



CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1968

Reform, Repression and Resistance

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA, EASTERN EUROPE AND DÉTENTE

1. INTRODUCTION

IN 1968, one country attempted to change the face of Socialism in Europe. In consequence, it suffered an armed invasion by five members of the Warsaw Pact, and that in turn has led to an upheaval in the political relations of the European states. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was a major crisis in the development of human society. It was not a major international crisis. There was not at any point any likelihood that war would result. But it is important to anyone concerned with the future of East-West relations for two reasons. The first is that in this invasion, for the first time in dealing with a fellow-Socialist state, and for the first time indeed since World War II, the Soviet Union, in collusion with other powers, acted as a deliberate aggressor without even the pretence of legality behind it. More, it acted against a state which had scrupulously re-affirmed in words and actions its loyalty to the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union throughout the months of disagreement which preceded the invasion. The invasion followed an agreement, signed barely three weeks before, in which all the states concerned had pledged themselves not to intervene in each other's internal affairs. The first question that this conduct raises is whether the Soviet government can be trusted in international relations for the time being, or whether its behaviour has shown that all hopes of an East-West *détente* have been illusory and that the old fears of an expansionist and aggressive superpower must be revived.

But the invasion is important for a second reason. Even should it be true that it is not possible to argue very much from the Soviet action, and that the *détente* can confidently be expected to continue, the events of 21 August and their

aftermath have brought about radical changes in the pattern of relations among the Eastern European states themselves, and this is likely to affect the nature of their relations with the countries of Western Europe. Granted that the *détente* will go on – that the Soviet Union and United States will continue to seek a certain level of understanding in their strategic relations, and that each will continue to avoid the risk of nuclear war over the interests of the other – what will be the *content* of this *détente*? In the recent past, it has been assumed that as Europe became a more secure continent, and the threat of war decreased, both super-powers would be willing to allow their European allies to take advantage of this security to assert a relative independence and to cultivate closer relations with each other. That assumption can now no longer be made. It appears that the United States is willing to allow for such an evolution but that the Soviet Union is not. Hence it becomes necessary to reconsider the nature of the *détente* process, and to re-examine what the prospects in Europe are likely to be.

This study sets out to examine only some of these questions. It provides no policy recommendations. Its object has been solely to indicate the nature of the new context. It does so by examining the nature of the Soviet action in the first place, and by attempting to assess its consequences in the second. I found while writing it that in order to begin to understand the character of Soviet behaviour during this past year, it was necessary to consider the developments in Czechoslovakia, and the interactions between Czechoslovakia and the rest of the Socialist camp in considerable detail. Without this, one runs the risk of creating a series of generalizations about the new pattern of conduct in the Soviet government, which could have considerable implications but which are supported by remarkably little evidence. A great part of what follows is devoted to an examination of the events between January and August this year, and from this some tentative conclusions are drawn. The pattern of the Soviet invasion itself, the nature of the Czechoslovak resistance, and the possible effects of this resistance on the Soviet appraisal, are in themselves important questions, but for reasons of space they can not be considered here.

It has seemed to me that in the recent past, there were three general assumptions about the nature of the *détente* and the character of Soviet government, and that these assumptions are now open to question. The first was that concurrent with a higher degree of Soviet-American understanding, went a Soviet readiness to relax the system of rigid political control in domestic affairs. The evidence for this assumption was drawn from such events as the publication of Professor Liberman's theses on profitability in 1962, and the compromise economic policies which followed. In himself, Professor Liberman appeared to be more a symptom than a cause of the re-examination of Socialist economic priorities, and it was fashionable in the Western world to discuss the prospects of a convergence of the two social and economic systems. It was widely assumed that even if they did not converge, the two systems would come to resemble each other closely enough to make an increasing range of agreements possible. Unfortunately, this expectation did not take into account the strains which such 'revisionism' must have put upon the Soviet Party in the intervening period. The second assumption was that with the growing *embourgeoisement* of the Soviet Union would go a greater preoccupation with domestic affairs and a readiness to accept a loss of authority among those states which had once been Soviet satellites. There was plenty of evidence for this, notably in the Soviet caution in foreign affairs generally, in the anxiety which was consistently apparent, to pursue the *détente* with the United States, in spite of such obstacles as the war in Vietnam, and in the mildness of Soviet reaction to such developments as Rumania's open defiance of some Soviet policies after 1964. This assumption was the comfortable one that a 'fat Communist is better than a thin Communist'. Unfortunately it failed to take into account the possibility that if he was pushed too far a fat *apparatchik* might feel he had more to lose than a thin *apparatchik*. The third assumption followed from the second: it was that henceforth, the governments of Eastern Europe would be permitted to conduct their affairs with a greater independence, that they would be free to enter into a variety of relationships with the states of Western Europe, and that so long as they kept to the ground-rules

