The Czechoslovak Communist Party's Revolution, 1986-1990

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Submitted in fulfilment of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

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Abstract

This thesis argues that the Czechoslovak Communist Party (*KSČ*) and its policies precipitated the course of Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution. It draws upon both opposition and Communist Party documents across twenty-five state, regional and local archives in the Czech and Slovak republics, as well as secret police reports, interview testimony, audiovisual materials and newspaper reports to offer a comprehensive reappraisal of both Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution, and the last few years of Communist rule which preceded it.

This thesis analyses the responses of grassroots, district and regional Communist Party committees to the *KSČ* leadership's own version of *perestroika*, known as '*přestavba*' (restructuring), between 1986 and 1989. In contrast to Michal Pullmann's (2011) work, which focussed only on the Party 'elite', the contention presented here is that the *KSČ* leadership used *přestavba* to put more responsibility onto local officials, whilst simultaneously preventing reform of the top Party structures. Local Party minutes show how this led to increased resentment and distrust among the Party membership, which affected the extent to which *přestavba*'s policies were implemented. The instability which *přestavba* caused also manifested itself in the official Socialist Youth Union (*SSM*). Newspaper reports, interviews and Party minutes show how *přestavba* caused tensions within the *SSM* membership as it tried to remain both relevant and representative of young people, and at the same time maintain its loyalties to the *KSČ*. Secret police and local opposition reports show that, after 17 November 1989, the *SSM* not only opposed the *KSČ*'s reaction to the emerging political crisis, but that in doing so spread news of the revolution and encouraged strike action. The *KSČ*'s own responses

during the revolution, never subject to any serious historical analysis, are also offered here. Mirroring the approach taken by James Krapfl (2009), who studied Czechoslovakia's revolution from the perspective of the 'winners' and drew extensively on local and regional opposition documents, this thesis looks at the losing side by drawing on equivalent regional and local Communist Party sources. The tensions *přestavba* caused affected the Party's ability to handle the demands made on it during November and December 1989. And having been encouraged to find their own solutions to the crisis, local functionaries and the Party grassroots decided instead to reject both the Party leadership and *přestavba* itself.

Contents

Preface

The thesis began with a single idea: to move beyond the standard narrative of Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution in which everything was based around Prague, with only an occasional glimpse of Bratislava. I wanted to find out instead how the revolution played out across all regions and districts of the former Czechoslovak state. Although some local histories of the revolution had been published which narrated the revolution in great detail, often including interviews with former local 'leaders' of the revolution, a systematic analysis of the revolution as it unfolded across Czechoslovakia had yet to emerge. During the research for this project, several other historians were independently working along similar lines. James Krapfl's *Revolúcia s ľudskou tvárou* (2009), sought to understand the revolution from the perspective of local Czech and Slovak opposition movements.[1] In relation to my own research, Krapfl's work proved useful in revealing the local tensions within Slovak opposition groups. Ironically, perhaps, reading his minutely researched work into individual local opposition movements made me increasingly curious about how their opponents—the Czechoslovak Communist Party—viewed the same events. Also, Michal Pullmann's *Konec experimentu* (2011) offered the first study of the Czechoslovak Communist Party's version of *perestroika*, known as *přestavba*. His main argument, that the reforms contributed to the regime's loss of confidence in its own ideology, offers one explanation of the Party's collapse during the 1989 revolution. Pullmann's study, however, stops short of revolution itself and cannot be considered as an analysis of how the Party 'imploded' during it.[2] Pullmann's work, which was published after I had

[1] J. Krapfl, *Revolúcia s ľudskou tvárou* (Kalligram, 2009).

[2] M. Pullmann, *Konec experimentu: Přestavba a pád komunismu v Československu* (Praha, 2011), p. 218.

completed my own research into the *KSČ*'s reforms offered an affirmation of my own developing thesis regarding the importance of *přestavba* in the revolution. The similar gaps which both Pullmann and Krapfl identified, including the emphasis upon Prague and the lack of attention paid to *přestavba*, also form the basis for this thesis. However, in making use of both opposition materials and, for the first time, Communist Party documents from district, regional and state archives, it goes beyond what both Pullmann and Krapfl have achieved to offer a fresh perspective on Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution and the years which preceded it.

The decision to focus on the Czechoslovak Communist Party (*Komunistická strana Československa*, hereafter *KSČ*) arose from the materials which primarily lay in those local archives. Whereas much of the opposition-based materials in the regions were often facsimile copies of what existed elsewhere, or differed very little from statements and proclamations issued elsewhere, time and again the surprising evidence cropped up in Party-based materials. First in newspaper articles, then in secret police reports, and finally in district, regional and state Party archives, more and more evidence emerged which seemed to contradict the familiar version of a revolution which pitted students and dissidents on one side, and the *KSČ* on the other. Although in manx dissident and student accounts the Communist Party's role in the revolution was perceived as being minimal, among the sources the Party's decisions, responses and behaviour appeared much more complex than previously supposed. Dissident activity, which for the most part remained confined to Prague throughout the 1970s and 1980s, cannot be a suitable starting point for understanding how the revolution took hold throughout the entire country. Similarly, scholarly discussion of the *KSČ* has been restricted to analyses of the top Party leadership, rather than considerations of its wider role in society as a mass political party. Furthermore, individual Party members who

aided the transition of power were implied to be doing so out of self-interest, rather than from any other possible motivation. In most of Czechoslovakia, where local Party officials held considerable sway and where levels of dissent were non-existent, the revolution as seen from a top-down, Prague perspective makes little sense. To understand Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution requires a new approach.

Analysing the revolution from the perspective of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, taking all the regions and districts of Czechoslovakia into account was challenging. I first had to get a sense of what happened during the revolution in Prague and within the *KSČ* leadership in order to then study what was going on elsewhere. The year (2010-2011) which I spent in the Czech and Slovak republics began with a survey of fifteen Czech and Slovak newspapers and magazines from October to December 1989, including the Czech *Mladá fronta* and Slovak *Smena*, the national dailies of the Socialist Youth Union; *Rudé právo*, the *KSČ* Central Committee's newspaper; newspapers of the National Front (the broad coalition of political parties and organisations, overseen by the *KSČ*) including *Svobodné slovo*, *Lud'* and *Zemědělské noviny.* I supplemented this broad overview of the revolution with reports in other regional and local newspapers from the local archives that I visited. Also, the Security Services Archive (*Archiv bezpečnostních složek*), part of the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic, hold daily State Security situation reports from October to December 1989, and gave me a sense of where the regime's interests lay concerning the opposition. It also allowed me to check claims made in newspapers of demonstrations, demands, whats type of opposition activity was taking place, and where.

From this initial research (which actually represented over half of the total time I spent in the Czech and Slovak republics), two things became clear. First, the *KSČ* and how it chose to react to the political crisis in November and December 1989 was varied

at every level of its organisation, at times unexpected, and not always consistent with what I had read elsewhere. Second, I realised that it would not be enough to analyse the actions of Communists without a wider understanding of the state of the Party and of the policies which it was implementing in the late 1980s. I had already identified that there was an existing gap in the literature concerning the late 1980s in Czechoslovakia, and no study existed on the *KSČ*'s reaction to the Soviet Union's *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) reforms. This gap was bridged by Michal Pullmann in 2011, shortly after I completed my fieldwork. Pullmann showed the interaction between Soviet *perestroika* with Czechoslovak *přestavba* (restructuring), and contrasted *KSČ* Presidium reports with other official sources (including newspapers and magazines). This rhetoric and the breakdown of ideological unity and stability which this had provided, according to Pullmann, contributed to the Party's eventual fall from power.[3] My own approach to *přestavba*, and the Party more generally, was largely based on my own research in the Presidium's archives, as well as minutes and records of discussions held in district and regional archives. Accessing sufficient material to draw more general conclusions about the state of the Party across the country involved visiting twenty-five regional, and district archives across the Czech Republic (including Prague, Brno, Ostrava, Plzeň, Třeboň, Opava, České Budějovice, Jablonec nad Nisou, Liberec, Lovosice, Lýsa nad Labem, Olomouc, Pardubice, Tábor and Teplice), and the Slovak Republic (Bratislava, Košice, Banská Bystrice, Poprad, and Levice). From the Communist archives, I was able to develop an understanding as to how local officials at the lowest levels of the Party were reacting to orders coming from Prague, not just in relation to *přestavba*, but also during the revolution as well.

[3] Pullmann, *Konec experimentu*, especially pp. 220-227.

Visits to regional and district archives also served to move away from an over-reliance on Prague-based sources as a means to analyse the revolution. The Party collections which lie in these archives, unlike the *KSČ* Presidium records in Prague do not just contain policy reports and resolutions of discussions, but written versions of verbal contributions from functionaries and Party members. Regional committees in particular also offered insight into local power bases. Those committees also often had several committee members who were simultaneously members of the Party's Central Committee, and the contributions of these functionaries are of significance in understanding the broader atmosphere within the *KSČ* during *přestavba.* District and regional Party records also hold regular (usually monthly) assessments of the political situation among grassroots Party members, which by their very nature are far more detailed and specific than the heavily edited versions which formed the statewide 'Inner Party Information' reports read by the Presidium. As, for reasons which will be explained, Czechoslovakia's *přestavba* reforms only really began to be implemented in the second half of 1988, my research into regional and local Communist Party committees focuses on 1989. Between 1986 and 1988 I rely on inner Party reports, Presidium decisions, Central Committee meetings, and newspaper reports to show the development of policy, before turning to local and district Party archives to show how these decisions played out on the ground.

The complexity of the Czechoslovak Communist state's institutional organisation is intimidating and deserves brief discussion for sake of clarity. Czechoslovakia, as a federative state (albeit nominally), had multiple levels of bureaucracy, with both Party and state administrative committees at each. Since 1968, the country had been divided into two federal republics: the Czech Socialist Republic (*Česká socialistická republika*), which was comprised of the traditional Bohemian

crown lands (that is, Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) and followed the present-day boundaries of the Czech Republic. It was further subdivided into seven regions (*kraje*) seventy-five districts (*okresy*) with Prague acting as both republican and state capital city. The Slovak Socialist Republic (*Slovenská socialistická republika*), which took the same boundaries as the present-day Republic of Slovakia was made up of three regions and thirty-seven districts, with Bratislava as the republican capital. Both Bratislava and Prague were elevated to the status of 'regions', with Brno, Plzeň, Ostrava and Košice having municipal status, lying somewhere between 'regional' and 'district' levels.[4] To achieve a more rounded view of the revolution, I visited at least one archive in each of the ten regions which made up the former Czechoslovakia, as well as other district archives, where possible.

I have also been conscious of overcompensating for the lack of research on the *KSČ* by only studying Party sources. Across all local and regional archives, I consulted both opposition documents from the two main umbrella organisations Civic Forum (*Občanské fórum*) and Public Against Violence (*Verejnosť proti násiliu*), as well as minutes and records from district and regional Communist Party meetings. Similarly, I conducted my own interviews with both former Communists and dissidents, including Petr Uhl (who, among other things, established the independent East European Information Agency in 1988), and Peter Zajac (a member of the Slovak opposition, and former member of the Slovak National Council). I also made extensive use of the many published interviews which exist with former dissidents and high-ranking Communist officials. For reasons of space and time it was not possible in my analysis of *přestavba* to analyse and appreciate various opposition interpretations of *KSČ* policy. To some

[4] For further information about the political system and the institutional structure of the state, see S. Zdobinský, *Elections in Czechoslovakia* (Prague, 1986).

extent, Michal Pullmann has already demonstrated how the growth of dissent in the late 1980s was facilitated by *přestavba* and how its discourse was used by them.[5] In my own work, I have made use of published volumes of the underground newspaper *Lidové noviny* (1988-1989), Radio Free Europe situation reports and secret police reports to provide necessary context to dissident activity in the pre-revolutionary period.

Above all, the thesis shows that it is not possible to understand the 1989 revolution without considering the Communist Party, its policies and its wider membership. It offers the first analysis of Czechoslovakia's revolution which places the *KSČ* at its centre. And in so doing, it argues that the Presidium, its functionaries, and its membership through *přestavba* created the conditions for revolution, and all of which directly affected the nature and course of it.

[5] Pullmann, *Konec experimentu*, pp. 167-172.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is not only the result of four years' work, but the maturation of many thoughts, ideas and interests which have been developing for a lot longer. A generous 5-year (2+3) scholarship from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), through the Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies funded not only the research for my thesis, but also my master's studies and postgraduate degree in Czech language which I completed at the University of Glasgow. I am also grateful to the Czech Ministry of Education, the Scottish-Czech-Slovak Society, and the Slovak Ministry of Education whose generous language scholarships allowed me to attend summer schools in Poděbrady (2008), Olomouc (2009) and in Bratislava (2010), respectively.

First as my undergraduate lecturer and mentor, and latterly as my Ph.D. supervisor, Dr. Mary Heimann has been unwavering in the support, dedication and kindness she has shown to me. She has regularly gone beyond the call of duty expected of any supervisor, going back to our Prague-Glasgow-Prague exchange concerning my original Ph.D. proposal in 2007, to her final comments and encouragement as submission drew closer. Without her enthusiasm for all things Czech, words of encouragement when I needed it, too many coffees to mention and, importantly, belief in this topic and my ability to complete it, I doubt this thesis would have reached completion. Around the History section at Strathclyde, Dr. Rogelia Pastor-Castro as my second supervisor, Dr. David Walker, and Margaret Jolly and Ann Bartlett have all offered knowing looks of sympathy in the corridor, words of encouragement and, in the case of Ann and Margaret, the best secretaries a department could have. I would also

like to acknowledge the support of Dr. Angela Bartie and Dr. Arthur McIvor in the Scottish Oral History Centre, based at the University of Strathclyde, who provided me with the interview equipment during my research.

At the University of Glasgow, within the Czech section of the School Modern Languages and Cultures, Dr. Jan Čulík has consistently made himself available offering both practical help and intellectual advice, particularly in preparation for my fieldwork in the Czech Republic. Dr. Mirna Šolić and Dr. Josef Švéda gave me first-rate Czech language tuition, emersion in Czech culture and tolerated my many grammatical mistakes. Prof. Rebecca Kay at the Department of Central and East European Studies oversaw supervision of my master's dissertation. I am pleased to report that the more interesting sections which I did not manage to include there have found a home in this thesis.

I am indebted to the people who, during my research stay in the Czech and Slovak republics between 2010-2011 have contributed to the completion of the thesis. I would like to thank the staffs of all the archives I visited and who helped me get the most out of my all-to-often brief research visits. A special thanks to Marta Švolíková in the State archive in Levice, and the anonymous staffs at the Jablonec nad Nisou and Tábor. The free tea, coffee and *Tatranky* were really appreciated. Also thanks to the team at the archive in Liberec for allowing me to stay in the archive's accommodation, and for the books they gifted to me. Also thanks to Karel Sieber at the Czech Television Archives (who I hope now understands why I was regularly skipping lunch); Hana Bortlová, at the Centre for Oral History (especially for the many cups of camomile tea); the staffs at the Security Services Archive in Prague and at the National Archives in Bratislava, all of whom helped with far too many photocopying requests; and the staff at the National Library of the Czech Republic (especially the one who talked to me about

dancing horses). Jana Jaskmanická, Josef Švéda and Erik Gschrei tolerated requests at odd hours for solutions to problematic translations. Also, to Jan and Dana Liškář, whom I met in 2008 in Ivančice, kindly gifted me their *Svobodné slovo* newspaper collection from November and December 1989 and with whom I am gratefully still in touch.

During fieldwork, I also made and renewed friendships which, given that they have endured me writing this thesis, I know will last many years to come. I would like to thank Eva and Robert Ponec who often had me round for home-cooked meals; to Erik Gschrei for dragging me out for late-night beers at Magic Planet; Josef Švéda who helped me integrate into Žižkov living; the Clarke family for putting me up during a brief stay in Poprad; Dr Elena Soler and Yuko Karasawa who tolerated my many rants; and especially to Harvey and Věra Cook who, since I got to know them in 2006, have always been around to help me out, especially when I first moved to Prague. They also gave me a place to stay during my research trip to western Bohemia, provided transport, food and humour, and are the most hospitable people I have met. I hope one day to repay the kindness they have shown me. My fellow Czechists Julia Clarke, Amina Al-Rajoub and Lea Ottocento have seen me struggle through this thesis. I first 'properly' started speaking Czech with Lea, the circumstances surrounding which were possibly responsible for our mythical search for *Dlouhé stráně*, followed by a less-than-mythical trip to Bruntál. Julia and Amina have been the best companions to share random moments of laughter in Poděbrady, Olomouc, Jihlava, Žďar, Česká Třebová, Prague, Budapest, and Glasgow. Their humour has kept me going, even when they were not around.

