Two Thousand Words' ", 176.
[114] "The 'Two Thousand Words,' " 176.

from Moscow, the Czechoslovak Central Committee hastily gathered in panic and condemned the manifesto as an "assault on Party leadership" and claimed it had opened "a path for anti-communist tendencies."[115] During the meeting, Josef Smrkovský, a chairman of the National Assembly, argued that the Party needed to stop the circulation of such writings because "if we do not end this now, then the tanks will deal with it… If we do nothing now, it will be too late in two to three months, and it will be dealt with in blood."[116] A few days later, Oldřich Černík, the prime minister, criticized the declaration for agitating both the "rightist" and "conservative" extremes. Dubček, using more elusive language, indirectly criticized the organizers of the manifesto, stating it was not possible to deal with unsolved problems and unsatisfied demands by "strikes and demonstrations, without regard for the needs and possibilities of society, and outside the democratically elected and responsible organs."[117] Despite the irritation, however, the reform leadership decided not to persecute its initiators and signatories.

Following the manifesto's publication, there emerged a spontaneous public platform against both Party-hardliners and Moscow. The journals that published the manifesto received an unprecedented number of letters from readers; *Práce*, journal of the Revolutionary Trade Union (ROH) alone received 102,621 readers' letters in the first two weeks after the publication, and only 188 of them were against the content of the manifesto. In the same period, the cultural magazine *Literární listy* received 34,241 letters, and 296 of them were sent by a group of employees from various workplaces across the country. The public campaign against Soviet

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[115] Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 276.
[116] Jaromír Navrátil and Jitka Vondrová (eds.), "Poznámky z diskuse na 81. schůzi předsednictva a sekretariátu ÚV KSČ k manifestu Dva tisíce slov č. 100 z 27.6.1968" in *Komunistická strana Československa: Konsolidace* (Brno: Doplněk, 2000), 152 and 158. Later, in an article titled, "One Thousand Words," Smrkovský criticized the document for "political romanticism" and for not thinking through the possible results of the irresponsible actions. Josef Smrkovský, "Jeden Tisíc Slov," *Rudé právo* July 5, 1968, 3. See also, Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 276-277; Končelík, "Dva tisíce slov," 498-495.
[117] Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 277.

intervention appears to have united different social groups for the reform cause. Teachers from a school in České Budějovice reported that regional Party leaders were trying to force lower-level functionaries to write a letter against the manifesto and sign their names to it. "It is the same old method of the old-conservatives, who sit in their seats and do not want to move," they wrote.[118] Workers from a car parts factory, *Motorpal* in Jihlava, wrote that they did not consider the manifesto to be calling for counterrevolution, and did not understand why officials were not embracing the article. They declared, "we all know the situation in our country is bad... we want the economic downturn to end and the path of our country to flourish."[119] According to two opinion polls conducted in mid-July and early August, 91 percent of the respondents wanted the "allied armies to leave the territory of our Republic immediately after the conclusion of the exercises," and 95 percent of the respondents considered the changes since January as "positive changes for the development of socialism in Czechoslovakia."[120] The latter number was twenty points higher than the support for Dubček two months earlier.[121]

As expected, the manifesto and the fact that its organizers were not punished led to an escalation of tensions between reformists and the leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries. Only a few days after the publication of the document, the Soviet Politburo met to discuss the events in Czechoslovakia and "Two Thousand Words" in particular. The overall consensus among the Ppolitburo members was that the mild attitude of the Czechoslovak leadership toward the signatories of the manifesto was "utterly incomprehensible."[122] Two weeks later, the leaders of the Pact countries came together, without the Czechoslovaks, and wrote the infamous Warsaw

[118] "Opět z redakční pošty," *Literární listy*, July 11, 1968, 4.
[119] "Opět z redakční pošty," *Literární listy*, July 11, 1968, 4.
[120] Piekalkiewicz, *Public Opinion Polling*, 13 and 46.
[121] Piekalkiewicz, *Public Opinion Polling*, 21.
[122] Jan Pauer, *Praha 1968 : vpád Varšavské smlouvy : pozadí, plánování, provedení* (Prague: Argo, 2004), 97.

