

## A Czech Newspaperman

by JOHN HOHENBERG

When I was in Moscow this past summer, three of *Izvestia's* editors side-stepped the embarrassing problem of Czechoslovakia while questioning me closely about the meaning of the uproar of dissent on the American campus. I fenced with them for a time, not really wanting to indulge in the homely American custom of ferocious self-criticism before the Establishment of the opposing superpower. Finally, to escape from an awkward situation, I told the gentlemen of *Izvestia* that one of their associates on *Pravda* had come to the conclusion that most American campus radicals were anarchists and had no program.

The judgment of the analyst for *Pravda*, however, did not impress the gentlemen of *Izvestia*. They observed with some justice, I thought, that their opposite number at *Pravda* was not of an age group that could be expected to communicate with the young people of a country that had an entirely different philosophy of government. "Isn't it more likely to be true," one of the *Izvestia* editors demanded, "that the young people of the American universities don't know what they want?"

I replied that it was too large a question to be easily decided, that I didn't know the answer, and that I must think about it. Since I was unable to obtain any observations on Czechoslovakia, I took my leave. But during the rest of my stay in the Soviet Union, and later in my visit to Russian-occupied Czechoslovakia, I

kept thinking of all the brilliant and devastating answers I could have made at *Izvestia* as a self-appointed champion of American youth and a defender of the free press. But somehow, none of the imaginary rhetoric was very satisfying. Because the more I saw and heard in the unhappy heart of Eastern Europe, the more questions I wanted to ask—questions that were perhaps even more difficult to answer.

I remember talking with an old journalist in Prague on a beautifully sunny summer's morning. My wife and I had been able to find him through mutual friends, but we scarcely thought he would have the courage to talk about the plight of his country, his people, and his profession. We were wrong. Sitting there in his plainly furnished room in an ancient building near the center of Prague, he meditated over what had happened to Czechoslovakia since the Soviet-led invasion of August 20-21, 1968. It was almost a monologue, delivered in a low and unemotional voice, as he bent over a cup of thick black coffee.

"For twenty-five years," he said, "we journalists told our young people that our future lay with the Soviet Union, that they could trust the Russians, that our hope was for the development of a truly beautiful communist society. And what happened? The Russians invaded us, occupied us, because we insisted on free discussion, on a free press, on Dubcek's socialism with a human face." He sighed and absently stirred his coffee. "At one stroke, we have lost a whole generation of young people. They will

never again believe anything we older people tell them."

A professor at the Charles University, the ancient citadel of learning in the center of Prague's medieval remains, was far more conscious of what it might mean if he were seen talking with two Americans. Although our conversation at the beginning was about inconsequential things, he kept shifting about and glancing nervously from one side to the other—the "Hitler *blick*" of another evil time in the history of Czechoslovakia. When I turned to the general subject of the press under Russian occupation, he reverted to the history of the newspapers of Bohemia under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. And when at length I asked him about his country's young people, he could only exclaim in despair: "It is difficult to talk of such things, is it not?" And I agreed. In the presence of such anxiety, which surely must have been justified, serious discussion was not possible.

The young people were well able to speak for themselves, fortunately. They showed no fear; nor did they, for that matter, seem to have much respect for their elders. Having little to expect from their social order, they were plainly interested in the opiates of self-indulgence and pleasure at whatever cost to themselves. Many were much like American youngsters: the boys with long hair and exaggerated, skin-tight costumes, and the girls in the briefest of miniskirts. They would say frankly, if asked, that they didn't know what was to happen to them, and were perfectly willing to talk of their revulsion against the Russian occupation. But few thought anything of serious resistance.

It was only at night, near the statue of Good King Wenceslaus in the center of Prague, that the depth of the feeling of the young Czechs became evident. For this had been the rallying point of Prague's resistance in the brave days of the "Czech spring" of 1968, when Alexander Dubcek had been the leader of a boldly revisionist Communist Party. It was here that the young people came by the thousands to show their support of Dubcek against the threat of Russian intervention. And it was here, after the occupation, that Jan Palach burned himself to death in protest, leaving a message for his fellow students at Charles University not to follow his example. During the long summer evenings, as the first anniversary of the Soviet invasion approached, the young people gathered once more about the base of the statue in hushed and shadowy groups. They brought with them flowers in pots and glass jars and even tin cans, and placed them about their patron saint in a gesture that was partly defiance, partly



—Wide World Photos.

Young Czechs protesting in Prague—"able to speak for themselves."

remembrance of things past, partly mourning for the freedom of which they had dreamed and which now was not to be theirs.

"We are willing to wait," one said. "We are willing to wait for twenty years if necessary. But we can tell you this: We will not always live this way."

It is no accident, when the Russians sent in Czech troops to crush a small demonstration in Wenceslaus Square on the anniversary of the occupation, that the flowers at the base of the statue were flung into the street, the jars shattered, the cans overturned. Nor was it merely a matter of maintaining order that caused the security forces to disperse the young people from their appointed meeting place. Yet, it couldn't be done as a permanent matter. The boys with the long hair and the girls with the miniskirts were back in the square soon enough. They felt secure with their own troops; as for the Russians, they knew enough to keep out of sight in a land that was simmering with outrage and anger and sheer frustration.