Dr. Ada-Charlotte Regelmann, Dr. Jeffrey Meadowcroft, Dr. Kim Dae Soon, Dr. Timofey Agarin, Dr. Rebecca Reynolds and Andrew Thurston have all continually supported me as friends and colleagues. My deepest thanks to go to Jeff, who made

moving offices so much more pleasant than I expected; and to Ada, who came over and said hello to me on our first day as postgraduates. Both kindly read the final version of the thesis, and many of the chapter drafts before it, and have always known exactly what I needed to hear. The few lines here cannot express my gratitude to them.

Finally, I would like to thank my brother Robert, and sister Lois, who put up with me especially through writing up, and who were there when it mattered most. And to my parents, Margaret and Norman, whose support and unquestioning faith got this project, and us all, to the finish.

Note on Abbreviations and Translations

Acronyms were used prolifically during the Communist period to refer to the multitude of state, regional and district levels of bureaucracy across the state. These are often reproduced by Czech and Slovak historians in their own work. For the native speaker of Czech or Slovak, abbreviations such as *ROH* (*Revoluční odborové hnutí/Revolučné odborové hnutie*, Revolutionary Trade Union Movement) or *JZD* (*Jednotné rolnické družstvo/Jednotné roľnické družstvo*, United Agricultural Cooperative) are as commonplace as the BBC to the native speaker of English. For the reader who is either unfamiliar with the field or languages, the number of acronyms, abbreviations and terms quickly becomes overwhelming. A further problem exists with cases like State Security, the Czechoslovak secret (or political) police, which can be abbreviated as *StB* or *ŠtB* according to either the Czech or Slovak original (*Státní bezpečnost/Štátní bezpečnosť*). Confusion can also arise with other acronyms such as *ČSR* which could equally stand for the Czech Socialist Republic (*Česká socialistická republika*), or the Czecho-Slovak Republic (*Česko-Slovenská republika*). To avoid confusion, I have avoided, as far as possible, using acronyms and abbreviations throughout the text. I have opted to use Czech acronyms rather than Slovak, for consistency and on the basis that the majority of sources I consulted used this form. Upon the first usage in the text, however, the full translation is offered, first in Czech, second in Slovak (where differences between the two exist). In the footnotes, titles appear in the original. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are the author's own.

Abbreviations used in this thesis are as follows:

ABS MV ČR	*Archiv bezpečnostních složek Ministerstv' vnitra České republiky* (Security Services Archive of the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic)
ČSSR	*Československá socialistická republika* (Czechoslovak Socialist Republic)
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
KNV	*Krajský národní výbor* (Regional National Committee)
KSČ	*Komunistická strana Československa* (Czechoslovak Communist Party)
KSS	*Komunistická strana Slovenska* (Slovak Communist Party)
KV	*Krajský výbor* (Regional Committee)
MěV	*Městský výbor*
NA ČR	*Národní archiv České republiky* (National Archives of the Czech Republic)
NF	*Národní fronta* (National Front)
ONV	*Okresní národní výbor* (District National Committee)
OV	*Okresní výbor* (District Committee)
SObA	*Státní oblastní archiv* (State Regional Archive)
SOkA	*Státní okresní archiv* (State District Archive)
SSM	*Socialistický svaz mladeže* (Socialist Youth Union)
StB	*Státní bezpečnost* (State Security)
ÚV KSČ	*Ústřední výbor Komunistická strana Československa* (Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party)

List of Illustrations

Introduction

Popular notions of Czechoslovakia's revolution have instead considered it as a swift and peaceful overthrow of an authoritarian regime led by a loose coalition of intellectuals and students are commonplace. This interpretation, present in the first newspaper reports of police violence on 17 November 1989--retrospectively held to have been the beginning of the revolution--continue to feed into our basic understanding of what happened during it.[1] British and American, alongside other Western journalists who found themselves in Czechoslovakia's capital, Prague, on 17 November, became the among the first to file detailed reports about the unrest.[2] Even Czechs and Slovaks heard reports of the 17 November march and the police violence via Western radio broadcasts into Czechoslovakia.[3] Although the Berlin Wall had been breached only nine days before, few could have guessed that an innocuous, legal student march could be the spark for revolution. The event had been co-organised by the official Socialist Youth Union (in Czech, *Socialistický svaz mládeže*; in Slovak, *Socialistický zväz mládeže*, hereafter *SSM*), and students unaffiliated to it, who called themselves the *Nezávislí studenti* (the Independent Students). The march ostensibly commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Jan Opletal at the hands of the Nazis in 1939, an event which had precipitated further student repression including the closure of all Czech

[1] J. Holland, 'Riot police use batons on Prague marchers', *The Times* (18 Nov. 1989); M. Battiata, 'Largest rally in Prague since '69 ends violently', *The Washington Post* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 1; J. Kaufman, 'Czech police smash protest', *The Boston Globe* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 1; E. Lucas, 'Czech police beat up protesters', *The Independent* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 1; M. Simmons, 'Czech riot police beat protesters', *The Guardian* (18 Nov. 1989); Anon., 'Clamor in the East; Riot Police Beat Marchers and Arrest dozens', *The New York Times* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 7.

[2] See collection of reporters' statements in *The New York Times* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 7; and *The Independent* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

[3] News of the march was sent to western news agencies that evening by Petr Uhl, the founder of the Czechoslovak section of the dissident East-European Information Agency (*Východoevropská informační agentura*). See P. Uhl, *Právo a nespravedlnost očima Petra Uhla* (Praha, 1998), pp. 75-76.

universities for the duration of the Second World War.[4] At the official end of the march, at the grave of Czech poet Karel Hynek Mácha in Vyšehrad cemetery, those who did not immediately disperse headed towards the city centre where the procession met Public Security (*Veřejná bezpečnost*/*Verejná bezpečnosť*)[5] officers, in riot gear who had blocked the surrounding streets. The police kettled and beat up the crowd as they tried to leave.[6] The march, which involved anywhere between fifteen thousand and fifty thousand marchers (depending on whose figures one believes),[7] was presented by *The Washington Post* as 'the worst episode'[8] of police violence against any demonstration over the previous two decades in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (*Československá socialistická republika*).

On Sunday 19 November, two days after the student march, more sensational details emerged in *The New York Times*: police and security forces had 'smashed the demonstration ... with truncheons and tear gas'. A twenty-year old student, named as Martin Šmíd, was also claimed to have been 'beaten to death' during the demonstration.[9] News of his rumoured death (which has remained the subject of much

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[4] In 1941, the International Students' Council in London established 17 November as International Students' Day in tribute to the repression shown against Czech universities, students and staff. Interestingly, the International Union of Students, which replaced the Council in 1945, was established in Prague and remained well-funded by the Czechoslovak government. More more information on the wartime student movement see P. G. Altbach, 'The International Student Movement', *Journal of Contemporary History* 5 (1970), pp. 160-167.

[5] Public Security forces were one division of the National Security Corps (*Sbor národní bezpečnosti/Zbor národnej bezpečnosti*). They took on all responsibilities of a standard police force in Czechoslovakia, dealing with public order, traffic, and criminal offences. The Public Security forces were controlled by the Czech Ministry of Interior and Slovak Ministry of Interior. The second division was State Security, the state's political (secret) police, which came under the control of the Federal Ministry of Interior.

[6] *The Washington Post* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

[7] Edward Lucas, who was present during the march, estimated the crowd at 50,000, whereas Associated Press cited the government-estimated figure of 15,000 people. See *The Independent* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 1; and *The New York Times* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 7.

[8] *The Washington Post* (18 Nov.1989), p. 1.

[9] Anon., 'New protests in Prague follows beating death', *The New York Times* (19 Nov. 1989), p. 26. News of Martin Šmíd's 'death' was received by Reuters, but first broadcast by the BBC, followed by Radio Free Europe. See, P. Uhl, *Právo a nespravedlnost očima Petra Uhla*, p. 77-78.

speculation ever since), served to galvanise opinion against the police violence and the *KSČ*, and helped to spread protests around the country.

In the days and weeks after the 17 November, British and American journalists, in particular, fell back on entrenched Cold War stereotypes to describe the political unrest to readers back home. Czechoslovakia had been held up as a 'stagnant', 'frozen', and 'lifeless' country, unable to reform its 'frozen political landscape': the first signs of unrest, taking place only days after the Berlin Wall's 'fall', now heralded a 'joyous and long-overdue political spring'.[10] Many considered the street protests as a 'second spring',[11] having direct parallels with the country's famous 1968 reform movement. Since Warsaw Pact troops had entered Czechoslovakia to contain those reforms in August 1968, the population had apparently been 'stunned into a sleepy numbness', and it had only been the police violence in 1989 had finally 'awoken' them to protest once more.[12] The street demonstrations and the strikes—already declared by Prague students to have been a 'revolution' as early as 21 November[13]—marked both the 'reappearance of history'[14] and, the now famous declaration by Francis Fukuyama, that it was history's 'end'.[15] The protests in Prague were presented as an unstoppable force of nature, in a world where 'the clocks [were] chiming again', and 'the dough-faced men' in the Communist Party's Central Committee unable to 'hold back history and reality any

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[10] E. Steen, 'Late flowering in a Prague winter', *The Independent* (25 Nov. 1989), p. 30.

[11] E. Lucas, 'Future beckons to another Prague', *The Independent* (25 Nov. 1989), p. 12.

[12] M. Simmons, 'Yesterday's men Jakeš and Ceauşescu bide their time', *The Guardian* (20 Nov. 1989).

[13] J. Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture and Society in Czechoslovakia, 1989-1992* (Ithaca and London; 2013), p. 18.

[14] H. Johnson, 'The reappearance of history', *The Washington Post* (29 Dec. 1989), p. 2.

[15] Fukuyama, of course, did not argue that history had 'ended', but rather liberal democracy constituted 'the end-point of mankind's ideological evolution' and that the events of 1989 were evidence of this. For the original argument, see 'The End of History?', *The National Interest* 16 (1989), pp. 3-18. This was developed more fully and later gained more widespread attention in book form, F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London, 1992).

longer'.[16] When, on 10 December 1989, three weeks after the march, Czechoslovakia's first non-Communist majority government in forty-one years was appointed, *The New York Times* reported dissident Václav Havel similarly claiming that the history of Czechs and Slovaks, having 'halted artificially', had 'finally begun to turn again'.[17] Amongst all the colourful language, journalists' reports did communicate an important idea: that the people had won, and Communism had been defeated. Any suggestion to the contrary seemed ridiculous.

Apparently no longer constrained by a Cold War mentality, political scientists, sociologists and other scholars matched journalists in claiming that 1989 was held to be a year of 'rebirth' for the region, and allegedly brought to an end the 'well-formed bipolarity that characterised the Cold War'.[18] As one allied Warsaw Pact country after another, including Czechoslovakia's neighbours Poland, Hungary and the German Democratic Republic, underwent radical political change, the 'domino-like collapse'—a metaphor which had originally been applied to the speed with which countries seemed to be falling under the influence of the Soviet Union—was now applied to the reverse phenomenon engulfing East-Central Europe.[19] And as Czechoslovakia seemed to undergo similar protests followed by regime change in November and December 1989, such an air of inevitability surrounded it that its revolution was held to have been 'nothing more than a short period of street demonstrations before the regime folded anyway'.[20] Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was not hard to claim that the protests showed that

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[16] W. L. Webb, 'Švejk and the art of survival', *The Guardian* (30 Nov. 1989).

[17] H. Kamm, 'Retirement for the dean of the Old Guard in Prague', *The New York Times* (11 Dec. 1989), p. 6.

[18] K Soltan, '1989 as Rebirth', in S. Antohi and V. Tismaneanu, eds, *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath* (Budapest and New York, 2000), p. 25.

[19] T. A. Baylis, 'The GDR "on the eve"', in *Post-Communist Studies* 32 (1999), p. 127.

[20] T. Szulc, 'Unpleasant Truths about Eastern Europe', *Foreign Policy* 102 (Spring, 1996), p. 60.

'Communism had failed' and that the amorphous 'civil society' had risen up to replace it.[21] The dominant role of ideology and its singular interpretation (in Czechoslovakia's case via the constitution, which proclaimed the 'leading role' of the Party and Marxism-Leninism), which characterised Communist parties' politics throughout East-Central Europe, were distinctly old-fashioned. The lack of opposition to the 1989 revolutions revealed an exhausted elite, one that no longer had the desire for power and wished to 'pass on the baton' of responsibility to others.[22] Meanwhile, on the other side of the political spectrum, the attacks on Marxism-Leninism had provoked both a 'crisis' among the European political Left, whilst also simultaneously providing 'unprecedented ... possibilities' to reinterpret Socialism.[23] With both the Left and the Right for the first time seemingly rejecting what had come before, there was also another important show of unity. All sides united around the argument that it was the culmination of dissident movements, emerging opposition groups and 'people power', alongside a failed system which led to the overthrow of Communism.

The favourable treatment shown to Czechoslovak dissent in the aftermath of Czechoslovakia's revolution is in stark contrast to the lack of interest in the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Published collections of sources directly concerning Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution—which provide a good indication of current trends in the historiography—show the extent to which the *KSČ* has been sidelined in the scholarship. Most of these collections are analyses of the revolution from the perspective of the 'opposition': that is, all those who protested against the *KSČ*, its

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[21] G. Stokes, *Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe* (Oxford and New York, 1997), p. 158, and p. 182.

[22] P. Kenney, *The Burdens of Freedom: Europe since 1989* (London, 2006), p. 4.

[23] J. Habermas, 'What does Socialism Mean Today? The Rectifying Revolution and the Need for New Thinking on the Left?', *New Left Review* (Sept.-Oct., 1990), pp. 3-21; L. Magri, 'The European Left Between Crisis and Refoundation', *New Left Review* 189 (Sept.-Oct., 1991), pp. 5-18; P. Aurbach, 'On Socialist Optimism', *New Left Review* 192 (Mar.-Apr., 1992), pp. 5-35; R. Milliband, 'Fukuyama and the Socialist Alternative', *New Left Review* (May-Jun., 1992), pp. 108-113.

Presidium, and the government. The two main opposition groups during the revolution, Civic Forum, which was predominantly based in the Czech Republic, and Public Against Violence, which existed in Slovakia, have the archives of their respective Coordinating Centres in Prague and Bratislava, respectively.[24] Historians Jiří Suk and Milan Otáhal, alongside Ingrid Antalová, a former activist within Public Against Violence, have spent time and effort arranging some of the most historically significant documents from these archives into published collections and chronologies.[25] Local and regional archives also hold collections of various sizes relating to *Občanské fórum* and *Verejnosť proti násiliu*; approximately half of all regional and local archives across the Slovak republic, and two-thirds in the Czech Republic claim to have at least some holdings relating to the groups. (Their preservation was in part thanks to historians like Milan Otáhal putting out calls during November and December 1989 for activists to keep any materials relating to their activities for future research.[26]) This research fits neatly into wider research of 'dissent' in Czechoslovakia more generally. *Občanské fórum* and *Verejnosť proti násiliu*, both of which only came into existence in November 1989 were umbrella organisations containing a wide range of opposition political parties, environmental organisations and other dissident initiatives, most of which had

[24] Archives relating to the Coordinating Centre of Civic Forum are kept within the Institute for Contemporary History in Prague. See Archiv Koordinační centrum Občanského fóra, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, Akademie věd České republiky, v. i. i. Archives relating to the coordinating centre of Public Against Violence form one collection within the Slovak National Archives. See Slovenský národný archív, and the 'VPN' collection.

[25] I. Antalová, ed, *Verejnost'proti nasiliu 1989-1991: svedectvá a dokumenty* (Bratislava, 1998); I. Koutská, V. Ripka and P. Žáček, eds, *Občanské fórum, den první: vznik OF v dokumentech a fotografiích* (Praha, 2009); M. Otáhal, and Z. Sládek, eds, *Deset pražských dnů. 17.—27. Listopad 1989* (Praha, 1990); J. Suk, *Občanské fórum: listopad—prosinec 1989. Události* (Praha, Brno; 1997); J. Suk, *Občanské fórum: listopad - prosinec 1989. Dokumenty* (Praha; Brno; 1998); J. Suk, with J. Cuhra and F. Koudelka, eds, *Chronologie zániku komunistického režimu v Československu 1985-1990* (Praha, 1999); J. Žatkuliak, V. Hlavová, A. Sedliaková and M. Štefanský, eds, *November 1989 a Slovensko: chronológia a dokumenty 1985-1990* (Bratislava, 1999).

[26] See, for example, SOkA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, 'Informační servis', č. 10, f.4 [recto].

emerged between 1986 and 1988.[27] Immediately, therefore, a scholar embarking on a new study into the revolution (and the broader period of 'Normalisation') is confronted with materials which reaffirm both existing perceptions of the overthrow of Communism and the irrelevance of the Communist Party.

