

Transformations of Opposition and Dissent in Prague and Brno in the Era of “the Normalization Regime”: Resistance to the Communist Regime between 1969 and 1989¹

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Abstract: The article deals with various periods and changes relating to opposition and dissent in the time of the Czechoslovak “normalized regime”. The text is divided into four parts, where the author analyses questions concerning a) term “the normalized regime”, b) different periods and expressions acceptable for each phase, c) activities produced by members of the resistance and d) the forms of repression used against protagonists of opposing and dissident movements by the Communist regime and its secret police. The main objective of the article is to draw attention to specific features of Prague and Brno’s oppositional environment and to make connections between the situation in the CSSR and international events.

Key words: the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Dissent, “the Normalization Regime”, Opposition, Repression, Resistance, the Soviet Bloc

Introduction

A great number of articles and papers have been produced on the subject of opposition and dissent. In this context, the article tries simply to draw attention to some connotations and

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phenomena which are interesting, worth mentioning, perhaps less generally and which can bring something new to consideration of the area in question.

The aim of this paper is to describe individual periods and those events of significance which occurred within them, to analyse similarities and differences between the usage of certain terms, and to analyse the activities of participants in opposition movements and ways in which they were oppressed in terms both of each phase and of the period as a whole. It also refers to the situation in other countries of the Soviet Bloc. Last but not least, it attempts to situate Czechoslovak developments in their international context – that is to say, Western Europe and the Cold War.

First, it is necessary to specify a particular objective of this paper. As distinct from the somewhat different conditions in Slovakia, it will be dealing in particular with the situation in Bohemia and Moravia, namely with Prague and Brno, which represented the main centres of resistance against “the normalization regime” in Communist Czechoslovakia. Opposition and dissent had gone through different periods and transformations dependent on developments in Czechoslovakia, in the USSR and the situation within the context of the Cold War. Consequently, participation in opposition movements varied in terms of the forms their activities took and the extent of repressive measures by the Communist regime. Nevertheless for the twenty years in question no reforming stream emerged within the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia; all opposition groups and dissident movements developed only outside the Party. In Poland or Hungary the mass movements were formed, but this phenomena had not conditions for originating in Czechoslovakia, therefore the dissent became isolated till the end in a “ghetto”.

The outline of this article is divided into four parts: firstly the author describes the regime and attempts to classify it according to certain criteria; then the text will be focused on the chronology and terminology typical for Czech conditions; thirdly, different kinds of dissident activity will be discussed; fourthly and finally, corresponding devices used by the power against members of the resistance will be analysed.

Because there are sometimes difficulties involved in engaging with this twenty-year period, the term “the normalization regime” is used instead of “normalization”, because the so called normalization was only a short phase at the beginning of this period, something that will be discussed in more detail shortly. Besides the expression “normalization regime” the term “real socialism” is sometimes employed.

One more thing which is focused on in the introduction, is the use of quotation marks around the expressions *normalization* and *the normalization regime*. The reasoning here is as follows:

the new regime installed after defeat of the Prague Spring did not normalize the situation towards democracy (to normality or a normal situation), but returned the regime to its position before the year 1968 with the objective of “normalizing” Czech society and its political system in the direction of authoritarianism. Therefore using these terms in quotation marks is preferred to emphasize the questionable logic of the whole situation. Another way of expressing these notions is the employment of terms such as *so called* or more accurately *what was known as normalization/the normalization regime*, because “so called” can have a negative connotation in English and it is not suitable for this purpose.

So what exactly was this *regime*?

1. “The Normalization Regime”

“The normalization regime” covers the period from April 1969 to November 1989. The beginning of this regime is connected with the unsuccessful attempt of reforming communists to make some changes within the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia during the Reform Process Prague Spring and with the subsequent invasion of Czechoslovakia by five countries of the Warsaw Pact in August 1968. Hardliners from the Communist Party at that time crushed Alexander Dubček’s reform leadership into submission and prepared conditions for the coming of Gustáv Husák to power. Nevertheless not everybody accepts this date as the beginning of “normalization”. Some tend towards to 21st August 1968 or slightly earlier, others to 21st August 1969 or even later. At any rate, April 1969 is a logical milestone in this period and it is often used for these purposes, so this paper will follow that usage.