letter, where they urged reformists to finally step in and take control of the situation in the country. The letter specifically mentioned Two-Thousand Words and branded it "an open call for a struggle against the Communist Party and the constitutional system, as well as a call for strikes and chaos."[123] Moreover, the leaders of international communism observed that "the platform found wholehearted supporters in the ranks of the Party and its leadership, who are backing anti-socialist appeals."[124] Nevertheless, despite the Warsaw Pact's near-ultimatum to "take urgent measures to block the road to reaction," the Czechoslovak leaders refused to persecute the organizers of the manifesto and re-establish censorship in the media; unfortunately, this refusal was one of the key reasons for the decision to intervene and put an end to the democratic socialist experiment.[125]

In July 1968, when David Newell-Smith, the British photographer, visited Prague to document daily life under Dubček, he witnessed a society united against intervention, albeit with differing priorities. An electrician complained that unqualified people were earning better salaries just because they were Party members; a student talked about creating a "sense of freedom" in the country; and one worker, "a fat man with a pockmarked face and a pipe, said: 'Far too much money was being spent on white-collar administration—there were more administrators than workers in some industries. Jobs for the boys. Then, we want no outside interference in our country—from Russia or anywhere.' "[126] Although none of the actual reform

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[123] "Document No.53: The Warsaw Letter, July 14-15, 1968" in *The Prague Spring 1968, The Prague Spring 1968 : A National Security Archive Documents Reader,* ed.Jaromír Navrátil (New York: Central European University Press, 1998), 229.
[124] "Document No.53: The Warsaw Letter," 229.
[125] "Document No.53: The Warsaw Letter," 232.
[126] "Observer picture archive: The Prague Spring, 27 July 1968" *Guardian*, July 22, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/22/observer-archive-the-prague-spring-27-july-1968?CMP=share_btn_tw&fbclid=IwAR2QKFclJQGq1R8wPWuQAcaiVqbjv3dTjLhB9BZ2IOwV4nDG9PyU8I3ltcA (last accessed August 1, 2020).

plans would align with this worker's demands, it apparently did not prevent him from supporting the reform experiment against foreign intervention. After all, the worst Spring would still be better than the impending Winter.

Conclusion

In the end, however, united public opposition to the intervention itself did not mean much when facing the military might of the Warsaw Pact armies. On the night of August 20th, invited by the conservative members of the top Party circles, invasion forces led by the Soviet Red Army moved in and seized the country's key institutes, utilities, and offices with a clear goal to end the reform era and "force 'counter-revolutionary' forces into submission."[127] A public survey conducted right after the intervention shows that only 1.2 percent of Czechoslovak society supported the reasoning behind the invasion. [128] As Soviet soldiers entered the major towns, people from all generations and social groups tried to talk to Soviet soldiers about the damages of invasion to the socialist cause, barricaded the main streets, changed road signs, and some even tried to fight off the armies of the Warsaw Pact with Molotov cocktails. However, gradually, despite this widespread sense of resistance in society, people soon realized that protests and street clashes with the Warsaw Pact soldiers would not bring anything more than civilian deaths, and the public resistance to the Soviet tanks gradually lost its momentum. Neither quarrels with Red Army soldiers nor stones and Molotov cocktails had any effect on Brezhnev's interventionist doctrine. After a few months of failed political maneuverings to salvage the reform program from Soviet influence, Dubček and other reformist leaders were

[127] Williams, *The Prague Spring*, 112.
[128] Piekalkiewicz*, The Soviet Invasion,* 6.

forced to resign from their positions, and Gustav Husák, another Slovak, became the First Secretary.

The invasion was a turning point in the history of communism in the country and brought a sea change in the people's perception of the Party and the Soviet Union. At the same time, however, the overwhelming majority of people, including the red-collars, eventually came to terms with living under the new order, conforming to its rules and requirements. In the next, concluding section of my dissertation, I will have a brief look at the red-collars' emotional reactions to the post-1968 predicament and discuss their eventual disintegration as a political force in "normalization" Czechoslovakia.