In addition to this ubiquity of dissident source material is the role of Prague. Characteristic of the reporting of any revolution is that a capital city's experience of it—in this case Prague's—is central to understanding events. As the capital contains the seat of executive power, in one sense this is entirely justified. Whilst Prague, as the seat of government in a nominally federative, yet heavily centralised state rightly deserved attention, its special status as a capital city also made its revolutionary experience unique, rather than representative of the rest of Czechoslovakia. English-language works in particular remain permeated with narratives, testimonies, and chronologies of the revolution from eyewitnesses or sources based in the city. Reasons for this are multiple. The city is well-known for its architecture, and its cultural legacy inherited from former inhabitants such as Dvořák, Hašek and Kafka. Writing about the 1989 revolution is just one example in which emotional responses and cultural stereotypes derived from the city are applied to historical events.[28] Furthermore, the city's international standing meant that in the immediate aftermath of the revolution eyewitness accounts and interviews with those who had been in Prague were most sought after (although to be fair there is no evidence of any notable international

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[27] B. Císařovská, and V. Prečan, eds, *Charta 77: dokumenty, 1977—1989*, 3 vols (Praha, 2007); R. Hlušičková, and M. Otáhal, eds, *Čas Demokratické iniciativy 1987-1990: Sborník dokumentů* (Praha, 1993); R. Hlušičková, *Hnutí za občanskou svobodu 1988-1989: Sborník dokumentů* (Brno, 1994); J. Svobodová, *Nezávislá skupina České děti 1988—1989: Dokumenty* (Praha, 1995).

[28] See, in particular, R. Fawn, *The Czech Republic: A Nation of Velvet* (Amsterdam, 2000); R. H. E. Shephard, *Czechoslovakia: The Velvet Revolution and Beyond* (Basingstoke, 2000).

observers having been elsewhere at the time).[29] Perhaps unsurprisingly, this has entrenched the idea of a Prague 'historical centralism' not just about the revolution, but of historical studies in the present-day Czech Republic. It has also led to accounts being dominated by elites, by virtue of them being based in Prague, rather than ones which seek to take account of more daily experiences and memories.[30] Thus the 'normalisation' of an elite view of the revolution is inextricably tied up with the city itself.

Alternate views of Czechoslovakia's revolution from the provinces have not sought to radically alter our understanding of the revolution. The main reason for this is that such 'local' histories closely follow existing Prague-based accounts, albeit concerned with a town or region, rather than seeking to compare local events to the wider revolution. Many local histories of the revolution were published around the twentieth anniversary of the revolution in 2009 from the Czech Republic, including Plzeň, Pardubice, Litomyšl, Hradec Králové and Ústí and Labem. (No similar local histories of the revolution have yet been published in Slovakia.[31]) Some are booklets published by local societies or museums, providing a chronology of events from the region alongside those in Prague.[32] Others have conducted interviews with locals involved in the revolution—including with former Communist functionaries—as a way

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[29] T. G. Ash, *We the People: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague* (Cambridge, 1990); M. A. Kukral, *Prague 1989: The Theater of Revolution, A Study in Humanistic Political Geography* (Boulder, 1997); N. Hawkes, ed, *Tearing Down the Curtain: The People's Revolution in Eastern Europe by a Team from The Observer* (London, 1990); T. Whipple, *After the Velvet Revolution: Václav Havel and the New Leaders of the Velvet Revolution Speak Out* (New York, 1991); R. McRae, *Resistance and Revolution: Václav Havel's Czechoslovakia* (Carleton, 1997).

[30] The phrase is my own, but the central ideas expressed by it are found in A. Stroehlein, 'Centre Vs. Regions: Not Just Prague', in *Central Europe Review* 13 (1999), *http://www.ce-review.org/99/13/stroehlein13.html#a3*. Last accessed on 10 September 2010.

[31] I do not include here work published in the year or so after the revolution, which I consider to be sources, rather than part of the historiography of the revolution. See *Pamätný bulletin nežnej revolúcie v Prešove a katalóg výstavy fotografií* (Prešov, 1990).

[32] See P. Karlíček, J. Němec, *Děčín 1989* (Děčín, 2009); J. Řeháček, *Sametová revoluce v Pardubicích* (Pardubice, 2009).

to explore their own local history.[33] Such studies have, at best, remained of particular local interest, and given their relatively recent publication have not yet been used in wider studies of the revolution throughout Czechoslovakia. They are also important because the majority of citizens who participated in the revolution did not experience it in Prague, and as such have had their experiences subsumed into a wider narrative which downplays their role.

Most accounts of the revolution have relied these, and other opposition materials and archival collections on which to base their analyses of the revolution. Jiří Suk's work, *Labyrintem revolucí* (Through the Labyrinth of the Revolution), detailed the top-level political negotiations during the revolution, generally avoiding official Party or government records in favour of interview testimony, transcripts of roundtable meetings between the opposition and government, and collections of documents from the Prague-based opposition centre, Civic Forum.[34] Also, Padraic Kenney, in his widely-cited *A Carnival of Revolution*, made extensive use of self-published, often illicit *samizdat* materials and interviews with former dissidents and members of independent (non-Party) groups.[35] The Centre for Oral History (*Centrum orální histore*) in Prague has also been responsible for the steady creation of an entirely new archival collection of interview testimony, ranging from interviews with students involved in university strikes during the revolution, to life-story interviews with workers, and 'elite' interviews with leading Party representatives and dissidents.[36] The declassification of United States

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[33] J. Vedlich, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové* (Hradec Králové, 2009); B. Čermáková, Z. Černý, P. Fiedler, D. Kelterer, eds, *Občanská odvaha dělá politiku. Občanské fórum v Chebu a Nové fórum v Plavně 1989/1990* (Praha, 2009); J. Rokoský, ed, *Sametová revoluce v Ústí nad Labem: svědectví studentů po dvaceti letech* (Ústí nad Labem, 2009).

[34] J. Suk, *Labyrintem revolucí: Akteř, zápletky a křižovatky jedné politické krize (od listopadu 1989 do cervna 1990)* (Praha, 2003).

[35] P. Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton, Oxford; 2003).

[36] See M. Otáhal and M. Vaňek, *Sto Studentských Revolcuí* (Praha, 1999); M. Vaněk, *Obyčejní lidé...?!* (Praha, 2009).

government documents, the archives of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and the gradual accumulation of *samizdat* and émigré literature and writings in established archives, have all provided other opportunities for researchers beyond official documents of the Party.[37] Whilst these publications have become widely accessible, the more restricted nature of the Party's archives and the reticence of scholars to publish such documents with similar zeal has resulted not helped our understanding of the Party as a whole.

Although the Czechoslovak Communist Party's archives were quickly taken into the state's control and declassified after the revolution, Party and government documents have not been widely used to understand the 1989 revolution. As Paulina Bren has noted in relation to her own work on 1970s and 1980s Czechoslovakia, Party archives have appeared to reveal little. More often than not, she has claimed, they merely contain the results of decisions heavily laden with the Party's ideological language, rather than showing processes of decision-making and policy formation. As a result, Bren relied on television archives to try and understand the nature of the regime and life in Communist Czechoslovakia, following the increasing trend adopted by historians to look beyond Party documents to understand the Communist period.[38] (The perspective of Western governments have actually been more widely published and

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[37] Relevant Czechoslovak collections from the archives of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (documents, sound archives) are held in the Czechoslovak Documentation Centre (*Československé dokumentační středisko*), part of the National Museum. The centre also is a depository for exile and *samizdat* publications from 1948-1989. Additionally, 'Libri prohibiti' was established in 1990 as a private, non-profit, archival research library based in Prague, collecting *samizdat* and exile literature from 1948 to present.

[38] Bren specifically points to the rise in oral history as an example of this. See P. Bren, *The Greengrocer and his TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca and London, 2010), pp. 5-7.

cited.[39]) Only two published collections of records relating to the Party during the revolution exist to date: one of which reproduces some inner Party reports from a wider collection currently sitting unarchived and unlisted in the Czech Republic's National Archives; a second is the transcripts of the Central Committee's extraordinary meeting on 24-25 November 1989.[40] The creation of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (*Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů*) in 2007 has, to some extent, altered this situation with historians' attention once again turning back to the regime. Regional State Security (*Státní bezpečnost/Štání bezpečnosť*, or *StB*) situation reports (sent daily to Prague) were collated and published via the journal *Securitas imperii*, extending over two thousand pages and stretching from January until December 1989.[41] The institute has also collected and published on the internet a variety of audio-visual materials, focussed around the 17 November student march, giving a fascinating insight to the demonstration from the police's point of view.[42] However, the institute's focus relating to the activities of the *StB* and on 'uncovering' the 'crimes' of Communism more generally has not always allowed for a nuanced and understanding of the past. With little else to go on, the expression 'the Communist Party' has become shorthand to refer to the actions and decisions of its leadership; what we know about regional and district Party functionaries, let alone grassroots Party members is based on heavily edited and

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[39] The Cold War International History Project, in collaboration with the National Security Archive have collected, published and often translated a variety of documents from all sides of the Cold War, published in the form of 'Briefing Books'. See V. Prečan, and D. Paton, eds, *The Democratic Revolution in Czechoslovakia: its precondition, course and immediate repercussions, 1987-1989: a chronology of events and a compendium of declassified documents: a briefing book for an international conference, Prague, 14-16 October, 1999* (Prague, 1999); V. Prečan, ed, *Prague—Washington—Prague: Reports From the United States Embassy in Czechoslovakia, November—December 1989* (Prague, 2004).

[40] Anon., *Poslední húra: Tajné stenografické záznamy z posledních zasedání ÚV KSČ v listopadu 1989* (Praha, 1992); F. Koudelka, with A. Nosková, and V. Prečan, eds, *Mezinárodní konference Demokratická revoluce v Československu 1989 - předpoklady, průběh a bezprostřední výsledky (Praha 14.-16. října 1999): studijní materiály. Seš. 5 a 6, Situační zprávy ústředního aparátu KSČ (20. listopadu - 1. prosince 1989); Pokyny a směrnice vedení KSČ nižším stranickým složkám (19. listopadu - 1. prosince 1989)* (Praha, 1999).

[41] 'Denní situační zprávy StB z listopadu a prosince 1989', *Securitas imperii 6* (2000). 3 vols.

[42] *http://www.ustrcr.cz/cs/listopad-1989* (last accessed 1 Nov. 2013).

simplified generalisations which made up regular inner Party reports to the Presidium on the state of the membership.[43]

No study has yet considered what effect *přestavba*, the *KSČ*'s version of *perestroika* had upon the wider Party membership and how this affected the Party during the revolution. Furthermore, in the existing scholarship there has been no serious discussion of how the Party's own decline in late 1989 came about. It is conceivable to understand other revolutions in history, for example, Russia in 1917, Austria-Hungary in 1848, and France in 1789, without considering the perspectives of those both behind the palace walls and and the revolutionaries at the gates. It seems strange, therefore, that historians and other researchers have so far neglected to consider in detail the reactions and responses of the Czechoslovak Communist Party to the political crisis which was sparked on 17 November 1989. With the increasing availability of local, regional and state-wide sources, Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution is ripe for fresh historical investigation and comprehensive reappraisal.

This thesis is a study of the policies of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (*Komunistická strana Československa*, hereafter *KSČ*) between 1986 and 1989, and how they contributed to the Party's loss of power during the 1989 revolution. It places 'the Party', an organisation which had, at its last official count, 1.7 million members, in a wider context. It considers not only the actions of the Presidium of the Party's Central Committee based in Prague, but also that of its functionaries in the regions and districts, and the rank-and-file grassroots membership in workplace committees and communities around Czechoslovakia. To do this, it was not enough simply to look at sources which were close to hand (Prague). Nor was it enough to focus just on one level of the Party's

[43] The collection of inner Party reports ('*Vnitrostranická informace*') from nos. 86-88, and nos. 90-106, and telex (*dálnopisy*) briefings to the regions lie unarchived (although are accessible) in the National Archives of the Czech Republic (*Nárdoní archiv České republiky*, hereafter NA ČR), Chodovec, Prague.

hierarchy. It is also incorrect to assume, even before 17 November 1989, that Party functionaries and local committees necessarily held the same views and outlook as those at the top.

This thesis seeks to overcome these limitations by analysing a range of sources across all regions of Czechoslovakia, not just Prague or Bratislava. It argues against much of the existing literature that has sought to understand the 1989 revolution—and the *KSČ*'s role in it—from the perspective of the opposition. It offers the first serious analysis of the *KSČ* during the revolution, taking due account of all levels of the Party's hierarchy, from its grassroots, through its district and regional committees throughout the country, to the Central Committee and its fifteen-member Presidium based in Prague. Its central argument is that the *KSČ*'s political programme between 1986 and 1989, and specifically the associated *přestavba* reforms of that period, helped create the conditions for revolution and affected the course. It offers an analysis based on Party documents, reports and minutes from district, regional and state archives, from all levels of the *KSČ* between 1986 and 1990 to account for the regime's collapse. It argues that the *KSČ* leadership used *přestavba* to redefine the nature of Communist rule in Czechoslovakia, maintaining the Party's 'leading role', yet distancing itself form the day-to-day running of the state. It simultaneously attempted to avoid reforming the top Party structures in order to maintain stability. But in doing so, it created increased tensions among society and within itself, which ultimately resulted in the Party's collapse.

This present work does not challenge the assertion that the political unrest in Czechoslovakia in late 1989 was anything other than a 'revolution'; nor does it seek to test or apply any one of the multitude of theories that attempt to substantiate, define or qualify it. Nor does it challenge the assertion that the political unrest in Czechoslovakia

in late 1989 was anything other than a 'revolution'. A debate started in the aftermath of the 1989 revolutions asking whether or not the revolutions warranted the very label of a revolution. One of the many interpretations on offer has suggested that at the very least the lack of a class dimension to the revolutions means it cannot be considered in the same way as those of 1917, 1848 and 1789.[44] This debate, far from informing about what happened in 1989 adds very little to our understanding of all the revolutions. Instead, as James Mark has argued, it only served to highlight the existing divide between those who view the 1989 revolution in a positive light (and therefore embrace the term), against the range of disillusioned voices who continue to reject it.[45] Czechs commonly speak about the 'November events' (*listopadové události*) rather than of a revolution, reflecting popular scepticism about the so-called Communist *mafie* (mafia) who became millionaires during privatisation in the early 1990s, and the many complex conspiracy theories which exist, particularly about the 17 November march.

The uncertainty over whether or not the events of 1989 in Czechoslovakia can be justifiably called a 'revolution' has also led to various adjectives being used to restrict the revolution's meaning and all that it implies. As James Krapfl has shown, the revolution's proponents during 1989 described the events as the 'Joyful' revolution, the 'Student's' revolution, the 'Cleansing' revolution, and even the 'Children's' revolution.[46] Apart from the ubiquitous 'democratic' and 'anti-Communist' revolution, other adjectives and journalistic shorthand were later used to varying degrees of

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[44] S. Eisenstadt, 'The Breakdown of Communist Regimes and the Vicissitudes of Modernity', in S. R. Graubard, ed, *Exit From Communism* (New Brunswick, London; 1993), p. 23.

[45] Contested memory and memory studies is a similarly wide subject in relation to 1989 and the Communist past in East Central Europe. See J. Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution: Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (New Haven, Conn., 2010), especially pp. 28-29.

[46] J. Krapfl, 'Revolution and Revolt against Revolution: Czechoslovakia, 1989', in K. McDermott and M. Stibbe, eds, *Revolution and Resistance in Eastern Europe: Challenges to Communist Rule* (Oxford and New York; 2006), p. 178.

success, including the 'people's revolution',[47] the 'liberal',[48] the 'rectifying'[49] and, famously, the 'Velvet revolution' (*sametová revoluce*).[50] Widely used in English-speaking countries, at least, 'Velvet' also remains deeply problematic since it only ever came into common usage in the Czech Republic, and even then used ironically to mock the revolution as 'too velvet'; in Slovakia, the 'gentle revolution', or *niežná revolúcia*, is preferred. *Nežná revoluce* actually appears to have been the first popular adjective to describe the revolution in Czechoslovakia, and was even used by Havel in a speech on ! 10 December 1989 to sum up the events that had just occurred.[51] The 'Velvet' revolution, apart from suggesting a Czech-slanted interpretation, ignores the initial violence which started the political unrest on 17 November. Though many scholars have used one or several of these descriptors to categorise or explain Czechoslovakia's revolution, instead of clarifying our understanding such terms have rarely added anything to our understanding of what actually happened. The term 'revolution' is used here neither in a pejorative nor positive sense, but because it accepts the idea that the events of November and December 1989 constituted a 'fundamental shift'.