The era of “the normalization regime” is divided into two phases: from 1969 to 1971 and from 1972 to 1989. As determination it could be employed the typology of authoritarian regimes provided by J. J. Linz and A. Stepan (1996: 42) and Linz’s models based on those of H. G. Skilling (Balík, Kubát 2004: 61). Before proceeding with the analysis of each period the author proposes to introduce a different approach to Czechoslovak “real socialism” as employed by Czech historians and political scientists who approach the era of “the normalization regime” with distinct notions. On the one hand, historians usually label this period a *totalitarian regime* – in the same way as they mark the whole Communist regime from February 1948 onwards. For them words such as “totality” or “totalitarianism” are synonymous with the Communist era in Czechoslovakia from 1948 to 1989. On the other hand, political scientists regard “the normalization regime” as a *posttotalitarian regime* and mostly use the expression “totalitarian” for the phase up to March 1953. The attention should be drawn to this difference in usage on

account of the fact that it provokes discussions between both academic circles and also because the author encountered this problem in the Warsaw East European Conference, where Czech and Polish historians and political scientists addressed this question and tried to explain their own statements. The author's view is that this dilemma persists unanswered up to the present day. In this article the definition relating to authoritarianism is adhered to, on the grounds of its being more accurate.

Nevertheless, the first period is in itself difficult to classify. According to Czech political scientists (Balík, Hloušek, Holzer, Šedo 2006: 160-161) one can choose between elements of *early posttotalitarianism* and *consultative posttotalitarianism*, to a certain extent also *quasitotalitarian posttotalitarianism*. What seems obvious is that it was a short dynamic phase close to totality with control by the communist state over the population, which resulted in a new diversification of society. Firstly, members of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (the so called *technocracy*) were ordered according to a system of nomenclature determining who can reach which position. Secondly, the group of people expelled by purges and checkups – a large number of intellectuals, artists, writers etc. – were excluded from the official sphere and deprived of the possibility of public activities (the *intelligentsia*, the inner core of the opposition). Thirdly, the Central Committee signed with the public "*the social contract*" guaranteeing people employment and social security, improvement of living standards, and satisfaction of material needs under the condition that they would give up their individual and civil rights, that the private sphere would be removed and that they would take no part in political activities. This degree of tacit popular acceptance for the "order" restored by force was the exact "normalization" and the aim of Husák's leadership. This phase ended after elections to the Federal Assembly in November 1971. Its result showed that the situation was entirely normalized, though the point of these developments became clearer in the summer of 1972, when trials were held against opposition leaders and dealt decisively with oppositional structures.

The next phase, from 1972 until 1989 is simply defined as *frozen posttotalitarianism*. Control mechanisms installed in the previous phase were preserved and obligations resulting from "the social contract" were fulfilled without problems. The Central Committee of the Communist Party concentrated on a "pact of calm" and possession of political power, while the Czechoslovak Secret Police (the StB) continued with the deterrence of dissidents and the suppression of oppositional activities. These repressions were initially successful, but gradually ceased to be effective. This system is already labeled as "the normalization regime" or "the regime installed during normalization" (Balík, Hloušek, Holzer, Šedo 2006: 159).

The last years of the Soviet Bloc are quite curious, because whereas in most countries of this region the model of *mature posttotalitarianism* emerged, in Czechoslovakia the freezing of the system survived. In the USSR thanks to M. Gorbacov and his "perestroika", plurality in all dimensions except the political sphere had been established and the Communist leadership introduced important changes. The anti-Communist opposition in Poland and Hungary became stronger, demanded reform of the regime and cooperated with the leading party. By contrast, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was divided into two parts (*older members with ideologically orthodox orientation versus pragmatically oriented younger members*) and was not able to accept the dynamics of social development and react adequately to the situation. As a result, the Central Committee lost support and its impossibility to start any reforms simultaneous with obvious pressure from society led to the fall of "the normalization regime".

2. Chronology and Terminology

We now turn to the next stage of the analysis, dealing with problems of chronological periods and the problems connected with terminology. Three phases of resistance against the Communist regime in Prague and Brno are outlined: 1. the beginning of the regime, 2. from the first quarter of the 1970s and 3. before the Velvet Revolution. In each case a stimulus appeared, which caused changes in people's thinking and initiated protests or other forms of oppositional activity on a larger scale. During the period covering the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s the opposition had formed as a reaction to the occupation and beginning of "normalization". In the 1970s members of opposing groups from the first phase of "normalization" tried to continue their resistance against the regime and from about 1975 they formed connections with a worldwide movement defending human rights on the basis of *the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe* being held in Helsinki. In the second half of the 1980s Czech dissidents reacted to liberation and changes in the Soviet Union including questions like improvement living standards, greater pluralism, the introduction of private property or adherence to basic human rights and freedoms.