(particularly in remaining members of the Warsaw Pact) the threat of force could be virtually ruled out. Again, there was considerable evidence in support, and it seemed to follow logically from the doctrine of 'National roads to Socialism' which had been proclaimed in the aftermath of the Polish October of 1956 and the Hungarian rising, and which was re-affirmed at the Soviet Party Congress of 1961.

None of these assumptions was misleading in itself. The difficulty was that, seen from the Western point of view, they appeared to be consistent with one another: they all seemed to be pointing in the same direction. Liberalization, economic experiment, greater independence in Eastern Europe, closer relations between Eastern and Western Europe, all seemed to indicate a particular pattern for the future, whose constituent elements were all of a piece. It now appears that from the Eastern, and particularly the Soviet point of view, these tendencies did not all add up in that way. Each seems to have imposed a certain strain on the system; the effects of each were exacerbated by the accusations of the Chinese; the collective leadership itself appeared unable to retain control of the pace or scope of changes in Eastern Europe; and these changes themselves ran the risk of producing challenges to the leadership in any case, particularly where the economic experiments in some countries produced strains within the political leadership of others. It was within this context that a crisis began to mount in the internal conduct of affairs of Czechoslovakia.

Lack of space again precludes a discussion of the fundamental causes of the revolution that occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Like all revolutions it had been going on for some time before it came to the surface. But it had three root causes, each of which was linked with the repressive character of the Novotny regime. The first was the failure of the economy: after a period of considerable economic ambition and relative success, the economy had begun to fail visibly, production had actually fallen in some years, and an endemic and continuing crisis appeared to have set in. The questions of profitability, of operation of a market mechanism and of the formation of prices were fundamental to any attempt to deal with these ills, and the compromises that President

Novotny had allowed to emerge in the discussion and application of these measures were insufficient to do so. The economy itself demanded greater freedom of discussion and initiative. The second factor was the question of the relations between Czechs and Slovaks—in itself one of the contributory factors, and also continuing symptoms of—the economic malaise; and here President Novotny's repressive record against the 'petty-bourgeois nationalism' of the Slovaks left little hope of future improvement. It also provided a focus of potential discontent and opposition within the Party. Challengers could emerge, who, because their chief emphasis in the past had been on the rights of the Slovaks rather than on liberalism in more general terms, might be acceptable as compromise leaders to replace President Novotny as First Secretary. Alexander Dubcek was chosen as First Secretary within the context of the Slovak revolt. The third factor was one of what used to be called freedom, but is now more politely referred to as liberalization. There had in fact been a considerable relaxation of intellectual control in Czechoslovakia during the previous three or four years. As in all revolutionary situations, it had, however, merely produced the demand for more. And it was followed by a fairly savage moment of repression, as one consequence of the Six-day War in 1967. In Czechoslovakia as in other Eastern European states, the Soviet demand that the Arabs be wholeheartedly supported and Israel blindly condemned had produced acute crises of conscience, particularly among the writers and intellectuals. The increasingly anti-semitic tone of official propaganda helped to turn this crisis of conscience into a revolt, led by the Writers' Union, whose magazine was closed down in the Autumn of that year. The immediate political effect of such actions was to polarize the 'Stalinist' and 'liberal sections' of the Party and increase the demands for a change.

During this period, the Soviet leadership attempted to intervene on behalf of President Novotny, though there is little evidence that Mr Brezhnev, when he visited Prague in December actually attempted to save him. He was more concerned with the manner of his going, and with saving what was to be saved of the Novotny apparatus. Although disquieted by the openness of the revolt, in a situation where,

in the Soviet context, discretion would have been the supreme virtue, he might even have thought that he had succeeded. It took some time before it became apparent that he had not.