An additional complication is the use of the terms 'Socialism' and 'Communism'. In 1960, the Czechoslovak parliament passed a new constitution, moving the country from a 'people's republic' to a 'Socialist' one. The official title of

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[47] B. Cummings, 'Illusion, Critique, and Responsibility: The "Revolution of '89" in West and East', in D. Chirot, ed, *The Crisis of Leninism and the Decline of the Left: The Revolutions of 1989* (Seattle and London, 1991), p. 101.

[48] B. Ackerman, *The Future of Liberal Revolution* (New Haven, 1992).

[49] J. Habermas, 'What Does Socialism Mean Today? The Rectifying Revolution and the Need for New Thinking on the Left', in *New Left Review*. 183 (September-October, 1990). pp. 3-9.

[50] There is still uncertainty as to who actually coined the phrase 'Velvet' revolution. Jan Měchýř has alleged that it was a French journalist who did so in late November 1989. Meanwhile, Victor Sebestyen has claimed it was Civic Forum's English translator, Rita Klímová, who first came up with the phrase. Neither offer references to back up their claims. See, J. Měchýř, *Velý převrat či snad revoluce sametová? Několik informací, poznámek a komentářů o naší takřečené něžené revoluci a jejich osudech (1989-1992)* (Praha, 1999), p. 13; and V. Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Phoenix, 2010), p. 367.

[51] Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, p. 18 and p. 22.

the new state, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (*Československá socialistická republika*), reflected the leadership's (politically-motivated) view that the country had reached 'Socialism' and could now set off towards 'Communism'. Although Czechoslovakia was one of the few countries of the Eastern bloc to have a titular *Communist* Party, 'Communism' only ever remained the 'final goal' of the Party, rather than the 'Socialism' which was claimed to be place by 1960. Tensions arise in the scholarship, however, due to the discrepancy between present-day conceptions of 'Socialism' (particularly for western European political parties), and the version of 'Socialism' practised under the banner of the *KSČ*, and other parties of the Leninist type. Some authors have tried to address this by purging all mention of 'Socialism', and refer in a blanket manner to 'Communism'. Others have taken the precisely reverse approach. Throughout this thesis, however, 'Communist' is used only in relation to the Party and its members; in relation to the existing state of affairs and society, 'Socialism' and its derivatives are used.

The thesis is divided into an introduction, conclusion and four main chapters. Chapter one, 'Writing Czechoslovakia's 1989 Revolution', gives an overview of the existing historiography of the revolution, drawing on Czech, Slovak and English-language works. It considers how Czechoslovakia's revolution shifted from a subject of political interest into one of historical study, drawing specifically on Czech and Slovak government attempts over the past twenty years to influence its interpretation. The chapter also looks at wider political and sociological scholarship on the 1989 revolution and its impact on later historical interpretations, discussing how more general studies of the 1989 revolutions in East-Central Europe have influenced understandings of what happened specifically in Czechoslovakia. The chapter argues that all previous studies (with the partial exception of Michal Pullmann's work) focus on how opposition forces

took power, and not how the KSČ *lost* it. It concludes that a great deal of research has been devoted to how precisely the role of opposition groups and dissidents overturned Communist rule, the Czechoslovak Communist Party's own position has been almost entirely ignored.

Chapter two, 'Restructuring the Socialist State', traces the *KSČ*'s reforms from the seventeenth Party congress in 1986, when the *KSČ* announced tentative changes in the economy, to the eve of revolution in November 1989. Specifically, it considers the political developments and policy shifts of *přestavba* (restructuring) and *demokratizace* (democratisation) which took place during the last eighteen months of Communist Party rule from April 1988 until November 1989. It looks at what the Presidium and Central Committee (the Party leadership) considered *přestavba* and *demokratizace* meant in practice, how it was to be translated into policies and how it was to be implemented at a local level. Chapter two draws on both Party documents at a state and district level and newspaper reports (primarily from *Rudé právo,* the Central Committee's daily), to argue that the *KSČ* leadership were trying to extract themselves from the day-to-day running of the country, and sought to shift responsibility further down the Party's hierarchy. This caused tensions within the Party which helped created conditions for revolution.

Chapter three, 'From Restructuring to Revolution', looks in detail at the crucially important role played in the revolution by the Socialist Youth Union. The chapter builds on previous themes of responsibility, democratisation and restructuring to show how young Party members in the Socialist Youth Union were pushing the *KSČ* towards greater reform, specifically throughout 1989. It concludes with an analysis of the first week of revolution in Czechoslovakia, between 17 and 25 November 1989, when the Socialist Youth Union was instrumental in spreading the revolution from Prague out into the regions. Through newspaper reports, opposition statements, Party

reports and secret police documents, the chapter takes a fresh look at the 'Student Revolution' and argues that the Union's role was not only crucial in explaining the speed of the revolution, but also offered a conciliatory position around which all sides—both Communist and non-Communist—could coalesce.

Chapter four, 'The Czechoslovak Communist Party's Revolution', makes use of newspaper reports, opposition documents, Ministry of Interior (*StB*) reports and district and regional Party records to consider how decisions taken by the Party leadership affected the actions and attitudes of the rank-and-file membership. The chapter shows how the membership reacted to local protests and citizens' demands, and how and why the Party was unable to effectively challenge opposition to its rule. It argues that the wider Party membership were left to respond to events in their own region with little direction from the leadership, creating a deepening sense of chaos. It offers an analysis of the revolution until early 1990, from the perspective of the Czechoslovak Communist Party—not only from the top leadership in Prague, but also among regional, district functionaries and ordinary Party in all regions of the state. In doing so, the thesis presents an alternative interpretation to the familiar 'anti-Communist' or 'Velvet' revolution: one inspired in part by the *KSČ*'s reforms, which contributed to the struggle among Communists and the struggle for reform.

Chapter One:

Writing Czechoslovakia's 1989 Revolution

Published accounts of Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution can be divided into those that consider it to have represented Communism's 'collapse' and those that assume it to have been its 'overthrow'. Each approach carries with it ontological and epistemological assumptions about the causes, nature, significance and essential meaning of the revolution that limit the conclusions one can draw. In addition to these broad differences, there are also specific conventions that operate within specifically Czech, Slovak and English-language historiographies, further complicating matters. Divisions exist not only between Czech, Slovak, and Czechoslovak perspectives, but within a broader literature concerned with the wider 'European' view. The many published collections that exist of carefully edited 'eyewitness' accounts, invited interviews, 'chronologies' and selected 'documents' and ephemera surrounding the 1989 Czechoslovak revolution are equally loaded in their assumptions and interpretations, although these may not always be explicitly stated. Such works need to be treated both as helpful collections of primary sources but also – because of their commitment to a particular paradigm in selecting and editing materials – as secondary works open to the same critiques as any other, more overtly subjective historical interpretation.

This chapter argues that Czechoslovakia's revolution has been overwhelmingly considered from perspectives that privilege opponents to Communist rule. The perspective that has been ignored is that of the Communist Party itself. In order to account for this, the first chapter of this thesis will begin with a discussion of the historical legacies and contemporary political influences that have influenced

Czechoslovak historiography since the revolution. It will argue that political and state influence upon historians has prevented significant analysis of the nature of Communist rule, and instead promoted research into those who opposed Communist rule. The chapter will then consider longer-term influences, arguing that the overwhelming focus on opposition to Communist rule prior to the revolution has continued ever since. Finally, the chapter will try to make analytic sense of the multitude of works that concern the revolution and dissent, examining the role that Charter 77, students, theatres, 'the grey zone' and other forms of dissent or opposition are argued in the existing historiography to have had. Conspiracy theories, current in the Czech and Slovak republics, will also be touched upon, but not considered in depth in this work. Rather, this chapter will argue that several longstanding historiographical traditions, dating from the 1970s and 1980s rather than from the events that occurred on 17 November 1989, account for the otherwise surprising absence of research into the Czechoslovak Communist Party (*KSČ*) in the late 1980s and through the revolution of 1989.

From the numerous published eyewitness accounts, interviews, chronicles, textbooks, political analyses and monographs on Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution, the overwhelming majority remain concerned with how power was won from the *KSČ* and a new, post-Communist society created. The most prominent work, Jiří Suk's *Labyrintem revoluce* (2003), gives a 'high political' account of the revolution through the Prague-based opposition group, Civic Forum, and the 'transition' of power which followed. Milan Otáhal has focussed on the other 'opposition' group that the *KSČ* faced in 1989: students. His *Studenti a komunistická moc v českých zemích*, (2003) or study of 'Students and Communist Power in the Bohemian Crown Lands', together with his edited collection of 100 interviews with students, *Sto studentských revolucí* (1999),

argued that dissatisfaction among students in the late 1980s contributed to their becoming the 'spark' of Czechoslovakia's revolution in 1989. More recently, James Krapfl's cultural history, *Revolúcia s ľudskou tvárou* (2009), republished in English as *Revolution with a Human Face* in 2013, has analysed opposition posters, leaflets, proclamations and other ephemera to seek to interpret the 'popular' meaning of the revolution to those who joined in the demonstrations and strikes that accompanied the regime's fall.

Such studies repeatedly stress the importance of opposition to the *KSČ* in the 1989 revolution. Their assumptions and lines of argument are largely framed by earlier, pre-1989 scholarship on dissent to Communist rule in Czechoslovakia as informed by Cold War attitudes. The consensus that has dominated scholarly approaches to Communist Czechoslovakia for decades has only just begun to be challenged, directly or indirectly, by a tiny handful of pioneering works, all of which have come out during the past four years, the same years in which the present work was being researched and written. The fact that a first few works, including this thesis, have independently identified the lack of research into Communist Party archives as a serious problem for our understanding of the whole of the 1980s, including the 1989 revolutions, across East-Central Europe, suggests that there is a new willingness among historians, many of whom were born after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, to begin to redress this glaring gap in our knowledge and understanding. Stephen Kotkin was among the first to declare, in a revisionist thesis of the European 1989 revolutions (2009), that existing opposition-based explanations for the fall of Communism lie in the 'realm of fiction'. Instead, he argues, the Communist establishment, or 'uncivil society', largely through

incompetence, brought about its own demise.[1] Taking a different, 'memory studies' and 'oral history' based approach, James Mark (2010) has looked at the rhetoric and policies of the post-Communist political leaderships in Hungary, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Estonia, and analysed how they have interpreted meanings of the 1989 revolutions to their own ends. He concludes that post-Communist societies in East-Central Europe have proven unable to come to terms with much of their recent past. Michal Pullmann's research, the only such revisionist work, apart from my own, to look specifically at the Czechoslovak regime's 'collapse', offered a first glimpse of how the Czechoslovak Communist Party responded to the *perestroika* and *glasnost* reforms coming out of the Soviet Union. Although Pullmann's work does not examine the 1989 Revolution itself, but only the lead-up to it, his study of the *KSČ*'s version of 'restructuring', or *přestavba*, shows for the first time how the Party failed to present a firm ideological vision of what *přestavba* meant. The publication of Pullmann's work while my research along similar lines was already well underway, helped to give me confidence and to further develop my own thinking about how the Party continued to behave during the Revolution.

Kotkin's and Pullmann's work are clear exceptions to a broader scholarly consensus that remains fixated on dissent and opposition to Communist rule. In the case of Czechoslovakia, this has resulted in two problems. First, as already hinted, by focussing on dissent and on Prague, historians have been led to overestimate the importance of opposition groups and so to continue to sideline the *KSČ* in their analyses. Even local Party functionaries who wielded genuine political power have been ignored: apart from the publication of a few selected Party sources, some

[1] S. Kotkin, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* (New York, 2009), p. 1.

discussion of the top Party leadership and a very few published memoirs of Communist officials, there scarcely exists any serious scholarship on the Communist Party leadership, let alone its regional branches and the grassroots of the Party. In all the writing that exists on Czechoslovakia's revolution, the *KSČ* has only been understood through those who opposed it. Secondly, because pre-revolutionary dissident activity was almost entirely centred around Prague, historians have, time and again, been drawn to events in and around the city. Even though Prague was the capital of a nominally federative, yet heavily centralised state and undoubtedly deserves attention, by comparison very little is known about how the revolution was experienced elsewhere, with perhaps the exception of the Slovak capital, Bratislava. And just as Prague came to dominate accounts of the revolution, so Czech interpretations came to dominate over Slovak understandings. Here, only Kapfl's work, together with my own, have sought to correct this centre-regional imbalance by looking comprehensively at sources (mainly newspapers and ephemera in his case, mainly Communist Party and Secret Police archives in mine) right across all the regions and districts of the former Czechoslovak state (i.e. the territories of today's Czech and Slovak republics).

Whatever approach historians adopt towards Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution, most accounts begin, and all accounts include, the now famous 'student demonstration' of 17 November 1989. This was the moment afterwards taken to mark the official 'beginning' of the 1989 Revolution, which is itself commonly described by Western journalists and others as Czechoslovakia's 'Velvet Revolution'. Since the events of 17 November 1989, so crucial to virtually all writings on the Czechoslovak revolution, remain contested, divisive and not entirely clear, it is important for the reader to know in detail what is known to have happened as well as how the events that took place in

Prague on 17 November have been variously contested, interpreted and memorialised since.

On Friday 17 November 1989, an official student march was organised in Prague to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Nazi repression against Czech students and universities, which they had shut for the duration of the Second World War.[2] The march set out from the Natural Sciences Faculty building, in Prague's New Town, to the nearby Vyšehrad cemetery, where the crowd was supposed to disperse. For reasons that are still unclear, many students decided to head for the city centre. At this point the march became illegal and grew in number as more joined the group. Before reaching Wenceslas Square, Prague's central boulevard and the site of previous anti-Communist demonstrations, police and security forces blocked the crowd's path. Announcements called on the demonstrators to disperse, but most were unable to do so as, in the confusion, the police had hemmed in the crowd on all sides. After a stand-off on National Avenue lasting nearly an hour, with some managing to escape, the police dispersed the remaining protestors with force, 'kettling' and then beating a number of demonstrators as they sought to leave.

Within a few days, almost all of Prague's university faculties were on strike and had declared a state-wide, two-hour work stoppage, or general strike, for Monday 27 November. The majority of university faculties around the country declared solidarity with Prague students and also went on strike, joined by many theatre workers and other artists. Mass demonstrations on Wenceslas Square in the run-up to the general strike led to the resignation of the entire *KSČ* presidium on 24 November. And after the strike's success, political negotiation opened up between government representatives and the

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[2] For a full account of the Nazis' repression against Czech universities and students and the events which led to the closure of all Czech universities on 17 November 1939, see J. Leikert, *Černý pátek sedmnáctého listopadu* (Praha, 2000), especially pp. 117-147.

self-appointed opposition leadership, the Prague-based Civic Forum (*Občanské fórum*), and the Bratislava-based Public Against Violence (*Verejnosť proti násiliu*). After protracted negotiations, further demonstrations, and increasing opposition demands and pressure, the first non-Communist majority government was sworn in on 10 December 1989 by president Gustáv Husák, who resigned shortly afterwards. Less than three weeks later, dissident and playwright Václav Havel was elected Czechoslovakia's first non-Communist president since 1948.

Within this basic narrative of events, writing about Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution has been greatly affected by the nationalist trends, government influence, and a long-standing interest in dissent and opposition perspectives, all of which have affected the wider scholarship on the revolution. Perhaps the most fundamental division in the historiography occurred on 1 January 1993, with the division of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic into two independent states: the Czech Republic (*Česká republika*) and the Slovak Republic (*Slovenská republika*, or *Slovensko*). This not only created two new independent states: it also encouraged historians to focus increasingly on writing the history of their own respective country. Even before then, Czech and Slovak historians had tended to focus on their own 'nation'; after 1993, however, writing history became a nation-building endeavour. This was a more significant task in Slovakia than in the Czech Republic, because Czechs had long considered the creation of an independent Czechoslovakia in 1918 as the culmination of their national demands and therefore did not feel the need to start, so to speak, from scratch.[3]

The division of the Czechoslovak state in 1993 further pushed Czech and Slovak historians into their own spheres of 'national interest'. Czech historians defensively

[3] Both Brown and Hlavičková make exactly this point. See, J. F. Brown, *The Grooves of Change*, p. 58; and Z. Hlavičková, 'Wedged Between National and Trans-National History: Slovak Historiography in the 1990s', in S. Antohi, B. Trencsényi, and P. Apor, eds, *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Budapest, 2007), p. 286, and pp. 249-253.

justify the all-too common decision to exclude Slovakia from their research into the former Czechoslovak state. Reasons for this invariably include appeals to the 'different social conditions' that existed in Slovakia, or the argument that such a study would be for a Slovak historian to undertake.[4] Michal Pullmann has argued, with justification perhaps, that the 'distinctive' nature of the Communist experience in Slovakia compared to the Bohemian crown lands greatly complicates any analysis across Czechoslovakia.[5] Vilém Prečan, in his summary of the 'Czech twentieth century', saw fit only to discuss 'Czech politics', arguing that the Czech and Slovak 'experience' of the twentieth century had produced 'distinctly different stories', despite having being part of the same state.[6] With the notable exception of Jan Rychlík and a few others, Czech historians usually omit any serious study of Slovak sources in their work.[7] Slovak historians, however, remain far more likely to engage with Czech historiography and to include sources from the Bohemian crown lands (the territory known today as the Czech Republic).