With regard to terminology one has to observe that the question is at once both easy and difficult. Czech historians do not deal with definitions and notions concerning people who disagreed with "the normalization regime" or the Communist leadership, unlike specialists in Germany, Hungary or Poland. With regard to the situation in the Czech Republic and other countries of the Soviet Bloc, the Prague historian Petr Blažek (2005) has written a study. On account of this solitary text in the field and in virtue of the situation in present Czech academia

this paper tends towards the simple distinction used by another Czech historian Milan Otáhal (2002: 68-69). He works with two terms only – *opposition* and *dissent* and with the criterion of political/unpolitical. For simplicity the following chart has been created:

<i>Period</i>	<i>Space of time</i>	<i>Main expressions</i>	<i>Additional expressions</i>
First	1969 – 1972	socialist opposition	political opposition
Second	1972 – 1987	civic dissent	unpolitical dissent / civic opposition
Third	1987 – 1989	political dissent	political opposition / civic opposition

The periods are offered primarily in a spirit of orientation, the bold terms are more definite, the weak terms more supplementary. Firstly, the criterion political/unpolitical should be explained. This depends on the presence or absence of political programmes. In the first and third period members of the resistance against “the normalization regime” wrote programmes with a political orientation, whereas in the second period dissidents resigned from the political sphere and created unpolitical (literary, dramatic, philosophical) texts. Therefore *civic dissent* is used for this middle period. Simultaneously, it indicates that in the first phase members of opposition created leftist and socialist programmes – therefore Otáhal calls them a *socialist opposition*. In contrast, dissidents at the time before the fall of the regime focused on topics like democracy, pluralism and partial capitalism, hence they are termed *political dissent* or maybe one might characterise them under the term *democratic dissent*.

Using expressions opposition or dissent depends on the position of representatives in relation to the system. If they chose to fight against the authoritarian regime and its exponents, they were the *opposition*. In the same way, in the first period people fought against the regime as the whole, while in the third phase they stood against the leadership of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party only. The term *dissent* is mostly used for those who chose not to fight, preferred dialogue to power and wanted the Party to be a potential partner in dialogue. In 1987 a change from civic to political dissent occurred because of differences between generations, the diverse approach to demonstrations and the potentially disruptive isolation of the dissidents’ ghetto (more Otáhal 1994: 71-75).

It should be added here that both the notions “opposition” and “dissent” are quite closely linked and it is common to use *opposition* for the whole era. Even if civic opposition is more often used for the period 1972–1977 and *dissent* after it, *opposition/opposing movement/opposing forces* remain important and frequently used terms in historians’ and political scientist’ studies concerning “the normalization regime”.

Also in relation to this topic, it is worth noting that in Slovakia there was a different situation, as Blažek has pointed out (2005: 21). The Catholic Church played a more important role in Slovakia than in Bohemia and Moravia, where the Church as a whole did not become either a political or a moral pillar for dissidents. The Slovak political scientist Juraj Maruša divided forces against the regime in the 1980s into two broad camps. *Civil dissent* was oriented towards advocacy of human rights and was connected through significant personalities with Prague and Brno's dissident environment, but was not very numerous. *Christian dissent* consisted of oppositely oriented Catholic activists with the support of the Underground Church, but some individuals developed Christian-democratically oriented political activities. In addition to these two environments, other groups existed in Slovakia, such as the group around Alexander Dubček or activists of the Hungarian national minority.

A significant point to observe is that in Czechoslovak conditions other terms apart from those of "dissent" and "opposition" are not very much used in comparison with those countries in a similar situation, where "rebellion", "revolt" and other terms, often with supplementary adjectives, make an appearance. However, in this article the expression *the resistance against "the normalization regime"* is also used, by reason that it enables to combine "opposition" and "dissent" into one conceptual notion.

The final point to make in relation to this theme is that representatives of the Czechoslovak Communist Party had their own terminology for people standing up to the system. Very often members of the resistance were labelled as "antisocialist (destructive) elements", "antisocialist forces", "hostile elements", "inner enemies", "internal adversaries" or "illegal structures". If communists used "opposition", they did it only with quotation marks "*opposition*" or as "*so called opposition*".

3. Activities of Opposition and Dissent

The next two issues concern forms of activity and repression. In general terms, it should be recalled that actions carried out by members of the resistance and repressive measures taken against them were an essential component of the Communist regime. Therefore activities produced by the opposition movement, which would be normal and legal in a democratic state, were, in the authoritarian system of "the normalized Czechoslovakia", supposed to be illegal and were systematically suppressed by the Czechoslovak Secret Police. In terms of their moderate actions opposition and dissidents were subjected to unreasonably hard sanctions, something which will be commented on in last part of this article.