The tragedy of Czechoslovakia was that the changes which followed occurred during a period when the Soviet Union had in any case attempted to take a closer and more active interest in its affairs. One of the consequences of the *détente* in Europe had been the fundamental changes that had occurred in German attitudes to the states of Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union was never disposed to allow West Germany itself to re-open the 'German question' or attempt to define the terms on which it could be settled. So long as West Germany refused to recognize East Germany, there was no prospect that any German policy would be allowed to become too successful. After the opening of diplomatic relations between West Germany and Rumania at the beginning of 1967, a conference of European Communist Parties had been summoned at Karlovy Vary in Czechoslovakia, which made it clear that no other member of the Warsaw Pact would be allowed to follow suit. At the same time, increasing emphasis had been laid on strengthening the 'northern tier' countries of the Pact – Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia – and this was generally interpreted (in the context of the general assumptions about the progress of the *détente*) as a political measure for the containment of West Germany. But it also had military components. It has even been suggested that the Soviet government attempted during 1967 to station Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia, and that President Novotny refused. There seems to be no real evidence to support this speculation, but it is *ben trovato*. It is symptomatic of the growing Soviet interest in Czechoslovakia.

From early in 1967 the Soviet Union had, so to speak, been keeping a careful eye on Czechoslovakia, and it had become one of the most important countries in the Eastern bloc, both in the eyes of the Soviet military and for the purposes of Soviet diplomacy.

Mr Dubcek came to power in this context. The most urgent aspect of his programme was to revive the economy. But his own convictions, and the development of the country itself during the preceding months, appeared to have con-

vinced him that it was futile to tackle the economy by itself. It could only be done with a larger and more general programme of democratization.

2. THE CHARACTER OF EVENTS: JANUARY TO AUGUST

By the time that President Novotny was persuaded to resign from his post as First Secretary of the Party, on 5 January 1968, considerable progress had already been made in the attempts to deal with the economic crisis in Czechoslovakia. It was not the immediate substance but the later implications of the reforms which initially disconcerted the Soviet leadership – just as it was the manner rather than the fact of Novotny's fall. For it soon became clear that the economic reforms were the first stage of a wholesale transformation of society in Czechoslovakia, the process which the government itself called democratization.

At this point it is worth distinguishing between the notion of democratization and that of liberalization. According to one's viewpoint, and to the extent of one's sympathy for the efforts made by certain governments in Eastern Europe, one might regard liberalization either as an expedient concession to the pressures of a developing society – a tactical readjustment – or else as an instalment of equity, necessarily limited by the context of the moment. In fact, its nature varies in Eastern Europe, with the government and country concerned. But fundamentally, the process of liberalization has two distinctive and universal features: it is conceded from above, and it is reversible. It is in fact a governmental operation, perhaps of some long-term significance for the subsequent development of a society, certainly an improvement for those who live in that society on the repressive rigidity of the immediately post-Stalinist period, but without any guarantee of continuing liberality, or of a genuine commitment to the development of greater freedom and responsibility among any but a small political *élite*. In this sense, liberalization has been experimented with – and subsequently dropped – in Poland; it is still toyed with in East Germany; it has been a feature of the Kadar government in Hungary; and it is certainly not unknown in the Soviet Union itself. But in all

cases, it has been a controlled experiment, and in most cases the experiment has gone into reverse when it threatened to have unforeseeable consequences. It has nothing in common with the programme of democratization which was embarked upon in Czechoslovakia.

That is not to suggest, however, that the essence of the Czechoslovak programme lay in the abandonment of control, or in the granting of total freedom. Indeed, Mr Dubcek was frequently dismissed by the more aggressively liberal of Western editorialists and columnists as 'another' Communist boss, until the events of July and August showed not only how his own government had alarmed the Russians, but also how immense was the support and enthusiasm it had generated at home. The essence of the Czechoslovak programme lay in an extraordinary balance between spontaneity and control, which in the context in which the government had to operate, must rank as one of the great political achievements of modern history until it was wrecked by the reactions of the Soviet leaders. It lay, too, in the fact that this was no experiment, no merely tactical adjustment, but a fundamental commitment to a complete and definitive change. With the moving and unassuming eloquence which came to characterize his style of government, Mr Dubcek described it as 'Socialism with a human face'. And perhaps it was this which proved fatal. For, ever since Lenin and the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917 with the promise that they could solve the colossal problems which confronted Russia, Communism in Europe has been inherently transitional. From the NEP, through the Five-year Plans and collectivization, through the period of Stalinism and the Purges, the period of post-war Stalinism, de-Stalinization, and the experiments with liberalization under Khrushchev, the collective leadership, and de-and re-liberalization, the whole of Communist history is one endless series of experiments, each marking the transition to Utopia and each a failure. Now, the government of Czechoslovakia had promised an outcome, and had begun to implement it. It would not in itself have done anything to solve the economic problems of the country, or any of the other social, demographic and political problems which beset every state; but it would have ensured that the nature of the state