The 1989 revolution, as a seminal moment in Czechoslovakia's history, has thus produced distinctly Czech and Slovak interpretations. Rather than the revolution having brought unity (real, or imagined) to Czechs and Slovaks, historians have emphasised the differences between the two nations. Jiří Suk, within the first few lines of his work, uses one participant's testimony to claim it to have been two 'individual revolutions', each

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[4] M. Otáhal, *Opoziční proudy v české společnosti 1969-1989* (Praha, 2001), p. 5, note 2. Otáhal also makes a similar justification in his work *Studenti a Komunistická moc v českých zemích 1968-1989* (Praha, 2003), p. 7.

[5] Pullmann argues he would have had to account for Czech, Slovak and Czechoslovak interpretations of *přestavba*, which became too complex. Pullmann, *Konec experiementu*, pp. 21-22, note 15.

[6] V. Prečan, 'České dvacáté století?', *Soudobé dějiny* 4 (2009), pp. 545-546.

[7] Among Rychlík's most significant contributions to the Czech and Slovak historiographies concerning the Czechoslovak state include J. Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa: Česko-slovenské vztahy 1989-1992* (Bratislava, 2002); J. Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století. Česko-slovenské vztahy 1945-1992* (Bratislava, 2002); and *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století. Česko-slovenské vztahy 1914-1945* (Bratislava, 1997).

with its ‘own distinguishable rhythm’; the different Czech and Slovak experiences anachronistically treating the revolution as a ‘precursor’ to the Czechoslovak state’s collapse at the end of 1992.[8] Ladislav Holý has used the revolution and its associated symbols explicitly to examine the notion of Czechness, to identify the ‘Czech nation’ and its self-perceptions. Holý, for example, takes the theatre strikes, a defining feature of Czechoslovakia’s revolution, to understand how Czechs perceived themselves as a ‘cultured, well-educated nation’.[9] In so doing, he claims the strikes to be something definitively ‘Czech’, and by implication, not ‘Slovak’—despite the theatre strikes having been equally widespread there.

Holý’s search for a ‘Czech identity’ within the revolution remains just one example of how the broader ‘Czechoslovak’ revolution has been directly and indirectly appropriated by the ‘Czech’ nation. The dominance of Czech national accounts in the historiography have taken hold precisely because historians have relied on Czech or, perhaps more precisely, Prague-centric, sources to form their interpretations of the revolution. Timothy Garton Ash’s eyewitness account, *Inside the Magic Lantern* (1990) brought these self-perceptions to a wider, English speaking audience, as did the reports by the many other journalists who flocked to Prague in late 1989 to witness the unfolding of the latest in a series of East-European revolutions. Historians without knowledge of Czech or Slovak have continuously fallen back on Ash’s account not only to get a sense of what the it was like to experience, but also to even understand the symbols, meanings and tropes of the revolution.[10] Ash’s account, however, was limited by his inability to understand Czech and his almost total reliance on events in Prague.

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[8] J. Křen as cited in J. Suk, *Labyrintem revoluce: aktéři, zápletky a křižovatky jedné politické krize: od listopadu 1989 do června 1990* (Praha, 2003). p. 15.

[9] L. Holý, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 141-144.

[10] Ash, *Inside the Magic Lantern* (New York, 1999), pp. 78-130.

The result, easily traced by the number of times Ash's account is cited, especially in much of the English-language scholarship, is a frequent replication his own Prague- and Czech-centric account, along with specifically Czech – not Czechoslovak -- national myths and stereotypes.

Slovak interpretations have tended to react against Czech-centric accounts, and particularly the dominance of Prague in accounts of the revolution. Historians such as Minton Goldman have criticised Czech dominanation during the revolution itself, with the negotiations between the opposition and the regime in late 1989 'centred in Prague', from where 'Czechs directed it'.[11] The revolution, the argument goes, was a continuation of what Czechs 'had been doing since 1918': taking the lead in the creation, development and evolution of Czechoslovakia.[12] Similarly, Gale Stokes, in his account of the 1989 revolutions in East Central Europe, has argued that it was 'a very Czech revolution'. During the public discussions that replaced scheduled theatre performances, demands for greater Slovak independence (i.e. actual, rather than nominal federalisation) were ignored, despite Slovak protestations.[13]

Although dividing Czechoslovak history along national lines may in some circumstances make sense, creating Czech or Slovak 'versions' of the revolution is an anachronism. As much as Czech and Slovak historians have emphasised the 'difference' between the two parts of the state, the fact remains that Czechoslovakia was a single state made up of many distinct regions, and the end of the Communist regime affected every part of it. As James Krapfl has aptly pointed out, if 'difference' is used to justify separate Czech and Slovak accounts, then very quickly one would be forced to admit

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[11] M. F. Goldman, *Slovakia Since Independence: A Struggle for Democracy* (Westport, Conn., and London, 1999), p. 20.

[12] Goldman, *Slovakia Since Independence*, p. 21.

[13] G. Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down: The Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe* (Oxford, 1993), p. 157.

'that there were thousands of distinctly "different" revolutions'.[14] Krapfl, the only historian apart from myself to attempt to analyse the revolution across the whole of the Czechoslovak state, has argued that 'local patriotism' and 'regionalism' were in fact more frequent opposition demands than 'national' ones.[15] He has also argued, less persuasively in the present author's opinion, that amongst opposition conceptions of the 'nation', Czechs and Slovaks were 'equally likely' to consider themselves as part of a Czechoslovak civic 'nation'. The evidence for this is highly contentious, however, coming in part from opposition spokespersons whose very task was to make the country appear 'united' against the Communist Party.[16] Whether or not one agrees with Krapfl's argument, what his work has shown is that only by undertaking research in both modern-day Czech and Slovak republics can one come to a judgement about whether or not Czechs and Slovaks experienced a similar revolution or not.

Separate Czech and Slovak accounts of the 1989 revolution have also emerged out of other long-standing differences in the development of historical practice. Prior to 1990, only a handful of institutions taught and studied history in Slovakia (the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Comenius University were the most important). Though the number of historical institutes has increased considerably since 1990, as Slovak historian Zora Hlavičková points out, the Slovak state's 'attempts to intervene' in historians' work, and the 'inadequacies' in historians' own methodologies (particularly concerning their nationalist and positivist tendencies) have discouraged historical challenges to 'traditional nationalism' in history.[17] She also has noted a general reluctance among Slovak historians to write history beyond 1948, as it 'personally

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[14] Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, p. 5.

[15] Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, p. 134.

[16] Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, p. 144.

[17] Hlavičková, *Narratives Unbound*, pp. 254-255.

concerns' many historians.[18] Although this situation is no different for Czech historians, the Czech Republic came out of the break-up of Czechoslovakia better off in its retention of documents and archival collections relating to the Czechoslovak state archives, which partly explains the greater focus on the Communist past there.

Both Czech and Slovak historians have come under pressure from their respective governments to influence the direction of their work about the revolution, and the Communist past more generally. In his study *The Unfinished Revolution*, James Mark has argued how a similar pattern of 'post-Communist elites' intervening in the writing of history began in Hungary, Romania, Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic states. After 1989, he argues, the idea that 'the past was something to be overcome' very quickly gained currency. History 'demanded to be reworked' and 'mythologised' so that 'post-Communism' became 'a culture of historical reinvention'.[19] The creators of the new post-1989 history legitimised the 'elite negotiated transitions' as 'culminations of earlier (often violent and confrontational) anti-Communist struggles'.[20] The struggle to do this, Mark argues, was a 'memory war', played out through the political-legal arena, through historical institutes, statues, museums and other forms of memory creation.[21] His central argument of an 'unfinished' revolution—which took hold particularly in Poland and Hungary in the mid-1990s because of disillusionment with their 'elite-negotiated revolutions'—is less applicable to the Czech and Slovak republics, which underwent a transition as close to a 'revolution' as any country.[22]

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[18] Hlavičková, *Narratives Unbound*, p. 258.

[19] J. Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution: Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (New Haven and London, 2010), p. 215.

[20] Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, p. 5.

[21] Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, pp. xviii-xxviii.

[22] Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, pp. 4-6.

The tenth anniversary of the 1989 revolutions marked a renewed effort on the part of the Czech and Slovak governments to intervene in interpreting what the 1989 revolution is supposed to have represented. The anniversary took place against a backdrop of great public dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the revolution. Lower voter turnout was recorded in elections, and support for the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy*), the successor to the *KSČ*, had reached a post-revolutionary high of twenty per cent.[23] Former students involved in the revolution also issued a direct challenge to all the country's political parties, claiming that as they had failed to stick to the ideals of the revolution they should resign *en masse*.[24] If the 1989 revolution was supposed to embody the values and legitimacy of the new Czech and Slovak republics, the fractious anniversary was surely a warning. Within two years of the 10th anniversary of the 1989 revolution, both Czech and Slovak parliaments had passed laws to declare 17 November to be a state holiday commemorating dual student struggles 'for freedom and democracy' in 1939 and again in 1989.[25] Whether the laws were a tacit recognition that politicians had lost control over the anniversary or not, the creation of the 17 November as a public holiday certainly marked renewed attempts by politicians to stake their own political fortunes to the revolution.[26]

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[23] See J. Rupnik, 'The Politics of Coming to Terms with the Communist Past: The Czech Case in Central European Perspective', *Tr@nsit online* 22 (2002).

[24] J. Brož, I. Chaun, V. Ježek, M. Mejstřík, Š. Pánek, V. Řehák, 'Děkujeme, odejděte!' from *http://www.sdo.jola.cz/prohlas_cz.htm*, 17 November 1999, (last accessed 17 Jan. 2010).

[25] Zákon č. 245/2000 Sb. ze dne 29. června 2000, 'O státních svátcích, o ostatních svátcích, o významných dnech a o dnech pracovního klidu'; Zákon č. 658/2001, 'Návrh skupiny poslancov Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky na vydanie zákona, ktorým sa mení a dopĺňa zákon Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky č. 241/1993 Z. z. o štátnych sviatkoch, dňoch pracovného pokoja a pamätných dňoch v znení neskorších predpisov'.

[26] D. Green, 'Memories and Perceptions of Czechoslovakia's 1989 Revolution', (M.Res thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008) , pp. 19-27.

In these efforts to re-appropriate the past for politicians' current political needs, the 1989 revolution has taken on an important role. If one can influence how the end of Communism is perceived, then one can affect how the entire Communist period is judged. As James Mark has also found, post-Communist politicians have in some cases been 'encouraged' to establish 'Institutes of National Memory' and historical commissions visibly to show their willingness to 'Westernise'. In other cases, this was done to prevent ex-Communists, many of whom were still employed in the bureaucracy, from having contact with citizens' files from the Communist period, and a new 'politically clean' institution was considered the best way to do this.[27] In 2002, the Slovak government, through the 'Nation's Memory Act' funded the creation of the Nation's Memory Institute (*Ústav pamäti národa*), to research 'the causes and manner of the loss of freedom' during Communism.[28] In 2007, the Czech Republic established its own Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (*Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů*) with similarly appointed aims.[29] The institute was set up to research both the 'criminal activities of the state's organs', which included both the *KSČ* and the *StB* (state security) and, significantly, 'resistance against it'.[30] The law defined the period of 'Communist totalitarian power' to date from 25 February 1948 to 29 December 1989.[31] Both Czech and Slovak institutes' main efforts to date, however, have involved the naming and shaming of top former Communist Party officials, *StB* officers, and

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[27] Many of these historical institutes and government departments collaborate in the European internet portal 'Memory of Nations' project. Also see Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, p. 47.

[28] Zákon 553/2002, 'O sprístupnení dokumentov o činnosti bezpečnostných zložiek štátu 1939-1989 a o založení Ústavu pamäti národa a o doplnení niektorých zákonov (zákon o pamäti národa)', section 8.

[29] Zákon 181/2007, 'O Ústavu pro studium totalitních režimu a o Archivu bezpečnostních složek a o změně některých zákonů'. Several members of the Czech Parliament brought a case to the Czech constitutional court challenging the legality of the law, but this attempt failed. See Nález Pl. ÚS 25/07, (13 March, 2008).

[30] Zákon 181/2007, section 4 (a) and (b).

[31] Zákon 181/2007, section 2 (b).

uncovering abuses of power, rather than to offer any serious evaluation of forty-one years of Communist rule.[32]

Although State-sponsored historical institutes have been the most common way politicians across East-Central Europe have sought to influence interpretation of the past, other methods have been used, too. Josef Švéda has argued that the creation of a 'new' society after 1989 encouraged a purge of much of the existing, pre-1989 historiography, and the creation of a new one. Old myths were discredited, with new ones quickly emerging to replace them. This was more than just a matter of renaming the Communist takeover of the National Front Cabinet in 1948, known before 1989 as 'Victorious February' and after 1989 as a 'Communist Coup'. In just one example, Švéda shows how the Mašín brothers, who killed a policeman in the 1950s and escaped to West Germany, had previously been labelled as 'terrorists'. After 1989, the brothers were bestowed with state honours and formally rehabilitated as 'heroes' by politicians and historians alike.[33]

Other legislation passed by both Czech and Slovak governments has attempted to define how long Communist rule actually lasted in Czechoslovakia, and even to define its nature. In 1993, the government of the newly independent Czech Republic adopted a law that precisely defined the Communist 'period' as having lasted from 25 February 1948 until 17 November 1989. It also declared 'Communist rule' to have been 'illegal', the Czechoslovak Communist Party to have been a 'criminal organisation'; its members—without regard to role or function—were all held equally responsible for the 'decimation of the traditional values of European civilisation'.[34] In 1996, the Slovak

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[32] Among the more obvious examples, P. Žáček, *V čele ŠtB: pád režimu v záznamoch dôstojníka tajnej polície* (Bratislava, 2006); P. Balun, *1988: Rok pred zmenou: zborník a dokumenty* (Bratislava, 2009).

[33] J. Švéda, *Mašínovský mýtus: ideologie v české literatuře a kultuře* (Příbram, 2012), pp. 223-234.

[34] Zákon 198/1993, 'O protiprávnosti komunistického režimu a odporu proti němu', preamble.

government passed an almost identical law, which also described the 'illegality' and 'immorality' of the 'Communist system'. Its chief purpose, apparently, was to 'place into the memory of the nation' the 'suffering and sacrifice' of the 'thousands of citizens' who opposed Communism.[35] Whether or not it was even possible to influence writing about the 1989 revolution and the Communist past in this way, the legislation at least encouraged Czechs and Slovaks to blame 'Communists' for their respective country's faults, and to absolve both themselves and current politicians.[36]

As well as using legislation to define the duration of Communist rule and to hold former Party members to account, politicians have also tried to define what can be considered to have been 'anti-Communist' resistance. In a highly controversial law passed by the Slovak government in 2006, 'opposition' and 'resistance' to Communism was backdated to 4 October 1944, the day when Soviet-led forces began the assault on the Dukla pass, just over the eastern border of modern-day Slovakia. Not only did this suggest that the Czechoslovak Communist regime had been imposed on the country by Soviets, it also meant that Slovaks who were fighting for the Fascist Slovak state alongside the Axis forces were now 'resistance fighters'.[37] Other forms of 'resistance' included simply being a member of an 'illegal group' (either at home or abroad), a political prisoner, or someone who had 'written, printed or distributed a petition' (but not signed one); anyone who had 'organised a political group or gathering against Communism'; or, vaguely, someone who had 'developed policies', 'produced publications' or 'engaged in other forms of anti-Communist activity' to advocate the

[35] Zákon 125/1996, 'O nemorálnosti a protiprávnosti komunistického systému', preamble.

[36] Some evidence does actually suggest this has happened. See D. Green, 'Memories and Perceptions of Czechoslovakia's 1989 Revolution', pp. 40-41; Also Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*, pp. 126-164.

[37] Zákon 219/2006, 'O protikomunistickom odboji', section 2.