Conclusion

The Invasion and the End of Reform Socialism

April 9, 1969 was not an ordinary day for the people of Jihlava. After all, it was Good Friday. As in previous years, people gathered in the old town square to visit the usual merry-go-rounds and swings that featured in the traditional St. Matthew's Fair *(Matějská pouť)*. As elsewhere in the Czech lands, part of the old town was turned into an amusement park, where people broke away from their daily routines, adults shared a drink with friends, and children could enjoy various rides and games. However, the appearance of an ordinary-looking man in the marketplace was about to change the joyful atmosphere of St. Matthew's Day. Standing in front of the Party headquarters, the man dropped two small notes, then lit a match; the paint thinner, which he had poured on himself earlier, immediately caught fire. Initially, people thought they were watching just another show, and did not think to call for help. By the time they realized what was going on, it was too late. The man's name was Evžen Plocek (b. 1929), a 40-year-old reform communist, and he died a few days later in the hospital. The leaflets he dropped before his suicide contained two sentences: "Truth is revolutionary—wrote Antonio Gramsci" and "I'm for the human face, I can't stand with the unfeeling people."[1]

[1] For the life and self-immolation of Plocek, see Petr Blažek, *Živé pochodně v sovětském bloku: Politicky motivované případy sebeupálení 1966-1989* (Prague: ÚSTR, 2019), 279-303; Roman Streichsbier, "Jsem pro lidskou tvář, nesnáším necit – Evžen," *Jihlavský Deník*, March 16, 2013, http://jihlavsky.denik.cz/zpravy_region/jsem-pro-lidskou-tvar-nesnasim-necit-evzen-20130316.html; Martin Herzán, "Evžen Plocek – příběh plný otazníků …", https://plocek.estranky.cz/, (last accessed November 14, 2020).

Born in 1929, Plocek was one of the young members of the working class, who attained upward social mobility after the revolution in 1948.[2] As a toolmaker by trade, he worked as a forced laborer in Germany during the war, and after liberation, found employment in the newly established engine-manufacturing company, *Motorpal*, in Jihlava. There he first became a member of the communist-led Revolutionary Trade Union (ROH) in 1953, then KSČ in 1955. Shortly afterward, Plocek enrolled at the University of Economics in Prague, studying foreign trade. Following his graduation, he quickly climbed the administrative ladder of the factory, becoming the head of the Sales and Technical Service Department. In 1967, Plocek was elected a member of the Factory Committee of the KSČ, where he strongly supported the reformist program during the Prague Spring. Depressed by the end of reform socialism and the rolling back of the earlier reforms, Plocek protested the post-1968 predicament through a publicly staged suicide.[3]

In many ways, Plocek's tragic lone last act symbolized the devastating disappointment and trauma that the Warsaw Pact intervention and the forceful end of the Prague Spring had brought to the red-collars. The invasion and subsequent "normalization rule" under Gustáv Husák symbolized the end of revolutionary idealism and the vision of reforming socialism in the country. While implementing strict censorship and mass purges across the country, the new leadership increased government spending so as to provide more and better consumer goods for people. As long as people remained silent about politics in public and lived their quiet lives, they

[2] The information provided in this paragraph is based on Blažek, *Živé pochodně v sovětském bloku,* 279-303.
[3] Plocek's public suicide was one of the 29 reported self-immolations that took place between January and April 1969. Despite the party's efforts to cover up these stories, self-immolations quickly became powerful symbols of mass public dissent for the Prague Spring's forceful end. The funeral ceremonies of some of the self-immolators (particularly of Jan Palach, the first self-immolator, and Plocek) were attended by large crowds, becoming some of the last public demonstrations against the new power-holders in the country. [3] Milan Černý, "Živé pochodně v roce 1969," *Česká a slovenská psychiatrie 99*, no.7 (July 2003), 360.

could enjoy relative luxuries such as private cars, cottages, or summer holidays in Yugoslavia.[4] Overall, what started out as an effort to form "socialism with a human face" in 1968, ended in a welfare dictatorship.