We now turn to particular activities carried out by the opposition movement in each period of the regime. Some of them covered the whole period, such as the distribution of leaflets, writing letters to official institutions and state representatives (mostly to the government, the president, the parliament), editing secretly typed editions (*samizdat*) as well as meetings and endless discussions. But in addition to these operations other actions were carried out in each period, and these will now be considered.

It has been already said that at the beginning of “the normalization regime” members of the opposition prepared programmes of a political character. The texts which expressed these programmes were leftist oriented, because the whole society inclined to socialism, though in various forms. The most important opposition groups were three in number and all of them created their own socialist programmes. *The Revolutionary Youth Movement* had its base only in Prague and was represented above all by Petr Uhl and Sybille Plogstedt. The movement was very radical in its programme and was the most extreme left of the three. Other groups, *the Socialist Movement of the Czechoslovak Citizens* and *the Czechoslovak Movement for Democratic Socialism*, had orientations closer to classic socialism and democratism. All the opposition groups had one common objective – they criticised “the normalization regime”, with its bureaucratic centralism, and they wanted to carry out an antibureaucratic revolution in order to create a democratic state and political pluralism. The most active people in this period were ex-Communists and former Socialists, among others some evangelicals, catholics and student leaders became also part of the opposition.

In the next phase of the regime dissidents refrained from the creation of further political programmes and decided on different kinds of action. The focus of their activities was “at home”, it may be said *in private* – mostly in flats, gardens, cottages and some other places, which could be more secret than any public places. Worthy of particular mention here are the underground university, *samizdat* and home theatre. In relation to these activities one might also complement the term “civic dissent” those of “parallel structures” or “counterculture”.

The Open University (or underground university) was the privileged institution of Brno’s dissident environment, although *home seminars* took place also in Prague. From the early 1980s Brno’s underground activities had gained a new and specific image. Through *the Jan Hus Educational Foundation* significant experts, political scientists, philosophers, authors and other

personalities went to Brno and gave lectures in flats according to language of the speakers.³ This distinctly conspiratorial activity had its special rules and ways of success and an audience, sometimes from the young. In addition to the underground university primarily housing seminars and discussion clubs, debates and lectures played a role in both centres – Prague and Brno.

In contrast to the previous period, intellectuals and the underground became a leading part of the resistance, although ex-Communists, ex-Socialists and Christians remained dissidents. With the underground development of secretly printed editions (literary and musical) and production connected with theatres, *home theatre* emerged at this time. Vlasta Chramostová as an actress and Václav Havel with Pavel Kohout as playwrights were involved in performances in Prague flats, whereas the *authors' readings* of Milan Uhde, *acted-out readings* of František Derfler and the *official alternative scene* represented by the Goose on a String Theatre took place in Brno.

The transformation from civic to political dissent occurred about 1987. Former members of political parties and dissidents founded various groupings, some ex-Communists established the *Club for Socialist Reconstruction – Renewal* and reform members from the People's Party created a reformist element within their party. Even though dissidents remained isolated, a new generation of students and young people brought new views into social life. Under the influence of international movements, new initiatives were founded and attempted to cooperate with anti-Communist movements in other countries of the Warsaw Pact. In this way dissidents and the young established: *the Independent Peace Association*, *the Movement for Civic Freedom*, *the Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity*, *the East European Informative Agency* and others. These initiatives together with samizdat and underground music groups gradually gained support from the public.

Till then people who had lived according to official government policy and had exploited regime guarantees, but had not been connected with "parallel structures", started to be dissatisfied with the living standards in comparison to the West and stimulated by changes occurring in neighbouring states of the Soviet Bloc. Under these circumstances and certain pressure from the unofficial environment the so called "*grey zone*" consisting of unsatisfied persons began to attend demonstrations, manifestations and fora arranged by the dissident movements and new associations. As well as attending demonstrations seeking to commemorate anniversaries of Czechoslovakia, people signed petitions, notably *the Several Sentences Petition*, created in the summer of 1989. Theatres and students also became more active as already

³ There were three sections. English speaking lecturers went to flats of Petr Oslzly and Rostislav Pospíšil, French speaking people to Milan Jelinek's family. The first visitor was the London philosopher David J. Levy, who gave his lecture in December 1984.

illustrated in relation to the Goose on a String Theatre and the Ha-Theatre in Brno or the students' magazine "Review 88", its title making reference to "Charter 77".