would not again be distorted or transformed in the next experiment: conducted to deal with the usual difficulties, but which a Utopian state can not deal with unless it once more proclaims its Herculean efforts and transforms the society. To do otherwise would be to admit the defeat of its Messianic purpose. It would be to admit that here after all, was a normal society. And that, in effect, is what Czechoslovakia was on the verge of doing. Not normal, in the sense of a state which was reverting to capitalism, or which was about to 'mix' its social system, but normal in the sense that it was no longer prepared continually to uproot the present in order to ensure the future, and normal in the sense that no revolutionary mission would now be permitted to justify the constant tampering with the lives of its citizens that the 'transition to Communism' has habitually involved. If it succeeded in this, if it assured a continuity of freedom and responsibility—in short, of human dignity—for its citizens, it could have become a standing reproach, or worse, a standing example, to other states in Eastern Europe. In fact, Czechoslovakia was on the verge of restoring some meaning to the word Socialism, and the wheel had come full circle since the days of Stalin. 'Socialism in one country' could now mean a danger to the Soviet state itself.

Those in Eastern Europe who have now got into the habit of arguing that they were justified in taking action over Czechoslovakia, and that they were doing so in order to 'protect Socialism' (in itself an interesting reversion to mediaeval concepts of Natural Law, since they explicitly declare that this overrides any other considerations of international law¹), or those apologists in the West who are now emerging to justify the Soviet occupation on the grounds that it was essentially defensive, should beware of the implication of their arguments. In terms of power and the control of power, it is difficult to see any connection between what was happening in Czechoslovakia and any threat to the Soviet Union or its more faithful allies in the East. In the Ukraine, in East Germany, in Poland, the army and the secret police were surely capable of taking care of any unrest that might have been

¹ It was Colonel G. I. A. D. Draper of the University of Sussex who pointed out this resemblance.

caused by the Czech experiment; indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the student disturbances in Warsaw in March which were touched off the events in Czechoslovakia did much to strengthen Mr Gomulka in his already exposed position. There is no evidence to suggest that as a result of what was happening in Prague the Pankow government was in any particular danger or that the Soviet state, which had survived the onslaught of Hitler, was now on the verge of collapse. The dangers, if there were any, were longer-term than that. And such dangers as the more timorous men in the Kremlin could perceive were not of a nature to threaten Soviet authority in Eastern Europe—Rumania had done far worse, and got off scot free: they were such as to make a nonsense of the continual transitions demanded of the Communist states, and to show that whatever the immediate difficulties, a Communist state could create Socialism in the here and now, instead of in the indefinite future. And the implications of arguing that the Soviet Union and its allies were only acting in defence of Socialism when they invaded Czechoslovakia are that the history of the Soviet Union and of Eastern Europe as a whole no longer makes any sense. The period of transition *must* not come to an end.

But if the threat from Czechoslovakia was precisely that democratization might help to bring about a recognizable form of Socialism, that was still a long-term threat. It does not in itself explain either the fact of the Soviet military intervention, or that it occurred when it did, or the manner of the Soviet and Warsaw Pact procedure. It is possible that the Soviet Union and its allies might have been able to adapt to the new situation created by Czechoslovakia—after all, there are, and have been, powerful forces for change in these societies, and Czechoslovakia offered the prospect of a radical improvement in relations between the Eastern and Western halves of Europe if the states concerned had shown the remotest understanding of what Mr Dubcek's government was trying to achieve. Even if the rewards of allowing Czechoslovakia to develop independently were not immediately apparent, it was also possible that efforts to contain its influence could have been restricted to political and economic counter-measures. That, indeed, appeared to be the first

choice of the Soviet Union in the months between January and June. It was only after that that military intervention became a serious possibility, and the intervention itself only happened after a long delay. I will argue later in this essay that these hesitations are themselves of great significance, and that there is evidence that the Soviet government only made up its mind to intervene at the last moment. But to understand the course of this decision, and to attempt to assess its effects on Europe—on relations between the Eastern and Western powers in Europe, as well as its effects on Eastern Europe—it is necessary to follow the developments between January and August in some detail.