Milan Kundera described the collective feeling that came after the invasion as "*litost*," a peculiar Czech word, which can be roughly translated as "a sadness upon realizing something or a certain situation, which should not have happened, happened irreversibly." In *His Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Kundera defines *litost* "as a feeling that is the synthesis of many others: grief, sympathy, remorse, and an indefinable longing… It is a state of torment created by the sudden sight of one's own misery."[5] Thus *litost* is a tragic feeling, as the subject is intrinsically aware of the irreversibility of the past, regardless of his future actions. Despite the sense of helplessness, it paradoxically "works like a two-stroke engine. Torment is followed by the desire for revenge."[6] Its sorrow of helplessness and self-misery fades away only when the subject has his/her semi-phantasmal satisfaction of revenge. However, since the subject is already in an irreversible situation, the desire for revenge is often misguided and unrealistic. Instead of a rational calculation of profits and losses, *litostic* revenge is impulse-driven; it aims to damage the opponent (or the illusionary source of agony) rather than following any conscious personal or political agenda. Accordingly, the euphoric feeling of resistance against the invasion was—for the most part—"*litost* talking" precisely because the resistors aimed to disrupt the post-invasion propaganda and its assertive tone (assertions such as "everything is under control" and "invasion was friendly aid" etc.) rather than follow any conscious and realistic political goals:

> When in 1968 thousands of Russian tanks occupied that amazing small country, I saw a slogan written on the walls of a town: 'We don't want

[4] For a useful discussion about "post-invasion consumerism," see Bren, *Greengrocer and His TV*, 86-89.
[5] Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1980), 121.
[6] Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, 168.

> compromise, we want victory!' You must understand, by then there was no more than a choice among several varieties of defeat, but this town rejected compromise and wanted victory. That was *litost* talking.[7]

Yet, emotions, even if they talk, do not defeat tanks. Despite the collective *litost* and initial burst of resistance, people eventually reasoned that resistance was futile and adjusted to the requirements of the new era. One must keep in mind that in 1968, the memory of the year 1956—when Hungarians led an armed resistance against the Red Army and suffered great losses—was still fresh for the Czechoslovak public. People had every reason to believe that open resistance against the new order was hopeless as it was backed by thousands of Warsaw Pact troops, who had been permanently stationed in the country.

A striking aspect of the anti-reform crackdown of the post-invasion era was that it demanded not just passive compliance but sought the denial and recantation of reformist ideas, especially from the intelligentsia who worked in key cultural and political sectors. Shortly after Husák's ascendence to power, the Party formed interrogation committees in order to establish ideological rigidity. The public intellectuals, who were known by the public for their support of reform communism, such as by signing the "Two Thousand Words" manifesto or making positive comments about the political developments during the Prague Spring, were asked to write a public apology and to denounce their former political beliefs and activism.[8] Soon the scope of the screenings went beyond these individuals and included the entire Party membership. For such an ambitious project, the Party leadership formed a total of 70,217 central committees, which included 235,270 members, and interviewed 1.5 million Party members in seven months.[9]

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[7] Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, 207.
[8] Bren, *Greengrocer and His TV*, 44.
[9] Hans Renner, *A History of Czechoslovakia since 1945* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 98.

The committee was to decide "whether to renew the person's Party membership card or to expel him from the Party, or else cancel his Party membership."[10]

The results of the interviews were extremely important for the screened individuals, as losing one's Party membership was synonymous with losing one's job and any future white-collar career path. The decision process was brutally simple. Interviewees were asked whether they agreed or disagreed "that the invasion was an act of necessary international military assistance," and agreement was the only correct response that would allow them to keep their Party membership.[11] Later, the wave of interviews included non-party members, especially in cultural and academic fields, because they were the active supporters of the leaders of reform communism until the very end. Those who refused to capitulate and clung to their reformist views were sacked from their positions and forced to work in blue-collar jobs.[12] Overall, around 326,000 Party members were either directly expelled or their memberships were not renewed in the new era.[13]