'restoration of freedom and democracy'.[38] Politicians in the Czech Republic attempted to frame the debate on Communism in almost exactly the same way, but in this case 'veterans' of the 'struggle' could also apply for one-off payment of 100,000 crowns in tribute to their past efforts.[39] As Jacques Rupnik has pointed out, the Czech Republic 'went further than most' in East Central Europe to 'legislate on the criminal nature' of the Communist regime (although Slovakia was surely not far behind).[40] Through these laws, as Petr Pithart, a former dissident and Prime Minister highlighted, the country returned itself to a position in which the regime has, once again, legally defined what historians can and cannot study.[41]

Politicians' interventions in historical debate through the creation of historical institutes, laws and even the creation of state holidays have encouraged historians to look for a 'shared commonality'[42] between the period of Nazi occupation (1939-1945) and Communist rule (1948-1989). The comparisons between the two periods have often been subsumed into theoretical debates about 'totalitarianism', 'authoritarianism' and alternative phrase which might encapsulate both Communist and Fascist rule it in all their complexity. On the one side, Miloš Havelka has argued that between 1939 and 1956, at the very least, the regime in Czechoslovakia could be justly described as 'totalitarian'.[43] Jan Pauer, on the other, has strongly criticised Havelka's argument, not least on the basis that no 'uniting factor' existed between the two regimes, 'except', he adds, 'the numbers of victims'. As Pauer has also pointed out, labelling the periods of

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[38] Zákon 219/2006, sections 4 to 8.

[39] Zákon 262/2011, 'O účastnících odboje a odporu proti komunismu', section 6 (7).

[40] J. Rupnik, *Tr@nsit online* 22 (2002).

[41] P. Pithart, '1969-1989: chybějící pojem či spíše nehcuť k porozumění', *Soudobé dějiny* 16 (4, 2009), p. 688.

[42] M. Havelka, 'Srovnávání nesrovnatelného aneb Existovala v nejnovějších českých dějinách epocha totalitarismu?', *Soudobé dějiny* 16 (4, 2009), p. 612.

[43] Havelka, *Soudobé dějiny* 16 (4, 2009), p 612.

Communist and Fascist rule as 'totalitarian' has two further problems. It not only implies an unending continuity between the two regimes, but also within each of them.[44] In other words, subsuming Czech experiences of Communism and Fascism as a singular experience of 'totalitarian rule' discourages historians from understanding the differences between the two regimes, and from seeing that both regimes underwent shifts and changes over the course of their duration.

In the Czech Republic, debate about 'totalitarianism' and the duration and nature of Communist rule has been particularly salient due to the creation of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. Rather than seeking to 'come to terms' with the country's Communist and Fascist past, the institute has tended to simplify interpretations of 'totalitarianism'. Just as with the banning of the *KSČ*, Pauer has claimed that the institute has promoted notions of the 'general misery' of Communism over any deeper understanding, and divided the population into a 'minority' of perpetrators, against which the rest are perceived as 'victims'.[45] Furthermore, the term '*totalita*' (literally 'totality'), frequently used by Czech journalists and politicians to describe the 'totalitarian' years, has had a similar effect. As Muriel Blaive has pointed out, the word emphasises the dominance of the Communist system over people's lives (i.e. the 'totality' of the system) and individual citizens' lack of agency. It implies not only that ordinary Czechs and Slovaks could do nothing against an omnipotent regime, but that they were the passive victims of something not of their own making. The widespread use of the term '*totalita*', as Blaive argues, also fails to raise 'a real

[44] J. Pauer, 'Totalitarismus jako teorie a jako český totáč', in *Soudobé dějiny* 16 (4, 2009), p. 701.

[45] J. Pauer, *Soudobé dějiny* 16 (4, 2009), p. 703.

methodological discussion' among historians that using the concepts of totalitarianism, authoritarianism, or dictatorship might.[46]

In the Czech and Slovak debate on 'totalitarianism', there is some consensus that the nature of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia during the 1970s or 1980s was different to the so-called 'Stalinism' of the1950s. The origins of this distinction goes back to the 1970s, when dissidents of the *KSČ* were searching for a way to understand the nature of the system against which they were struggling.[47] Václav Havel's highly influential contribution argued that the Communist system was an ideologically 'exhausted dictatorship' and could be considered 'post-totalitarian'.[48] The strength of Havel's conceptualisation, as Pauer has persuasively argued, lay not in its attempt to generalise about the regime, but precisely the opposite: it was a characterisation of the Czechoslovak regime specific to the late 1970s.[49] More generally, the post-totalitarian model appealed to Czech and Slovak historical memory, which divided the Communist period into the 'Stalinist' 1950s, followed successively by the 'Prague Spring' of the 1960s, and the 'Normalisation' of the 1970s and 1980s.

'Normalisation' is the most common way historians have referred to the *KSČ*, its policies and society during the 1970s and 1980s. The term originated in the first Czechoslovak draft of the secret Moscow Protocol, signed by *KSČ* presidium and Soviet politburo in the days after the Warsaw Pact intervention in 1968, with the *KSČ* leadership promising to have a 'normalised' situation.[50] The term 'Normalisation',

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[46] M. Blaive, 'The 1989 Revolution as a non-lieu de mémoire', in A. Gjuričová, ed, *Sborník z konference „1989-2009: Společnost. Dějiny. Politika"*, Heinrich Böll Stiftung Praha, *http://www.boell.cz/navigation/19-856.html* (last accessed 19 Dec. 2013).

[47] The origins of 'totalitarianism' stretch back to the 1920s on the nature of the Soviet regime. See A. H Brown, *Soviet Politics and Political Science* (New York, 1974), p. 23.

[48] V. Havel, "The Power of the Powerless", in J. Vladislav, ed, *Living in Truth*, (London, 1989), p. 80.

[49] Pauer, *Soudobé dějiny* 16 (4, 2009), p. 704.

[50] Z. Mlynář, *Night Frost in Prague* (London, 1986), p. 252.

which sounds like a jargon word in Czech and Slovak as well as in English, was later widely assumed to have been a bureaucratic word invented by the Soviets. It was thereafter avoided by the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia, which instead referred to 'real Socialism' (*reálný socialismus/reálny socializmus*). The term 'Normalisation' gained popular currency abroad not only to describe the process by which the state pulled back from the liberal Prague Spring reforms, but all that followed, right up until the 1989 revolution.[51] Just as Havelka's argument simplifies the changing nature of the regime in Czechoslovakia from 1939 to 1956, 'Normalisation' has conflated two decades (just under half of the Communist regime's life) into one conceptually empty, yet politically loaded term. The lack of a suitable alternative – apart from Havel's arguably equally problematic term 'post-totalitarianism' -- reflects both the lack of research into these two decades—especially the 1980s—and a general reluctance to revisit an uncomfortably ambivalent time in the country's history.

The nature of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia has been similarly defined by those who opposed the *KSČ*. Between 1948 and 1968, Historians have referred to 'opposition' and 'resistance' to the Party, rather than 'dissent' from it.[52] In Czechoslovakia, opposition to the Party took the form of popular protest and anti-State activity, such as the monetary reform protests in Plzeň, western Bohemia, in 1953.[53]

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[51] The *KSČ* used the word 'normalisation' several times in *Poučení z krizového vývoje ve straně a společnosti po XIII. sjezdu KSČ*, its official reaction to the 'Party crisis' of 1968. However, the Party never used the term publicly as a way of describing the situation in country in the years after. 'Real Socialism' has been traced back to Soviet ideologists in the early 1970s. See, L. Sochor, *Contribution to an Analysis of the Conservative Features of the Ideology of 'Real Socialism'*, (Köln, 1984), p. 5, and pp. 8-10.

[52] J. Hanzal, *Cesty české historiografie*, p. 84.

[53] For analyses of violent episodes of revolt and opposition during this time see, for example, K. Kaplan, and J. Váchová, eds, *Protistátní létáky a jiné formy odporu v roce 1949: Dokumenty* (Praha, 1994); Z. Jiršaek and J. Šůla, *Velká peněžní loupež v Československu 1953 aneb 50:1* (Praha, 1992); B. Masin, *Gauntlet: Five Friends, 20,000 Enemy Troops, and the Secret That Could Have Changed the Course of the Cold War* (Annapolis, MD.,2006); J. P. C. Matthews, *Majáles 1956: Nevydařena revolta československých studentů* (Brno, 2000); J. Pernes, *Dělnické demonstrace v Brně v roce 1951* (Praha, 1996); J. Pernes, *Brno 1951: Příspěvek k dějinám protikomunistického odporu na Moravě* (Brno, 1997); J. Švéda, *Mašinovský mýtus: Ideologie v ćeské literatuře a kultuře* (Příbram, 2012).

Apart from individual examples of resistance, the general conclusion from the historiography is that between 1948 and 1958, violent opposition to the Party matched the violent methods that the Party used to suppress challenges to its authority.[54] This had begun with the persecution of opponents in other political parties, included the trial of Milada Horáková, and twelve other politicians, and which led to copy-cat trials elsewhere around the country.[55] Any institution which claimed to 'speak for the nation', from the semi-political gymnastics organisation *Sokol* to the Catholic Church, were pushed into joining the National Front (*Nárdoní fronta/Národný front*), the broad coalition of political parties and social organisations which were subsumed under the *KSČ*'s authority. Those that failed to be integrated into the National Front were 'neutralized'.[56] Having removed possible challengers to the Party's rule, the *KSČ* then began to purge itself, including the infamous Slanský trial, a practice that was to be repeated several times during the Communist period, and one which has similarly attracted much attention from historians.[57] Both opposition to the *KSČ* and the Party's extreme repression subsided over the course of the 1950s as part of de-Stalinisation, to increasing political, economic and individual freedoms, introduced by First Secretary Antonín Novotný in 1961, and accelerated under his successor, Alexander Dubček, in 1968. Barbara Falk argues that the 1960s in Czechoslovakia was ultimately about the extent to which writers, artists and others were 'testing the limits ... and pushing the boundaries' of the regime, rather than directly challenging its authority, or dissenting

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[54] An extensive literature exists on the various minorities and groups targeted by the Party. For a summary of repression in the early years of *KSČ* rule see, for example, K. Kaplan, *Stát a cirkev v Československu v letech 1948-1953* (Brno, 1993); K. Kaplan, and J. Váchová, eds, *Perzekuce po měnové reformě v Československu v roce 1953* (Praha, 1993); J. Kocian, and M. Devátá, eds, *Únor 1948 v Československu: Nástup komunistické totality a proměny společnosti* (Praha, 2011).

[55] M. Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State That Failed* (London, 2009), p. 185.

[56] Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, p. 181.

[57] Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, pp. 200-203.

from it.[58] Whereas in the Soviet Union this was precisely the period when 'dissent' began to be discussed in the literature, in the Czechoslovak historiography resistance both within and outwith the Party was not referred to in similar ways.

The culmination of these reforms during the 1968 'Prague Spring' came with the removal of pre-publication censorship and the relaxation of restrictions on travel abroad. The subsequent armed intervention by five armies of the Warsaw Pact on the night of 20-21 August 1968, which suppressed this perceived counter-revolution of liberal reform, marks a critical juncture in contemporary Czechoslovak historiography. In the post-1989 historiography, the 'tragic' narrative of the Prague Spring and its suppression underwent a complete reassessment. Passive resistance to the Warsaw Pact armies during 21-27 August 1968, to a large extent organised by the *KSČ* itself, started significant political dissent in Czechoslovakia for the first time.[59]

The Warsaw Pact intervention and the end of the reform movement were so significant that 1968 is frequently taken as the starting-point or end-point for anyone engaging with the history of Communist Czechoslovakia. The power struggle inside the leadership of the Party, which had in part led to the Prague Spring in the first place, began with the resignation and removal of several of of the most liberal voices.[60] Within six months, and thoroughly discredited, the failure of the reform movement was marked by the resignation of Alexander Dubček on 17 April 1969. Gustáv Husák, who had supported the reform movement, replaced him as First Secretary. The new course which the *KSČ* set out on, dubbed 'Normalisation' (*normalizace*) and based on the joint

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[58] B. J. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe* (Budapest and New York, 2003), p. 68-69; See also M. Shore, 'Engineering in the Age of Innocence: A Genealogy of Discourse inside the Czechoslovak Writers' Union, 1949-1967', *East European Politics and Societies* 12 (1988), pp. 397-441.

[59] Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, pp. 249-252.

[60] M. Heimann, 'The Scheming Apparatchik of the Prague Spring', *Europe-Asia Studies* 10 (2008), pp. 1717-34.

declaration signed by the *KSČ* presidium and the Soviet leadership, sought initially to curtail the more extreme elements of the Prague Spring. The document, *Poučení z krizového vývoje ve straně* ('Lessons from the Crisis Developments in the Party') was passed by the *KSČ* Central Committee on 10 December 1970 and became the official interpretation of the Prague Spring and Warsaw Pact intervention. It marked a new, dogmatic interpretation of Marxism-Leninism from the *KSČ* leadership and -- in response to this repression -- renewed opposition directed against the Party.

Historians' efforts to explain the nature of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia during the 1970s and 1980s, including how it collapsed in 1989, have drawn primarily on the experiences and writings of those who chose to dissent from the *KSČ*. The originally religious meaning of the term 'dissident', referring to a believer who had renounced his or her faith, began to be used in a new, political sense in the 1960s, as Sovietologists and specialists in East-Central Europe sought to explain the increasing political unrest which had emerged in the aftermath of Stalin's death in 1953.[61] It was no coincidence that the method through which many dissidents wrote and exchanged ideas, known as *samizdat*, emerged at the same time. *Samizdat*, literally meaning 'to self-publish', also originated in the Soviet Union in the late 1950s. Dissidents elsewhere in Communist regimes were using similar clandestine publishing methods to spread ideas and soon the term was being used widely throughout East-Central Europe to refer to anything produced or published which had not been authorised for public dissemination by the Communist authorities.[62] In this sense,

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[61] V. Mastný, ed, *East European Dissent*. 2 vols. (Facts on File, 1972), p. 9.

[62] Like the political use of the term 'dissent', *samizdat* is, as Feldbrugge notes, a phenomenon older than the term. He cites Julius Telesin, who traced the origins of the term to the late 1950s, coined by a Russian poet. See F. J. M. Feldbrugge, *Samizdat and Political Dissent in the Soviet Union* (Sijthoff, 1975), pp. 3-4.

samizdat was one of the principal means by which dissidents could engage in debates with one another and, in certain circumstances, transmit those ideas and debates abroad.

The first political 'dissidents' in Czechoslovakia were, as in the other countries of East Central Europe, mainly former Communist Party members, who perceived the *KSČ* as having strayed from Socialism's original ideals.[63] Whereas in the English language the term holds a more exclusive meaning (to hold opinions which are at variance from an existing position), both the German and Russian equivalents suggest a person who merely 'thinks differently', and thus allows practically anyone to be defined as a 'dissident'.[64] Václav Havel, the best-known dissident in Czechoslovakia, and who gained the label after becoming a founding signatory to Charter 77, the human rights group, further broadened the meaning of 'dissent' in his *samizdat* essay 'The Power of the Powerless'. In it, he claimed that a dissident is 'simply a physicist, a sociologist, a worker, a poet', or any individual who does 'what they feel they must' and, as a result, comes into 'open conflict with the régime'.[65] Havel's dislike of the label was also rooted in the original forms political dissent took. As Padraic Kenney has pointed out, many 'dissidents' like Havel rejected the term as it implied 'an essential agreement with the system' of the many to which only a small minority were opposed outright.[66]

Others, such as Skilling and Griffith, have considered 'dissent' as something more organised and structured. They defined it as the conflict between a 'political interest group', whose members 'share certain attitudes on public issues' and, in making

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[63] D. Pollack and J. Wielgohs, eds, *Dissent and Opposition in Communist Eastern Europe: Origins of civil society and democratic transition* (Aldershot, 2004), p. x.

[64] H. G. Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia* (London, 1981), p. 187.

[65] V. Havel, 'The Power of the Powerless' (1978), in *Václav Havel: Living in Truth.* Ed. J. Vladislav. (London, 1989), p. 80.

[66] P. Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 10-12.

those views public, 'make definite claims on those in authority'.[67] Regardless of whether a more inclusive or exclusive interpretation of 'dissent' is taken, the main point, as Mary Heimann has made, is that determining what was 'dissent' activity is always open to interpretation. In the case of religious pilgrimages and prayer groups in Slovakia in the late 1980s, she has claimed they could be seen as 'primarily religious', 'anti-regime', or even 'Slovak nationalist', 'depending on the outlook of both participants and onlookers'.[68] None of this has stopped 'dissent' becoming a catch-all phrase, used to describe any opponent of Communism in the Eastern bloc. Unlike Communist Party membership, where a person was either a card-carrying member or was not, defining who was or was not a dissident remains difficult.

A general consensus has developed since 1989, that from the early 1970s, dissent in Czechoslovakia steadily increased, eventually climaxing in the *KSČ*'s loss of power. This growth in dissent over the 1970s and 1980s came in three distinct phases. The first phase of opposition to the then newly-elected *KSČ* leadership in 1970 was led by former Communist Party members, reform Communists (sometimes called 'Eurocommunists') and newly-exiled Czechs and Slovaks, who tried to counter the *KSČ*'s official version of the Prague Spring which the Party was propagating at home. For some, it was a chance to continue the fight for the ideals of the Prague Spring; for others, the 'Soviet invasion' proved the illegitimacy of Communist rule.[69] Reform Communists were among the first to provide critiques of both the Prague Spring and its failure.[70] The Party purges between 1969 and 1971, the new policy platform, and a

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[67] H. G. Skilling, and F. Griffiths, eds, *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (Princeton, 1971), p. 24.