For the Dubcek government—which did not assume its final form until April—was relatively slow to move. In retrospect it seems that Mr Dubcek undertook an heroic and almost impossible task in the circumstances in which he came to power; but he revealed a mastery of tactics during this period which brought him very near to success. And it is in any event almost impossible to determine at what point he himself became wedded to the objectives outlined in the Action Programme of April: it is safe to assume that at the beginning he had no very clear idea of what he was going to be able to do, and the first couple of months bear the marks of somebody playing it by ear, and exploring the limitations and potentialities of his position. I shall argue that, though the Soviet government was already concerned about the future course of Czechoslovakia before the fall of Novotny, it was prepared to do no more than attempt to influence its development in the early months; that by April, Mr Dubcek had succeeded both in establishing control over the government, party and country and that he was capable of maintaining this control while creating the unique form of Socialism which is now associated with Czechoslovakia, and that he continued to be perfectly capable of tactical readjustment in the following weeks, as the modifications to the April programme which he brought about in May revealed. But by this time the over-reaction of the Soviet Union was endangering his programme by creating pressures from below, and thereafter the domestic pressures and the Soviet pressure began to interact on each other in a dangerous and ultimately

fatal manner. Thus, it appears to be of little use to try to understand the Czechoslovak crisis in terms of the Soviet rationale alone: to ascribe, as it were, a fixed set of considerations and preoccupations to the Soviet government, and to explain its actions in terms of this or that interest or a combination of them. On the contrary, it is probably true to say that there was scarcely an aspect of the Czechoslovak government's programme which did not find *some* powerful sympathizers inside the Soviet Union—though the nature and identity of the sympathizers varied from case to case. Certainly, there was no indication between January and June that the many different elements of the Czechoslovak programme were themselves enough to unite the disparate elements inside the Soviet government *against* it. It was rather that the very pressures set up by Soviet reactions created an increasing radicalization inside Czechoslovakia, so that in order to maintain a united country Mr Dubcek had to go faster than he would otherwise have wished, to appear to defy the Soviet Union over many points where their interests were after all almost identical, and so in the end to create for his adversaries some of the very arguments they were looking for in their contention that he was incapable of controlling what he had set out to do. And even then, it seems doubtful whether the Soviet government would have been ready to intervene, were it not for the fact that the train of events between April and July had initiated a political crisis inside the Soviet itself.

And this crisis came about, not because the Czechoslovak programme presented, in its substance, any single factor, or combination of factors that would have been enough to threaten the Soviet state or its interests in Eastern Europe, but because the Soviet leaders and possibly their allies misread the *implications* and the future scope of what the Czechoslovak government was trying to do.² Throughout, there was little to suggest that the Soviet leaders were alarmed by the precise proposals of the Czechoslovak government; much to

² 'The reactionary elements who sought to introduce "democratic socialism" in Czechoslovakia understood full well that this concept suggested replacing socialist democracy by an entirely new political system.' *On Events in Czechoslovakia*, Press Group of Soviet Journalists, Moscow 1968.

suggest that they could not stomach the style and appeal of the Dubcek government. Thus at the Cierna meeting, and again later in Moscow, Mr Dubcek is reported to have been able to refute, point by point and without difficulty, all the accusations that had been made against him and other members of his government. There was no evidence to suggest that any *action* had led to the betrayal of socialism of which he was accused; equally, his refutations made no difference to his accusers. They were concerned with the nature of the man, and the nature of his government.