4. Repression

The repression of and attacks against members of dissident and opposition groups were not as harsh as at the beginning of the 1950s, when show trials against significant representatives of the Communist Party and members of the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party were held, but they were still very unpleasant and annoying. For the continued persistence of "the normalization regime", systematic persecution, monitoring activities and chicanery were led in particular by the Czechoslovak Secret Police and its informants. In the same way as in previous parts each period will be analysed separately.

The suppression of the socialist opposition began very early – already at the end of the 1969. The attack was led against the Revolutionary Youth Movement with successful results for the StB. The movement was destroyed and its leaders were taken into custody. The first significant trial held within "the normalization regime" took place in March 1971. Among the accused P. Uhl was sentenced to four years and S. Plogstedt to two and a half years.

Further aggression came in November 1971 shortly before elections to the Federal Assembly. Several opposing groups were preparing handouts with recommendations for voters not to vote or to vote secretly and scratch the ballots of the National Front. In that way people could express their discontent with the regime and not permit the Communist Party to win elections. Participants of the "leaflet action" were first arrested and other members of the socialist opposition followed next months. Trials were held in the summer of 1972 and judiciary charged forty-seven persons with the highest punishment for Jaroslav Šabata, who received a prison sentence of six and a half years. The nature of the accusations was in all of the trials essentially the same: persons were charged with crimes against the Republic, with subversion of the CSSR and with hostility to "the normalization regime" (Otáhal 1993: 18, 30).

As already indicated, punishments were not as extreme as in the first years of the Communist regime, but the Communist Party was still able to initiate politically motivated trials against its adversaries. The political climate of the Cold War was then enacted in the spirit of normalization conditions between the United States and the Soviet Union, so relations between them were not disturbed. Until the occupation of the CSSR in the summer of 1968 events in Czechoslovakia had been regarded as an internal matter of the Soviet Bloc and the Soviet Union had to ensure calm "at home" among others through the pacification of oppositional elements

(Otáhal 1993: 31). Nevertheless protests against trials and sentences had found a response among a range of European intellectuals, international organizations, and exile presses as well as French socialists, British Labourists and members of several communist parties.

The next wave of repression came in the second half of the 1970s. Trials were mounted against the authors of *the Manifesto of Charter 77*. The stimulation for this initiative was the trial of the protagonists of the music group the Plastic People of the Universe in 1976, which for dissidents amounted to an attack on freedom of speech. A hysterical campaign against signatories to the Manifesto culminated in January 1977, when the Red Right and artists in the National Theatre stood out against Charter 77 and appealed for subscription to the so called "Anticharter". As justification provided for people who had no possibility to read the Manifesto it was proclaimed that the Chartists had committed crimes which included, above all, subversion of the Republic and damaging the Republic's interests abroad.

Initiatives similar to the Czechoslovak Charter 77 originated in other Warsaw Pact countries and made reference to the declaration *Treaty of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* accepted at the Helsinki Conference by the communist states concerned. Because of international pressure and support for dissidents from abroad the Czechoslovak government did not mount political trials on a larger scale, but turned to different sorts of oppression, above all against speakers for Charter 77. Nevertheless the Communist Party took advantage of another activity *the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted* and in October 1979 organised a trial of members of the CDUP, who were at the same time signatories of the Manifesto. Even if the goal of the offensive – destroying Charter 77 – had not been realized, systematic deterrence together with minimum information from the mass media to the public about trials and the situation in general brought about the isolation of Chartists from society.

In addition to this situation civic dissent generally was persecuted through forms of oppression carried out by the StB and its informants. Among these the Czechoslovak Secret Police used various kinds of chicanery and threats, further house searches, wiretaps, monitoring of activities as well as the deterrence of dissidents, members of their families and friends. At this time a lot of members of the opposing movement decided to emigrate and some of them tried to help "home dissent" from exile.