And what of the Czech press? Once so brave and uninhibited in its enthusiasm for the new socialism of Dubcek's dreams, it was now shackled. It whispered its dissent in Aesopian syllables when it dared, but it had precious little opportunity to do so. The rebellious weeklies, the font of the opposition to the complaisant press of communist tradition, had been suppressed. In each of the thirty dailies, there was a pro-Russian watchdog—a new editor-in-chief for the party papers, and a censor for the non-party press. Nearly 100 of the 4,500 members of the Czech Writers' Union were proscribed and unable to work as journalists, because they had written too much of the truth; some had menial jobs, others were being cared for by friends.

**B**ut they still had spirit. One of them, reminded that the Warsaw Pact invasion forces of 500,000 or more had now dwindled to only 70,000 Russians, flared up: "Whether it is seven, seven hundred, or seventy thousand Russians really makes no difference. This is an occupied country, and we will not rest until they are gone. The Soviet Union has forfeited the respect of every citizen of this country."

I remember calling at one of the Czech dailies and talking to a sad-faced editor about his paper and his staff. "We have a new editor-in-chief," he said. "The government has brought him in because the Russians approve of him and he makes sure of what goes into the paper. What can we do?"

"How long will this last?" I asked.

The editor shrugged. "A long, long time. They have seen what we can do if

we have a chance, these Russians. We won't have such opportunities again very soon."

There were others among the Czech journalists who tried, in the painfully polite manner with which they address Americans, to make it clear that their ideal of a free press was scarcely something of which I would approve. "Let us not forget," one of them said, "that eighty-five to ninety per cent of the journalists of Czechoslovakia were communist and remain communist, and we hope the world remembers it. Because it shows how false the Russians were when they said they had to invade us to prevent us from overthrowing the Communist Party. We didn't want to do that. We wanted to develop our own system in our own way for our own country."

"Like the Rumanians?" I suggested.

Again that hopeless shrug I saw so many times during my all-too-brief time in Prague. "Yes, the Rumanians did it better than we did. They dissented from the Russians, but they didn't advertise it in their press and, so far, they have not had to suffer for it. I suppose you would say they were smarter than we were."

For the journalists, as for the young people, there was little hope in Czechoslovakia's future. The bold white symbol—the name of "Dubcek!"—was fading on the walls of many a building in Prague on which it had been painted; his own fate was foreordained. People knew he would be thrown out of the government by the very officials who had once sworn fealty to him, and were not surprised when it happened. Here and there were freshly painted taunts, "Husak-Rusak," linking Dubcek's successor, Gustav Husak, to the Russians.

Ordinary people, when given an opportunity, referred wistfully to that gallant time when they had been able to say what they wished, read whatever they chose, and go wherever they pleased. But with Dubcek's downfall, the press, radio, and television remained stiffly correct within the Russian meaning of that much-abused word. The unions could mutter about slowdowns; yet, they were well aware that their leaders faced severe punishment if such delays in work decisively interfered with production. The Russians had it in their power to punish fourteen million people by creating shortages of materials and food, if necessary. As for the young dissidents, their Students' Union was dissolved. A new and loyal party group took over the Writers' Union with undetermined consequences to the journalists who remained under proscription. And the foreign press went under strict surveillance with the resultant expulsion of a number of correspondents. It was

not enough for the fearful Czech regime to force the *New York Times's* Tad Szulc out of the country. His successor, Paul Hofmann, was also expelled because of the "hostile attitude taken by your paper against the CSSR."

For Czechoslovakia, the age of dissent was over.

With the defection of Anatoly Kuznetsov to a safe haven in Britain, the world learned that there had been a small movement of sympathy for Czechoslovakia among a few Soviet writers. Kuznetsov himself had been ashamed, but he had been able to do precious little to make his feeling of protest mean anything. The fate of such writers as Yuli Daniel and Andrei Siniavsky, still in confinement after their 1966 show trial, was an object lesson in what could happen to dissident authors or journalists in the Soviet Union. When Pavel Litvinov and six of his associates tried to lead a sympathy demonstration for the Czechs in Red Square, they were beaten up and most of them went to prison.

Alexander T. Tvardovsky, the editor of *Novy Mir*, still clung to his post despite official displeasure over the kind of material he published in his magazine. Yet, it was only a question of time before he would be replaced. After all, he had been the foremost defender of the great novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, whose works had been proscribed in his own country although they appeared in most of the major cities of the Western world. Nor was Tvardovsky the only remaining symbol of independence in the Soviet orbit who trembled on the brink of professional oblivion. The onetime hero of Soviet youth, Yevgeny Yevtuchenko, had been removed from the board of the magazine *Yunost* to discipline and to punish him.

Once he had rebuked his critics with these lines:

They tell me: Man, you're bold!  
But that is not true. Courage was  
never my strong point.  
I simply considered it beneath my  
dignity  
To fall to the level of my colleagues'  
cowardice . . .  
One day posterity will remember  
This strange era, these strange times,  
when  
Ordinary common honesty was called  
courage.

