

An Open Letter To a Soviet Scientist

By KAREL HUJER

Dear Ivan Vasilyevitch:

It was good to meet you again at the last International Congress of the History of Science in Paris, Aug. 25-31, 1968. We also enjoy remembering all our previous meetings in an atmosphere of goodwill and understanding, with participants presenting their communications guided by the ethics of scientific truth. This summer, however, our meeting with the more than 60 delegates from your vast country, the USSR, was portentously clouded by the military hordes under command of your Kremlin masters, who for entirely unjustified reasons invaded defenseless Czechoslovakia. In a spirit of dialogue, advocated only too earnestly by numerous liberalizing Americans, please permit me to modestly comment on the extent of the tragedy deliberately provoked by the soldiery of unscrupulous Soviet chieftains.

The subservient "allies" of the Warsaw Pact need hardly be considered in this appalling outrage of the 20th century. From what I observed of your countrymen at the Paris Congress, none appeared aware that a treacherous act was committed less than three weeks after the Bratislava agreement. For Russia to sign that treaty was a deliberate farce with an invasion already well planned weeks if not months previously. I address you personally for I have been conscious of your devotion to scientific honesty. I would turn to Tolstoi of tsarist days or Pasternak of the Stalinist era or to any of your courageous contemporary writers who have spent years in Soviet labor camps simply for boldly pointing out searing injustices and tragedies in your land which takes such pride in its scientific astronautic accomplishments.

In your sheltered and privileged position of the Soviet Academy of Science, enjoying advantages that millions of your ordinary neo-proletarians cannot dream of, you evidently are exposed only to official channels of information craftily screened by the masters of the Party, in contradiction to all that

your officially glorified science stands for, which is truth. Thus, your leading daily paper which carries the tragicomic name "Pravda" (which means truth) repeatedly reported counter-revolutionaries in Czechoslovakia, but there were no counter-revolutionaries. Dubek not only was raised in good Marxist tradition but also was directly trained in your own country. As against your Soviet dehumanized system he wanted a socialism with a human face, which valued discussion, persuasion and the dignity of man. Your people at the Paris congress, although scientists, tried to minimize the tragedy in Czechoslovakia, stating that the Soviet army treated Czechs and Slovaks well. Let me introduce some established facts.

On Aug. 24, four days after the invasion, in Liberec, an industrial city in northern Bohemia, a mass funeral was held for the first victims of the brutal Soviet invasion. While thousands of mourning Czech citizens silently marched toward the crematorium, creating a human chain of clasped hands, the stupidity rather than effrontery of the official Muscovite propaganda used a military helicopter to drop copies of your newspaper "Pravda," announcing that Liberec had organized a festival of welcome to the Soviet army in gratitude for the "liberation from the counter-revolutionaries."

While your masters glorify science as the herald of the Communist age, science initially stands for honest truth, as you well know. What is the meaning therefore of this incredible distortion to which your public is exposed? Your masters become the same tyrants against whom the former generation rose in tsarist days. The name of your Moscow daily "Pravda" (i.e. truth) as it originated in tsarist days, could have been justified when it represented the voice of oppressed proletarians of those days of tyranny, but today no greater travesty has ever been used for truth. It bankrupts anything noble in human behavior and pales down the cruelty of your medieval Tartar masters. Who are the scribes who like obedient robots serve in its editorial

offices for their plate and a privileged apartment in one of those modern structures? Are you aware that these dwellings, too, were constructed with cement produced by slave labor in Czechoslovakia with 20 years of unparalleled exploitation?

Were you, Ivan Vasilyevitch, truly informed what havoc was produced by your ignorant soldiers in the beautiful city of Prague? In that defenseless country which had reached the rock bottom of its economy through Communist mismanagement, will your soldiers be called "heroes of the Soviet Union?" It is a long, sad and heart-rending story. Do you know how many unarmed, young people were mowed down by your well armed and protected soldiers? Also, that Red Cross marked cars serving wounded citizens were targets of your Soviet soldiery and that 22 doctors doing this Samaritan service were killed? Did your "Pravda" newspaper report that the Children's Hospital at Karlova plaza was the target of ruthless shooting and operations had to be interrupted?

Let me relate one human incident that particularly touched Prague citizens. Maria Charouskova, a 25-year-old mother of a 2-year-old son, had great hope for a better life. Both she and her husband were employed and after several years of evening studies, on Aug. 25 she was enroute to the Prague University office to submit her thesis. While changing street cars just under Hradcany Castle, she was shot down by a brutal soldier, evidently because she wore in her lapel a little Czechoslovak flag. She fell on the pavement, her thesis stained with her blood. In a few hours this spot was covered with flowers by mourning citizens. Was this soldier, "hero of the Soviet Union," one of the so-called "liberators?" Countless human tragedies were brought about by the senseless decision of your Kremlin masters. Do you believe history will record only the Kremlin version of this betrayal of international loyalty and the U.N. charter signed by Soviet delegates?

Are you aware, Ivan Vasilye-

vitch, that Czech people who were never Russia's direct neighbors, were always friendly and regarded your nation as their big Slavonic brother who would protect them from centuries of the old Teutonic "Drang nach Osten," pressure to the east? Your Kremlin masters, intoxicated by power, cared nothing whatever for the friendship of a small nation. If Hitler promised his millennium, Czechs and Slovaks now say it will take a millennium before they can forget what the Kremlin Communist imperialists have done to them. Soviet invaders have even superseded Hitler's hordes of 30 years ago in the way their "liberating" army behaved in peacetime in Czechoslovakia. In your closed society, I have little hope this letter will ever reach you. It is true that the bridges that some naive, liberalizing individuals in our open society have advocated have always represented a one-way traffic, conveniently exploited by your Kremlin masters who have penetrated much deeper into the European West than any Ivan the Terrible or Peter the Great ever dreamed of.

But the voice of history reminds us of an enduring wisdom as stated by Friedrich Engels in his letter to Karl Marx Sept. 4, 1870. Both are your ideological masters and both grew up in an open society, deep in what your ruling Communists call bourgeois and capitalist Western Europe. Engels wrote:

Terror—these are superfluous cruelties perpetrated by the ruling tyrants to sooth their fear. We understand that terror is an instrument of the rule of those potentates who are actually afraid.

Thus thought the fathers of communism nearly one century ago. It is remarkable how well they defined the motivation of their pupils sitting on the Kremlin tsarist throne in this 20th century as they ordered the invasion of small, defenseless Czechoslovakia Aug. 21, 1968.