Though repression became an enduring component of the regime and lasted till its end, its intensity was gradually reduced and its technical mechanisms stopped to be functional. Very often people involved in political dissent were arrested before or during demonstrations practised on the occasion of anniversaries, but, on the whole, these actions appeared ineffective and

embarrassing. Typical punishments towards the end of the regime included arrest for two consecutive forty-eight hour periods, paying fees or conferment of admonitions. The campaign, which started after publication of *the Several Sentences Petition*, was conducted again among the Red Right, but this time much more moderately than in 1977. Also punishments were not so strict because of the fall of communism in neighbouring countries, pressure from society and the gradual isolation of Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

Intellectuals together with some other social groups, such as students, the underground, young people and actors persisted as the main forces of dissent. Neither workers nor churches had become an important and numerous part of dissent, therefore mass movements of the type of the Polish Solidarity or the Hungarian Democratic Forum had not arisen in the CSSR. The opposition in most countries of the Soviet Bloc arranged contacts with state power and could cooperate with it; by contrast Czechoslovak resistance forces remained isolated, did not penetrate into wider spheres and were unsuccessful in their attempts at dialogue with the Central Committee. While in foreign states liberalization took place, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was still very conservative and had no will to carry out changes. The gradual malfunctioning of a repressive system as well as the political system as such caused embarrassment and the non-effectiveness of the whole “normalization regime”, which collapsed in November 1989.

Conclusion

In this article the author has attempted to report on events in Prague and Brno under “real socialism” in the 1970s and 1980s, to focus on particularly interesting questions and to draw attention to some problematic phenomena. Now, in conclusion, the findings will be presented separately according to individual issues.

The first of these it was the definition of the term “the normalization regime”, which evokes some controversy between historians and political scientists. In this paper preference is accorded to a simple division into two periods. Whereas the first period is awkward to classify and includes elements of *early* and *consultative posttotalitarianism* and partially also some aspects of *quasitotalitarian posttotalitarianism* (1969–1971), the second is clearly defined as *frozen posttotalitarianism* (1972–1989) despite the situation in other states of the Soviet Bloc, where at the end of these regimes mature posttotalitarianism arose.

The second area which was analysed is the chronological delimitation of and, in particular, terminology issues concerning the Czech opposition environment. With the help of

a simple chart an attempt has been made to distinguish between individual periods and to choose for each of them appropriate terms. This was carried out on the basis of activities produced by members of the resistance, which varied in every phase. It has been found out that two expressions are the most suitable for Prague and Brno's conditions — *opposition* and *dissent* — as will be clear from the title of this article. Although *opposition* could be used for the whole era it is inclined to using this term for the beginning phase only (1969–1972). Afterwards the expression *dissent* is preferable, because members of resistance ceased to fight against the regime and wanted to initiate a dialogue with communist leaders (1972–1989). Further, these notions have been specified with corresponding adjectives and as a result the following distinction was established: *socialist opposition* (1969–1972), *civic dissent* (1972–1987) and *political dissent* (1987–1989).

In the next part of the text concrete initiatives and opposing actions were dealt with. Activities produced by members of the opposition movement were described and attention was drawn also to specific features in each phase. From the late 1960s to the early 1970s opposing groups created socialist political programmes and set up discussion meetings, in the 1970s and 1980s dissidents edited secretly published editions, met within the underground university and took part in home theatres, and at the end of the 1980s people standing against the system founded new movements and initiatives with programmes, in which they attempted to reform the Czechoslovak regime in the direction of political plurality and democracy.

In the last section the article focused on characteristic repressive devices used against participants of the opposition and dissident movements. Through key trials of leaders of resistance, especially in the first period of “real socialism”, and through other repressive arrangements used till the end of the communist regime, the situation was illustrated and it was shown how Czechoslovak events had been influenced by the international course of events.

Finally, the main findings of the article could be summarised by means of the following four statements. (1) No reform stream originated within the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in spite of disputes between the two wings of the party, in particular at the end of the regime. Therefore no intra-party opposition was created and all groups of resistance emerged out of the Communist Party. (2) No mass movement after the fashion of movements in some neighbouring countries of the Warsaw Pact developed, because Czechoslovak inhabitants made do with the “normalized” system and gave up political or civic activities. Neither workers nor peasants nor Christians participated in demonstrations and fora on a mass scale and they did not become a decisive force in the resistance. (3) Dissent remained isolated and restricted to intellectuals for the whole era. Moreover, before the Velvet Revolution no communal co-ordinative organ was

established, which would enable someone to enter into dialogue with the Central Committee of the Party and bring about reforms. That is why opposition forces in Czechoslovakia did not cooperate with communist leaders as it was possible in Hungary or Poland, where the opposition held discussions with representatives of the leading party. (4) Eventually the Czechoslovak "normalized regime" was, by the late 1980s, so weak and its repressive measures so ineffective, that the activities of StB members, informants and ordinary communists were more embarrassing than successful.

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Notice: Electronic sources verified as of October 4, 2007.

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