I found much more of such courage in Prague than I did in Moscow. True, the excesses of Stalinism seemed unlikely to return. But in the press, in the literature, in the theater, and in the arts, there was precious little dissent for the foreign visitor to see. It was only in the movies that a modicum of criticism of Soviet life was permitted,



and, even here, such films were not advertised in advance and were shown only a night or two at a time in theaters far from the center of Moscow.

I remember once seeing a Moscow teen-age girl with long hair, tight-fitting Levi's, a tight sweater, and hippie beads at a market. She was wearing a button that celebrated the return of the first American astronauts to reach the moon, a souvenir that was issued broadcast by the American Embassy in Moscow to any Soviet citizens who would take them. It was the young lady's symbol of protest. When I asked her whether she was interested in any particular movement, she replied quite earnestly, "I love all people. I want peace for all people. I am only interested in the truth."

Perhaps I wasn't in Moscow long enough, but I saw only one like her. If there are others, it would be news. For Soviet youth, only one path is open and that is the one approved by their government. There is no sign that they are discontented with their lot, either from what little I could see or from the vantage point of friends who have known the Soviet Union for decades. It is only in Czechoslovakia that a whole generation of young people has been lost to the system that shattered their belief, robbed them of hope, and imprisoned a whole brave people.

In the light of such experiences, I think I would be better prepared today to interpret the meaning of the uproar of the American campus for the three gentlemen of *Izvestia*. It is evidence, first of all, that our generation of young people, far from being lost to us, is actually a profound and beneficial influence on national policy. They have released a wave of moral indignation against the inequities of our society that has had an impact on our political system and has shaken the cherished values of an older generation. Had it not been for them, and a section of the press that amplified their youthful voices into a full-throated roar of protest, the movement to foreclose the Vietnam war might not have reached its current stage, and the end might be even further off than it now seems to be. It is their generation that has been in the vanguard for more than a decade in breaking down some of the barriers to the achievement of a multi-racial society and for this, as well as for their conviction that they must take political action, we are profoundly indebted to them.

True, in crushing all dissent including that of the youth, the Soviet Union has established law and order in Czechoslovakia today. But, gentlemen of *Izvestia*, permit me to ask one small question in return: Was it worth all the trouble it has caused you?



Panelists at Westinghouse Conference included (from left) Max Kohnstamm, Charles E. Bohlen, George W. Ball, Christopher Layton, and Sir Eric Roll.

## Forecasting the Seventies

by JOHN TEBBEL

LONDON.

**T**wenty-nine experts from many fields peered into the Seventies here recently and found prospects for the decade ahead to be more uncertain than promising for the world and its people. The experts were gathered for a four-day conference sponsored by the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company, a force that can be expected to play an important part in shaping that future and whose twelve television and radio stations in nine major American cities constitute the most influential of the non-network groups. Westinghouse modestly refrained from discussing its own product; instead, Group W, as it is known, flew some eighty-five leading American business executives and community leaders to hear the forecast and engage in a running dialogue with the forecasters.

In the speeches and conversations, the perspective was inevitably American, and nearly all agreed that if the problems of the world are to be solved in the Seventies, it won't be through the present policies of the Nixon administration. The businessmen, many of them presumably Nixon supporters, heard an abundance of criticism of the President, both direct and implied.

The tone of the conference was set by a panel of eight Group W correspondents, brought in from its bureaus. Bernard Redmont, chief of the Paris bureau, reporting on the peace talks there, argued that when the negotiations are eventually concluded, peace "will come on terms no better than those available right now, and for that matter, available to us in the past. . . . Our whole negotiating posture in

Paris has foundered and failed because it has been based too often on myths, erroneous assumptions, and faulty judgments."

From Washington, Sid Davis, chief of the bureau there, granted that it was not an easy period for the President, but he pointed out that "the real danger in a 'quiet Presidency' is that it could become an 'insulated Presidency.'" However, Davis believed that Mr. Nixon would be a formidable candidate for re-election in 1972. "While it is too soon to judge where he is going," Davis added, "it is clear that his zigging and zagging leaves him plenty of maneuvering room in the center."

Turning to other sore spots in the world where American policy, or the lack of it, may determine events in the Seventies, Charles Bierbauer, Group W's Eastern European correspondent, predicted that arms limitations talks with the Soviets "will be a prolonged affair, like the Paris negotiations, but conceivably they will lead us to a European security meeting broader than the bilateral talks. Many Western observers feel Moscow wants European security talks merely for the propaganda value of gaining recognition of East Germany. Yet the existence of two Germanies is a reality that must be admitted on the way to improving East-West relations."

As for the Middle East, correspondent Jay Bushinsky described the situation as "a military standoff, a waiting game, with each side hoping that the other will cave in first." While they hedged their bets carefully, others at the conference appeared to agree that a major war in the Middle East was not likely in the Seventies.

Japan, said several speakers, will