This kind of alarm was felt at the very beginning. Mr Brezhnev's visit to Prague at the end of 1967 was intended, less to save President Novotny, who seemed to become more of a liability every day in any attempt by the Soviet Union to retain control over the course of Czechoslovakia, than to ensure that his departure did not affect the essentials of the Czechoslovak system. And it appears that the decision of the Czechoslovak Central Committee to separate the functions of President and First Secretary of the Party obtained the Soviet blessing. But the first difficulty was already apparent: the Soviet Union was ready to permit radical changes in the Czechoslovak governmental structure (indeed it would be difficult to refuse, since one of the main tenets of collective leadership inside the Soviet Union itself since the days of Mr Khrushchev's original de-Stalinization had been the separation of the same functions) but the question was what the *content* of such decisions was to be. Collective leadership itself was a modest principle of government, which did not promise any great change in the system beyond that—in the Soviet context admittedly important in itself—of creating safeguards against the arbitrariness of full-scale Stalinism. It was perfectly compatible with a more regular and predictable form of repression. But the announcement that President Novotny was no longer to be First Secretary—that the functions were to be separated—in 'accordance with the process of democratization which has begun' implied something altogether more radical: that the removal of President Novotny from the real centre of power did not represent a culmination, as the Russian leaders might have wanted it, of the process of rebellion of the previous few months, but

merely the next step on a road whose destination had not yet been fully determined. The fact that Mr Dubcek was himself a compromise choice, that he had until that point been the First Secretary of the Slovak Communist Party, and that his individual potentialities had not been fully appreciated by the men who elected him, probably served to reassure the Soviet government at this point—the more so since the revolt of the Slovaks against excessive centralism in Prague, though it had been officially condemned on many occasions as petty bourgeois nationalism, was something they could understand, and hope to cope with by a judicious mixture of concession and coercion. But that still left the fundamental question unanswered. It was whether the pace of change inside Czechoslovakia was going to outstrip the adjustments made inside the Soviet Union in the cause of what may loosely be called revisionism.

The economic reforms that were decreed from Prague were not yet of a nature to alarm the Soviet Union—indeed the names of Professor Sik and Professor Liberman were coupled together frequently enough. Inside the Soviet Union, Mr Kosygin had had to tread a fairly difficult tight-rope between the economic imperatives of the situation and the political risks which were involved in implementing reform, but there was no reason to suppose that Mr Dubcek would find the task any easier, or that he would produce a much more workable compromise than that managed by Mr Kosygin. In the sphere of foreign policy, Czechoslovakia was almost embarrassingly anxious to please the Soviet Union;³ its relations with the Federal Republic had already been reasonably well defined in the period since the Karlovy Vary meeting of European Communist parties in April 1967; it was the only member of the COMECON, apart from the Soviet Union itself, which did not enjoy long-term credits and substantial capital inflows from West Germany, and it was unlikely to go further than the other members of the organization—if, indeed, it ever got that far; and in internal policy, there was little to suggest that a Republic whose President continued to be Mr Novotny, which was shortly to elect Mr Bilak as First Secre-

³ Foreign policy in Europe, that is to say. In the Third World, it showed greater independence, notably in refusing to supply Nigeria with arms.

tary of the Communist Party in Slovakia, would be likely to push its process of democratization too far. From the Soviet point of view, then, the essentials seemed to be reasonably secure, and it must be emphasized that on individual points of substance in the months that followed there was little in the Czechoslovak programme that had not already happened inside the Soviet Union, or was at least aspired to in the Soviet Union by men who were ready to support it when it occurred somewhere else. It did become clear later, though, that the individual reforms were to be accompanied by an erosion of what the orthodox believers in other countries regarded as the legitimate role of the Party.

It was the continuation of this erosion which finally made the reforms indefensible to Moscow. But that was not apparent at first. In the first few months, Mr Dubcek seems to have been aiming at a transformation of the Party, and it is safe to assume that that was what he always had in mind. But, as I have suggested, he seems to have lost his full control of developments in the period after the 'Action Programme' had prompted a severe over-reaction on the part of the Soviet Union. In the first few months, there was every indication that he was prepared to go slowly and cautiously in advancing towards his, in any case, limited objective.

Altogether, one may distinguish three phases in the history of Czechoslovakia between January and August 1968. The first lasts from January to the beginning of April, when President Novotny was finally dismissed, the government was reconstituted and the 'Action Programme' was published. The second from April to July, when the Czechoslovak government had to go faster and make more concessions than it appears to have wished, and when the relations between Czechoslovakia and the other Warsaw Pact powers degenerated to the point of crisis; and the third from early in July to 21 August, when the crisis in relations between Czechoslovakia and the other states in Eastern Europe helped to bring about a new form of crisis inside the Soviet Union, and the abhorrent solution was found. The history does not end there; the fourth phase is still going on.