

Czechs Inspired by U.S. Commitment in Vietnam

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By KAREL HUJER

In this age of global strategy, it is not surprising that American resistance to Communist imperialism in Vietnam now bears fruit in recent liberative events in Czechoslovakia. For the Communist master planners, it is never a question of the freedom of a small country. Rather, the Soviet empire, a stupendous colonial system inherited and magnified from the czars and controlling one-sixth of the globe, has only one object—the victory of communism at whatever price in human life.

Russia—and its communist bloc as the main arsenal for North Vietnam, is evidently anxious to erode American war potential, and what a propaganda ruse, as it waves an olive branch and points to American imperialism. Besides, the USSR is watching closely their long cherished goal—the Mediterranean sea beyond the historical Dardanelles.

U.S. Marines may find many surprises in the treacherous, partisan type of uncustomary warfare in Vietnam. This is a typical heritage imparted by the Tartars on the Russians and widely practiced by the Communists. Nevertheless, the enduring American resistance and sacrifices in the distant land of Southeast Asia encourages the rising wave in Czechoslovakia. In postwar years unprecedented Communist expansion went unchecked, the most tragic being the enslaving massacre of Budapest in 1956 and the seizure of Cuba by Castro at the doorstep of Florida.

Czechoslovakia has its freedoms with America since World War I, when T.G. Masaryk signed its independence on October 18, 1918 in the same Independence

Hall in Philadelphia, with the same pen and at the same table as did George Washington in 1776. But today Czechoslovakia is not free although it so happens it is the only captive nation bordering the USSR that now has no Soviet army of occupation.

Hungary, Poland, and East Germany in particular, have large numbers of Red divisions. The question ominously arises: If Czech resistance persists, will Soviet tanks again start rumbling over the Czech border as they did in Budapest? Khrushchev, with whom both Eisenhower and J.F. Kennedy fraternized, ordered those tanks to Hungary. This same Khrushchev also once represented a most unparalleled Trojan horse in New York City, where he boorishly pounded the table with his shoe during the UN session and from a New York balcony called himself the "prisoner on Manhattan." He even allowed nuclear warheads to be placed in Cuba.

Now Communist typical mismanagement after twenty years of unscrupulous tyranny in Czechoslovakia, which we followed during our various visits, reached the end of its rope, and a minor incident started the trouble. It happened in Prague university student dormitories last November. The constant lack of electricity and heating in dormitories infuriated students. Candles were being used and the condition was beyond the imagination of our explosive U.S. slums.

After repeated vain pleading and petitions, students organized a so-called "candle procession" to Hradcany, president Novotny's residential castle. It was brutally suppressed by the SNB security police who not only dispersed students but entered dormitories to beat both boys and girls in their respective quarters. This was too much. The public was overwhelmingly on the side of the students

and the general feeling was so explosive that Communist lackey Novotny flew to Moscow for help. Yet before Brezhnev came to Prague, the progressive Slovak Dubcek had taken over as secretary of the Central Committee, leaving Novotny only the presidency of the republic. Brezhnev had to confirm the fait accompli without interference.

Novotny tried to organize another putsch but failed when his principal accomplice, General Sejna, chose to escape, not to comradely Russia but to capitalist America, while the next ranking officer committed suicide. That did it. A wave of invincible indignation arose throughout the country with the passionate cry: Novotny resign. This he ingloriously did on March 22, even before the Central Committee meeting.

The Prague atmosphere still continues tense, only a spark may ignite an explosion. Soviet tanks and divisions are poised on three sides of Czechoslovak boundaries. But 12 years after Budapest makes a great difference. Soviets today play the role of peace dove and cannot quite afford to let their tanks loose on Czechoslovakia. Yet this could be portentous since what Bismarck said in the previous century still remains valid: "Whoever rules Bohemia becomes master of Europe." This remark is also symptomatically similar to that of King Philip of Spain centuries ago: "He who controls Cuba controls the Americas." (What about this, America, with another hot summer coming up?)

Czechs have always felt warm heartedly toward their big Slavonic brother, Russia, but they now have learned their lesson. On September 8, 1947, before our departure from Czechoslovakia, I was invited to visit Czech foreign minister, Jan Masaryk.

The meeting took place in the

same Cerninsky palace in Prague where, a few months later, just two weeks after the February Communist putsch, he was conveniently liquidated. During our discussion I commented: "American friends are concerned that Communists are preparing a putsch." Jan Masaryk replied: "They will not do it, Russians will prefer a loyal friend rather than a rebellious subject." Evidently he was an overly friendly democrat and unaware of the pathological dimensions of Stalin.

When the U.S.A. announced its generous Marshall Plan and Czechoslovakia gladly offered to join the Western community, Stalin invited Jan Masaryk to Moscow. After his return, Masaryk characterized the entire mission thus: "I came to Moscow as a minister of a free country and returned as a serf."

The history of the last 20 years of Czechoslovakia is the sad illustration of a disastrous serfdom. Is the new dawn now rising over the land of Jan Hus, Comenius and Masaryk a sign of better things to come? Friends we have met during our visits this last decade have said they were repeatedly disappointed so they prefer not to nourish illusions.

On T. G. Masaryk's birthday last March 7, thousands of students and public marched to Masaryk's grave on Lany's cemetery and one proclamation read: "Even though you were exiled for 20 years from your homeland and your grave was crated and the public not allowed to stop at your last resting place, we have never forgotten."

So America, your sacrifices in Vietnam, so unheralded by the Western world, are a great source of courage and inspiration for the enslaved Communist satellites. They know that someone, somewhere, is willing to die to let freedom ring on this earth.