[68] Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, p. 293.

[69] The *KSČ*'s justification of to the Warsaw Pact intervention was first set out a *Pravda* editorial. It was later backed up by the the so-called 'White Book', an account-based publication to counter the influence of the 'Prague Black Book', which had presented the 'invasion' to the rest of the world in a very negative way, from the Party's perspective.

[70] Otáhal, *Opoziční proudy v společnosti, 1969-1989*, (Praha, 2011), pp. 82-111.

discredited post-1968 *KSČ* leadership provided the basis for much of the initial dissent that appeared. The 'Prague Spring' had always been flexible enough to be co-opted by both left- and right-wingers as a positive development, being seen either a liberalising movement away from Socialism towards democracy, or else a move towards a more democratic Socialism, depending on one's political perspective.[71]

This first phase of dissent also included journalists, writers and filmmakers who had ended up living abroad, either because they had emigrated or felt forced to continue their work abroad after being prevented from doing so in Czechoslovakia by the Party's screening commissions. In the confusion of the Warsaw Pact intervention, thousands of Czechs and Slovaks (many of whom were Party members) had also taken the opportunity to emigrate at a time when foreign travel was still relatively easy and harsh border controls had not yet been reimposed. Writers such as Josef Škvorecký and Milan Kundera continued their careers from abroad. Émigré publishing houses aided in the process, enabling 'dissident' writings eventually to find their way back to Czechoslovakia.[72] Much of this dissident literature published abroad influenced how the outside world perceived and interpreted the Prague Spring and the events which followed it. Only over the course of a decade or more after the revolution did these emigre and *samizdat* works find a new audience in Czechoslovakia and became fully integrated into Czech and Slovak historiography.[73]

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[71] Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, p. 212.

[72] Of the most important were the '68 Publishers, in Toronto, Canada; and Palach Press (named after the student martyr Jan Palach) in London, United Kingdom. See Jan Čulík, *Knihy za ohradou: Česká literatura v exilových nakladatelstvích 1971-1989* (Prague: 1991).

[73] See, for example, L. Martinek, and M. Tichý, (eds.), *Česká a polská samizdatová literatura: sborník z mezinárodní vědecké conference* (Opava: 2004); J. Vlk, V Vaňková, and J. Novotný, *Minulost a dějiny v českém a slovenském samizdatu 1970-1989: Bibliografie* (Praha, 1993); Rudolf Jičín, *Bibliografie samizdatových publikací a státí ve fondech a sbírkách dokumentačního oddělení* (Praha, 2002); Růžena Hamanová, *Katalog k výstavě nezavislé literatury v samizdatu a exilu v letech 1948-1989 V.Z.D.O.R.* (Praha, 1992).

1968 is widely accepted as a watershed moment which sparked a new phase of dissent in Czechoslovakia among reform Communists and ex-Party members. Historians have long considered a second distinct phase of dissent to have begun in 1977, marked by the launch of Charter 77 which is widely presented as 'something new and different'.[74] The announcement of 'Charter 77' on 1 January 1977, a loose initiative designed to monitor the State's adherence to human and civic rights, came in response to two separate, but related events. First, was the persecution of the underground rock band Plastic People of the Universe, whose members had been put on trial by the authorities.[75] The band's persecution, which contravened the Helsinki Agreements that Czechoslovakia had ratified on 13 October 1975, also acted as a motivation to hold the regime to the standards that it set itself on paper.[76] The merging of the cultural and political concerns of Charter 77 was evident in the initial idea for Charter, which originated among reform Communists, but was led by Havel, who was concerned with specifically 'cultural opposition'.[77] Gordon Skilling, the most prolific historian of the 1970s and 1980s to push the dissidents' case in the West, argued that Charter 77's legacy was above all that it prompted many individual Chartists, as well of groups of Chartists, to 'assert and defend their rights' to 'act independently on their own' without simply 'waiting for someone else to take the initiative.[78] In the late 1970s and through

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[74] Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia*, p. 177.

[75] M. Vaněk, *Byl to jenom rock 'n' roll*, (Praha, 2010), pp. 329-333; Otáhal, *Opoziční proudy v společnosti*, pp. 127-129.

[76] D. C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Right, and the Demise of Communism* (Oxford, 2001); M. Povolný, *Zápas o lidská práva: Rada svobodného Československa a helsinský proces, 1975-1989* (Brno, 2007); S. B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (New York, 2011).

[77] Its authors, Václav Havel, Jan Patočka, Jiří Hájek, Pavel Kohout, and Zdeněk Mlynář, reflected this. See Otáhal, *Opoziční proudy v společnosti*, p. 126.

[78] H. G. Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia* (London, 1981), p. 97.

the 1980s, the Charter 77 movement and the name of ‘dissident playwright’ Havel became extremely well-publicised in the West.

Charter 77 ’s legacy has been subsequently reassessed since 1989. Milan Otáhal, in particular, was the first to seriously challenge the prevailing assumptions about Charter 77’s supposed influence. Otáhal’s first revision of Charter 77’s legacy claimed that the group had remained in a ‘ghetto’ in Czech society and that Charter 77 did not lead a ‘directly lead to the end of the totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia’.[79] He has since revised his view to stress both the political and social context of the Charter’s establishment: it was published at a time when reform Communists’ attempts to form an opposition movement were ‘exhausted’. Chartists were also ‘unsuccessful’ in their attempts to ‘confront’ the regime because of the ‘state of society’, which he claims, ‘was not willing to support an opposition struggling to change was the situation’.[80] Charter 77’s long-term influence on society, reassessed after 1989, is largely the continuation of a debate about the Charter’s effectiveness which took place among its own members throughout the 1980s. Otáhal’s substantial contribution to the debate, valuable as it is, has really only shifted the focus of historians’ attention from Charter 77 onto other forms of opposition to the *KSČ*, rather than offered a wholesale reassessment of the relationship between the *KSČ*, dissenters and society at large.

A third phase of dissent in Czechoslovakia came as the *KSČ* began to introduce political and economic reforms based on the Soviet Union’s plans for restructuring, or *perestroika*. New sorts of social movements typified these new forms of dissent, rather than ‘traditional’ lines of dissent concerning human and political rights. Padriac Kenney, who first put forward the thesis that a rise of social movements can explain the 1989

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[79] Otáhal, *Opozice, moc, společnost*, (Praha, 1994), pp. 47-49.

[80] Otáhal, *Opoziční proudy v společnosti*, p. 166.

revolutions, also argued strongly that dissent had not been confined to individual countries, but was fluid: ideas and cross-border activity spread and interacted throughout East Central Europe.[81] This international aspect of dissent has gained popular currency as others look for cross-border similarities in each country's Communist history. Social movements, although undoubtedly a manifestation of disagreement or disenchantment with aspects of the status quo, offer more ambiguous expressions of dissent: participation in a social movement did not necessarily equate to opposition to the Communist state. Nevertheless, as the Party began to allow greater discussion of the environment, religious and political freedoms, there was a simultaneous rise in the number and size of groups which stood against what the *KSČ* was proposing on these very questions.

Interwoven with studies of dissent and opposition to the *KSČ* are similarly ambiguous accounts of the Czech 'underground' or 'counter-culture', and 'the grey zone'. Both are harder to define: membership was often contingent on retrospective self-identification, or through participation in cultural and social activities that the Party deemed to fall outside accepted cultural norms. Both members of the grey zone and the underground, however, are widely cited as having diversified the nature of dissent in Czechoslovakia during the 1970s and 1980s.[82] Because of the more ambiguous nature of membership, participation and what actually constituted the grey zone and the underground, such studies as exist of these various groups' contributions to dissent or opposition have only emerged since 1989.

Since the 1989 revolution, the theatre, in which significant numbers of the 'grey zone' worked, has been held up as one of the 'bastions' of 'culture' against the dogmatic

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[81] Kenney, *Carnival of Revolution*, pp. 284-287.

[82] Petr Oslzlý, 'On Stage with the Velvet Revolution', in *The Drama Review*, 34, no. 3 (Autumn, 1990), pp. 101-102.

tendencies of the *KSČ*.[83] Theatre attendance, subsidised by the Communist State, had a long cultural inheritance back to Habsburg times. Petr Oslzlý, a dramatist and former member of the Advisory Board to the President of Czechoslovakia, claims that some theatres, particularly those known as the 'authorial' studio theatres, were a significant part of the grey zone. They were an 'intellectually dynamic and active sphere' which lay between the 'official culture' of the *KSČ* and the 'forbidden culture' of the underground.[84] The authorial theatres represented a new style in which there was a 'shift of responsibility' towards actors themselves, who developed their own themes, as well as the means to express them through text, trope, and image, 'for which they took ultimate responsibility'.[85] These theatres, which might more loosely be termed 'alternative', provided a 'link between official theatres and the grey zone' and dissident circles when the revolution began.[86] In his doctoral study on the authorial studios, Charles Beck claims that the authorial theatres fostered trust among the theatre workers and dissidents, and also between theatres and the wider population, which later provided for 'the rapid and efficient orchestration' of the 1989 revolution.[87] In the Bohemian Crown Lands and in Slovakia, as in the Habsburg empire that preceded them, theatres were a significant aspect of cultural and national life: heavily discounted performances meant that attending the theatre was not unusual. In smaller towns, where there were no

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[83] M.A. Kukral, *Prague 1989: Theater of Revolution, A Study in Humanistic Political Geography* (Boulder, Col., 1997); František Černý, *Divadlo v bariérách normalizace (1968-1989): vzpomínky* (Praha, 2008).

[84] Oslzlý, 'On Stage with the Velvet Revolution', p. 102.

[85] Oslzlý, 'On Stage with the Velvet Revolution', p. 102.

[86] Oslzlý, 'On Stage with the Velvet Revolution', p. 102.

[87] C. D. Beck, 'The Czech Authorial Studio Theatres, 1968-1989: Twenty years of rehearsing the Revolution', (Ph.D. thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 1998), p. 4.

colleges or universities, the theatres—a significant symbol of national life—became, as Oslzlý claims, 'the bastions of the revolution.'[88]

Studies of environmental movements in both the Czech lands and Slovakia have divided historians into those who perceive environmentalists as having contributed to the regime's fall in November 1989, and those who remain more skeptical about such a claim.[89]

Miroslav Vaněk has argued that during this third phase of dissident in the late 1980s, 'practically all Czech citizens' initiatives' concerned themselves with 'environmental matters'.[90] One reason for this was a reaction to the Chernobyl nuclear accident on 26 April 1986 in Ukraine, something Padraic Kenney has called 'a remarkable event whose impact on the revolutions of 1989 is still underestimated.'[91] In the late 1980s, the environment became a concern for both the initiatives which Kenney and Vaněk analyse, as well as the regime, though the reasons for this are less obvious. Ian Welsh and Andrew Tickle, in their discussion of the rise of environmental movements across Central and Eastern Europe, claim that it was 'part of the global turn' which the world was taking at the end of the 1980s. Across the Eastern bloc, they argue, these groups were unique as they were able to gain legitimacy within Marxist-Leninist ideology in a way other opposition groups were not able to do. Whilst few doubt that the environment became a concern for both citizens and the regime, whether or not the movements

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[88] Petr Oslzlý, 'On Stage with the Velvet Revolution', p. 104.

[89] M. Vaňek, *Nedalo se tady dychat* (Praha, 1996); A. Tickle, 'The Environment Before and After the Revolution' in *East European Reporter* 4 (1990), pp. 18—20; F. Singleton, ed, *Environmental Problems in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Boulder, Col., 1987); J. Mylnárik, *Ekológia po Slovensky: Otázky životného prostredia na Slovensku 1948-1988* (Praha, 1994); R. Manser, *Failed Transitions: The Eastern European Economy and Environment since the Fall of Communism* (New York, 1993); F. W. Carter, and D. Turnock, eds, *Environmental Problems in Eastern Europe: The Natural Environment* (London, 1993).

[90] M. Vaněk, 'The Development of a Green Opposition in Czechoslovakia: The Role of International Contacts', in G. R. Horn and P. Kenney, *Transnational Movements of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989* (Oxford, 2004), p. 183.

[91] Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*, p. 71.

constituted ‘an important prefigurative role’ in the 1989 revolutions is far from clear.[92]. In his doctoral thesis, Edward Snajdr argues that conservationists in Slovakia—most of whom remained members of the official Slovak Union of Conservationists, were able not only to go about creating spheres of trust through their close work in protecting the environment, but using this atmosphere challenge the regime in its claim that it protected the environment. The best-known example of this was the publication of the document *Bratislava nahlas* (Bratislava Aloud), and which circulated widely around Bratislava in *samizdat* is, he claims, a firm example of this.[93] On the other hand, Miroslav Vaněk has argued that ‘it remains a question’ whether or not these groups constituted ‘movements’. Many environmentalists remained members of top-down bodies, founded from within Communist Party organs, compared to Western Europe where these organisations were independent.[94] Vaněk describes their work in similar terms to how theatre workers within the grey zone were perceived. Environmentalists, in their ‘small-scale work’ opposed the government’s focus on economic growth, rather than being opposed to the regime itself.[95]

Analyses of the 1989 Revolution are situated between two wider historiographies: one concerning ‘dissent’ and the other the nature of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Just as 1968 proved a critical moment in Czechoslovak history around which historians have based their work, the same can be said of the 1989 revolution. So far, the vast majority of these works have been situated firmly in existing debates about the role of dissidents, social movements, and opposition to the *KSČ*. The most

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[92] I. Welsh, and A. Tickle, ‘The 1989 Revolutions and Environmental Politics in Central and Eastern Europe,’ in A. Tickle and I. Welsh, eds, *Environment and Society in Eastern Europe.* Harlow: Longman, 1998.

[93] Edward Karl Snajdr, ‘Green Mask, Green Mirror: Environmentalism, culture and politics in Slovakia's transition from socialism (1985-1995)’, (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1998), p. 57.

[94] Vaněk, *Transnational Movements of Change*, p. 178.

[95] Vaněk, *Transnational Movements of Change*, p. 179.

significant study to date is Jiří Suk's (2004) *Labyrintem revoluce*. This study offers, in Suk's words, a 'phenomenology of the revolution' and an analysis of Civic Forum as 'an actor in the political changes' between November 1989 and Czechoslovakia's first competitive elections in June 1990.[96] Suk based his work on previously published collections of documents, interview testimony with leading members of Civic Forum, and transcripts of roundtable negotiations between the opposition and state and Party representatives.[97]

Building upon previous research into dissent, Suk placed Civic Forum's work in the revolution as the climax of years of political dissent in Czechoslovakia. Civic Forum had its roots in the 'traditional opposition',[98] namely Charter 77—an association strengthened by Civic Forum's founding membership and its *de facto* leadership of leading dissident Václav Havel. Public Against Violence was, much like Civic Forum, a creation of disparate Slovak social movements, dissident groups and and cultural professionals; unlike Civic Forum, it never became 'a formalised dissident movement' but rather a 'committed intellectual community'.[99] It was long held that both Public Against Violence and Civic Forum were 'sister initiatives'[100] with each representing the needs of each nation. Though founded separately, Public Against Violence and Civic Forum 'worked closely'[101] with each other in the organisation of street protests,

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[96] Suk, *Labyrintem revoluce*, p. 16.

[97] J. Suk, 'K prosazení kandidatury Václava Havla na úřad prezidenta v prosinci 1989: *Dokumenty a svědectví*', *Soudobé dějiny* 6 (1999), 346—369; J. Suk, *Občanské fórum: listopad - prosinec 1989. Dokumenty* (Praha, Brno; 1998); J. Suk, *Občanské fórum: listopad—prosinec 1989. Události* (Praha, Brno; 1997). For transcripts of the negotiations which Suk relied upon, see: V. Hanzel, ed, *Zrychlený tep dějin: reálné drama o 10 jednáních; autentické záznamy představitelů státní moci s delegacemi hnutí Občanské fórum a Verejnosť proti násiliu v listopadu a prosinci 1989* (Praha, 1991).

[98] O. Tůma, 'Czechoslovakia' in Detlef Pollack and Jan Wielgohs, eds, *Dissent and Opposition in Communist Eastern Europe: Origins of Civil Society and Democratic Transition* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 41.

[99] F. Gál, *Z Prvej Ruky* (Bratislava, 1991), p. 22.

[100] Gál, *Z Prvej Ruky*, p. 22.