The purges and screenings disproportionately targeted the red-collars. According to a study conducted by Kieran Williams about the purges, while white-collar workers constituted 33.1 percent of the Party membership, they accounted for more than half of the expelled members.[14] Moreover, according to data from Slovakia from mid-1970, when categorized based on class backgrounds, "about half of all purge victims were initially from the working class."[15]

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[10] Bren, *Greengrocer and His TV*, 44.
[11] Bren, *Greengrocer and His TV*, 44.
[12] Bren, *Greengrocer and His TV*, 44.
[13] Pernes, *Takoví nám vládlí*, 294.
[14] Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968-1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 235.
[15] Williams, *The Prague Spring*, 235.

Thus, Williams concluded, the purge "punished most severely those members who had enjoyed post-war social mobility to move from manual to administrative positions."[16]

The extent of the purges demonstrates that a significant percentage of the reformers (the red-collars in particular) defended their reformist beliefs and did not compromise with the new order. At the same time, however, considering that around 25 percent of the intelligentsia did not survive the screenings while 85 percent of them supported the reform efforts before the invasion, it is safe to argue that the majority of them recanted their earlier beliefs in the interviews.[17] This is all too understandable because, in many cases, the ideologically incorrect answers would not only mean career suicide but also significantly endanger the opportunities of close family members to attain higher education and better job opportunities. Many of the red-collars found themselves forced to choose between their integrity and the future of their children. When, for instance, Slovak sociologist and later dissident Milan Šimečka (b. 1930), refused to make a public declaration in support of the end of the Prague Spring and denounce his earlier opinions, the regime not only kicked him out of his teaching job at the university, but also did not allow his son to enter university. After his expulsion from his post at the university, Milan Šimečka worked as a truck driver for twenty years until he became an advisor for President Václav Havel after 1989. By that time, his son was already a thirty-five-year-old married man with children. He never went to university.[18]

The screenings and purges brought ideological rigidity, especially among cultural and academic circles. Some members of the red-collar literati, like Ladislav Mňačko or Milan

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[16] Williams, *The Prague Spring*, 235.
[17] For opinion poll results, see Piekalkiewicz, *Public Opinion Polling*, 17,18 and 21; for Williams, *The Prague Spring*, 235
[18] László Rajk and Martin *Šimečka,* "Dilemma '89: 'My Father was a Communist," *Eurozine, May 7, 2010, http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2010-05-07-debate-en.html* (last accessed October 27, 2020).

Kundera, emigrated to the West to evade having to make the unfortunate choice between active compliance and a professional career. Others, like the sociologist Radovan Richta, publicly disavowed their previous writings during the Prague Spring and were able to retain their positions.[19] And those who refused to repent, like the writers Ludvík Vaculík and Ladislav Helge, were promptly expelled from the Party as well as the culture industry, forced to make a living through blue-collar or clerical jobs. As the post-invasion rules no longer allowed head-on criticism and 1960s-style radical discussions about the nature of socialism and democracy, the red-collar literati could only publish in *samizdat* journals and disappeared from the general public eye.

This dissertation has described reform socialism as the political junction of the social and emotional yearnings of the red-collars, who came of age under the spell of revolutionary Stalinism but later regretted the anti-democratic aspect of their idealism and attempted to save the revolution from within. Yet the forceful end of the Prague Spring and the mass purges resulted in the disappearance of the red-collars as a relevant social, political, and emotional group in the country. Their idealistic faith in the reformability of socialism received a fatal blow with the invasion, and the questions they had been asking regarding the nature of "mature socialism" and how to merge it with "democracy" became irrelevant even for many of the former reform socialists. When in 1989, Dubček re-emerged with the discourse on "democratic socialism" and "socialism with a human face," his slogans soon lost their resonance.. He was easily outmaneuvered by Václav Havel, a son of a well-to-do businessman and distinctly not a

[19] Sommer, "Are We Still Behaving as Revolutionaries?," 107.

red-collar character, in the competition for the leadership of the Velvet Revolution. The time of socialism, and its red-collar reformers, had passed.

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