[101] Tůma, *Dissent and Opposition in Communist Eastern Europe*, p. 41.

coordinating demands, and in talks with the *KSČ*. Oldřich Tůma also argues that Public Against Violence had published 'a more radical and politically better articulated programme' than Civic Forum, but that very quickly the two 'centres of revolution'—Prague and Bratislava—drew together and 'complemented one another almost ideally.'[102] Within the leaderships of both organisations, Suk has shown this not to be the case. The major difference between the two was to do with which institutions each group perceived to be the most important. For Civic Forum, the priority lay in the federal government. Public Against Violence focussed on 'Slovak national identity' and the Slovak National Council, although Suk argues that this in no way manifested itself in its programme or demands, but rather 'intuitively'.[103]

Alhough Civic Forum and Public Against Violence were clearly similar in their origins, activity and goals, differences such as those outlined by Suk were offered by historians as justifications for treating Slovakia and the Bohemian crown lands as separate entities in the revolution. This led to historians choosing to focus studies of the revolution on either *Civic Forum* or *Public Against Violence*, the Bohemian crown lands or Slovakia, but not on Czechoslovakia as a whole. The argument that the Czech Civic Forum and Slovak Public Against Violence were natural representatives of their respective nations has been roundly dismissed by James Krapfl in his study 'Revolution with a Human Face', (2013). Krapfl argues that, as the revolution spread throughout Czechoslovakia, individual decisions by each town or city to establish a Civic Forum or Public Against Violence chapter was less dependent upon nationhood and much more ad hoc. Confusion—of which there was more than enough during the 1989 revolution—explained why in some regions of Slovakia, many chapters initially described

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[102] Tůma, *Dissent and Opposition in Communist Eastern Europe*, p. 41.

[103] Suk, *Labyrintem revoluce*, p. 168.

themselves as the local Civic Forum (or some variant of this name).[104] Sometimes, Slovak towns received news about the creation of Civic Forum in Prague first before news about Public Against Violence in Bratislava. In the first ten days of revolution, the Prague-based movement came to be as common in Slovakia as Public Against Violence. As Krapfl elaborates, with the success of the general work stoppage on 27 November and as negotiations began between Civic Forum and Public Against Violence with the *KSČ*, the Public Against Violence leadership in Bratislava attempted to cement its legitimacy as the representative of Slovaks, forcing Slovak branches of Civic Forum to rename themselves as chapters of Public Against Violence.

Even as early as 1990, however, a few public figures began to suggest that the already-established Prague narrative did not fully account for the revolution's development. Some testimony and works have suggested that differences in mentality, or revolutionary demands existed. In the midst of the revolution in early 1990, socialist and dissident Petr Uhl pointed out that:

> The desire for compromise is greater in Prague, whereas in the countryside there is a different problem: as there are very few qualified people to take responsibilities, Party members tend to come to the fore. This causes considerable friction, with the more anti-Communist people saying that nobody who was in the Communist Party has the right to be in the leadership of Civic Forum. That kind of view does not exist in Prague.[105]

This puts the many interviews, speeches, and testimonies that the leading members of Civic Forum (and to a lesser extent, Public Against Violence) have provided to journalists, researchers and historians in a very different light. If the Coordinating

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[104] Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, p. 121-129.

[105] P. Uhl, 'The Fight for a Socialist Democracy in Czechoslovakia', in *New Left Review.* p. 118.

Centres of Civic Forum and Public Against Violence did not know even the most fundamentals of the situation across large parts of the country, then it makes it difficult to believe that their narratives of the revolution can be relevant except to the broader situation in Prague and Bratislava. In all the writing and research that has so far been carried out, no one has yet attempted to subject these local revolutions to serious scholarly study.

The few local histories of the revolution that do exist, most of which were published around the twentieth anniversary of the revolution, replicate the existing trends of the prevailing historiography: a focus on opposition (even in towns where no organised dissent existed)[106]; the publication of interviews with students, opposition representatives and Civic Forum activists,[107] and the reproduction of opposition statements and press articles.[108] This is less surprising when several of the authors were involved in the revolution itself.[109] Apart from the value of such studies for the communities about which the books are concerned, any regional dynamic that emerges emphasises the tensions between the Prague-based Civic Forum coordinating centre, and elsewhere. As Miroslav Anton has pointed out, an 'inherent centralism' which has dominated the Bohemian crown lands 'since time immemorial', provoked authors to wish to explore the revolution as it took place in their own towns.[110] He further points out that 'the struggle' beyond Prague was 'often many times harder, more complicated

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[106] See J. Řeháček, *Sametová revoluce v Pardubicích (*Pardubice, 2009); and B. Čermáková, *et al*., *Občanská odvaha vstupuje do politiky, 1989/90: Občanské fórum v Chebu, Nové fórum v Plavně* (Praha, 1990); L. Valeš, *Listopad '89 v Klatovech, aneb, Klatovy v přelomových letech 1989-1990* (Klatovy: 2005); L. Valeš, *Rok 1989 v Plzni a západních Čechách* (Dobrá Voda, 2003).

[107] See J. Vedlich, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové* (Hradec Králové, 2009); M. Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni* (Plzeň, 1999); and J. Rokoský, ed, ed, *Sametová revoluce v Ústí nad Labem: svědectví studentů po dvaceti letech* (Ústí nad Labem, 2009).

[108] J. Řeháček, *Sametová revoluce v Pardubicích* (Pardubice, 2009).

[109] This appears to be is true at least for Miroslav Anton and Jaroslav Rokoský.

[110] Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni*, p. 90.

and perhaps more dangerous' and that 'in Czech society ... there is not this recognition' of what happened elsewhere.[111]

As long ago as 1996, Wisla Surazska argued in an article on local revolutions in Central Europe that Civic Forum only began to emerge in some parts of Czechoslovakia during 1990. Through memoirs of new mayors and councillors in the Czech Republic and Slovakia shortly after the revolution, Surazska has argued that whereas the 'first wave' of democratisation was the mass movements typified by street protests in big cities, the 'second wave' of democratisation in the towns and villages of Czechoslovakia occurred later, and was much more 'elitist' in character. Here, she argues, it was small groups which 'sensed opportunities opening up with the introduction of municipal autonomy'. Surazska goes on to argue that rapid changes in both institutional design and elite composition of these local regimes 'would justify the notion of a local revolution.'[112] Krapfl has carefully pieced together local newspaper articles by district (*okres*) from the point when the local press became freer during the revolution. The freeing of the press did not mean censorship had ended: Krapfl declares a newspaper to have become freer, or having undergone 'radical changes' when Civic Forum, Public Against Violence and striking students 'were allowed to edit specific pages'.[113] This raises considerable methodological problems, since it effectively excludes from study all those who were not explicitly supported by Civic Forum or Public Against Violence, but is nevertheless extremely valuable in bringing to light the differences between different regions and localities across the state.

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[111] Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni*, p. 90.

[112] W. Surazska, 'Local Revolutions in Central Europe, 1990 to 1994: Memoirs of Mayors and Councilors from Poland, Slovakia and The Czech Republic,' in *Publius*. 26, no. 2 (Spring, 1996), p. 138.

[113] J. Krapfl, *Revolúcia s Ľudskou Tvárou: Politika, kultúra a spoločenstvo v Československu po 17. novembri 1989* (Bratislava, 2009), pp. 244-247.

James Krapfl's painstaking work in regional and local archives in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia has enabled him persuasively to challenge the hitherto ubiquitous 'national' interpretation of Civic Forum and Public Against Violence. His *Revolution with a Human Face* further claims to offer an 'emic' study of the revolution, or in other words, to seek to understand the revolution from the perspective of those involved.[114] Krapfl's major contribution to the historiography is his research into the regional and local dynamics of the revolution, largely concerning Civic Forum and Public Against Violence. Krapfl understands the revolution as a 'departure' from which the '*demos*', or people, set about creating a new society based on 'humanness' (*lidskost/ľudkosť*).[115] Krapfl refutes the accepted belief that Civic Forum and Public Against Violence were 'sister' movements. He claims that in the early days of the revolution, Civic Forum proved to be more open and inclusive, resulting in chapters being founded in both republics. Public Against Violence, on the other hand, was perceived by many Slovaks as a Bratislava grouping of intellectuals.[116] Krapfl's research also claims that the coordinating committee of Civic Forum struggled to keep up to date with events around the country, and accepted Public Against Violence's supposed hegemony in Slovakia without question, despite the fact that chapters of Civic Forum had been established across Slovakia, as early as 20 or 21 November as far east as Košice.[117] Rather than *Civic Forum* and Public Against Violence representing a Czech/Slovak struggle to represent their own respective 'nations', the early revolutionary days were, according to Krapfl, a struggle between Public Against Violence Bratislava and other

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[114] Krapfl, *Revoution with a Human Face*, p. xii.

[115] Krapfl, *Revoution with a Human Face*, p. 1, and especially pp. 107-108.

[116] J. Krapfl, 'Civic Forum, Public against Violence, and the Struggle for Slovakia', conference paper to the Annual convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS), Washington, D.C., November 2006. p. 9.

[117] Krapfl, 'Civic Forum, Public against Violence, and the Struggle for Slovakia', p. 5.

Slovak regions for dominance over who spoke for Slovaks.[118] What Krapfl fails to do, however, is to extend his 'emic' approach to encompass Communist Party members, to look at their role in the revolution at the regional and local levels, which is one of the main aims of the present work.

Students, who took a central role in organising the 17 November march and were the first to take strike action in response to the police violence that ended it, have also been the subject of numerous published accounts and studies concerning the revolution. Former students have also been active in publishing their own accounts of the revolution, such as Marek Benda *et al.*'s *Studenti psali revoluce (Students Wrote the Revolution)* and Petr Kotek's *Kronika Studentského vysílání* (*Chronicle of student broadcasts*)[119] The involvement of so many theatre workers in the revolution provided Czechoslovakia's revolution with much literary and dramatic imagery. Harking back to newspaper narratives of an intellectual revolution, Oslzlý writes, the students were 'the future of the nation', dissidents 'the conscience of the nation', and artists 'the spirit of the nation' during the revolution.[120] A major oral history study that ended by publishing 100 interviews with students who were involved in the revolution as *Sto studentských revolucí* was published in 1999 by the Czech Centre for Oral History.[121] It was on this significant contribution that Czech historian Milan Otáhal, who had been purged from Charles University in Prague in 1969 but re-instated in 1990, based his *Studenti a Komunistická moc v českých zemích 1968-1989* (Students and Communist Power in the Czech Lands 1968-1989). He describes the creation of STUHA (*Studentské hnutí*, or

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[118] Krapfl, 'Civic Forum, Public against Violence, and the Struggle for Slovakia', pp. 26-27.

[119] M. Benda, *et al*, *Studenti psali revoluci* (Praha, 1990); P. Kotek, *Kronika Studentského vysílání: FAMU během listopadových událostí roku 1989* (Praha, 2000).

[120] Oslzlý, 'On Stage with the Velvet Revolution', p. 105.

[121] M. Otáhal, and M. Vaňek, *Sto Studentských Revolcuí* (Praha, 1999).

Students' Movement), a group who often just referred to themselves as the 'independent students' to differentiate itself from the officially-sanctioned student Union of Socialist Youth (*Sociálistický svaz mládeže*, hereafter cited as *SSM*). Otáhal claims that students who opposed the 'Normalisation regime' in Czechoslovakia took one of two approaches. One was simply to conform and to join the *SSM*. The other was to refuse 'to collaborate with official institutions', thus pushing them towards the dissident concept of a *parallel polis* (second society, in other words, opposition) and led to the creation of the 'independent' students' union known as STUHA.[122] Otáhal limits the focus of his study solely to the Czech lands, and specifically to university students in Prague. He claims it was the capital city that was 'the focus of societal and political life' for the student movement.[123] 'The situation in Slovakia', he goes on to declare, was 'specific and also access to sources is harder'.[124]

The dating of the revolution—based on a chronology of events from Prague—offers yet another example of how the city looms over the way the revolution is perceived and remembered. Although it is right that Prague, the capital city and seat of government of a heavily centralised state, should be given serious attention in any study of the events of 1989, to allow it entirely to dominate Czechoslovakia's revolutionary story is to ignore mountains of archival and other regional evidence from across the country and to open oneself to fundamental misunderstandings of the nature and significance of a revolution that was statewide, and not confined to the capital. Though local histories and occasional publications give a local view from different regions in the Bohemian crown lands and Slovakia, within the wider contemporary historiography

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[122] M. Otáhal, *Studenti a Komunistická moc v českých zemích 1968-1989* (Prague, 2003), p. 162.

[123] Otáhal, *Studenti a Komunistická moc*, p. 7.

[124] Otáhal, *Studenti a Komunistická moc*, p. 7.

Prague entirely dominates the discussion. This Prague-centric outlook is not unique to studies of the 1989 revolution. The current popularity of dissident studies, when it appears that dissent activity was heavily concentrated in Prague, hardly encourages historians to look beyond the capital. Czech historical institutes in particular, although they have continued to gather and publish source materials, have not attempted to shift from this Prague perspective. Two popular collections published for the general public to mark the twentieth anniversary of the revolution, contain edited interviews, internal documents, photographs and even film footage but retain a Prague-centred chronology and focus.[125]

How long Czechoslovakia's revolution lasted is in itself an open question: most agree that the spark for revolution came on Friday 17 November 1989, when the police and security forces violently dispersed a student march through central Prague. Though no one had any idea that the march would lead to a mass revolt, on Monday 20 November the first of a series of large street demonstrations took place on Prague's Wenceslas Square and put the *KSČ* on the back foot. When the revolution actually ended is less clear. Early accounts suggested the revolution was essentially a ten-day affair[126]; the fast-paced nature of the revolution appeared to be confirmed by later documentary collections.[127] Others considered 10 December 1989 as the climax to revolution, the day when the country celebrated 'the victorious peaceful revolution'.[128]

Various conspiracy theories have emerged since the 17 November, each purporting to explain why revolution came about, each of which is similarly centred on

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[125] I. Koutská, V. Ripka, P. Žáček, eds, *Občanské fórum, den první* (Praha, 2009); Barbora Čermáková, Zbyněk Černý, Pit Fiedler, Dietrich Kelterer, eds, *Občanská odvaha vstupuje do politiky: 1989/90 Občanské fórum v Chebu, Nové forum v Plavně* (Praha, 2009).

[126] T. G. Ash, *Inside the Magic Lantern*, p. 78.

[127] M. Otáhal, and Z. Sládek, eds, *Deset pražských dnů (17.-27. listopad 1989): Dokumentace* (Praha, 1990).

[128] Anon., *Kronika sametové revoluce* (Praha, 1989), p. 2, and pp. 42-43.

Prague and the events of 17 November. Although they differ as to why the State might have become involved in the demonstration the same unanswered questions from 17 November march remain. The first suggests some StB-led provocation to encourage students to continue the march after its supposed end at Vyšehrad, and continue towards Wenceslas Square where, unbeknown to them, were security forces waiting to prevent any further disturbance. Rumour suggests that StB officers had infiltrated the crowd and managed to divert the crowd to National Avenue. As the beatings began on National Avenue, a 'student' appeared to fall and collapse to the ground and be taken away by stretcher. This later turned out to be Pavel Žifčák, an undercover StB officer (Růžička), a fact which later only fuelled the previous suspicions. Finally, student Drahomir Dražská allegedly saw a student beaten and carried away in a stretcher. Her claimes reached Petr Uhl, who at the time was involved in the independent Eastern News Agency. Uhl spread the news, which quickly circulated on Voice of America, the BBC, and Radio Free Europe. Dražská, having escaped National Avenue, ran into Miroslava Litomiská, who during their conversations that night on the way home revealed that she knew some members of Charter 77.[129] Although these rumours and conspiracy theories were swiftly dismissed by, among others, Kieran Williams in his study of the *StB*, they continue to have common currency throughout the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Such work has been spent on recreating this moment in history that the movements of both police and demonstrators on that night are known down to the minute.[130] Despite claims and rumours she was an StB agent, Dražská publicly declared she was not and that the whole affair had been made up.[131] Victor Sebestyen, in his recent narrative account of

[129] P. Záček, 'Fáma o smrti Martina Šmída a její vyštetřování. Rekonstrukce vyštřovacího spisu Státní bezpečnosti', *Securitas imperii* 16 (2010), p. 148.

[130] Müllerová, Hanzel, eds, *Albertov 16:00*, pp. 39-42.

[131] Interview with Drahomír Dražská, in A. Müllerová, V. Hanzel, eds, *Albertov 16.00* (Praha, 2009), pp. 54-56.

the 1989 revolutions, went so far as to claim this as 'an example' of when 'there really were conspiracies behind the theories', arguing that the *StB* leadership staged the 17 November events to hasten Gorbachev-style reforms in Czechoslovakia.[132]

Just as 1968 came to be universally accepted as a clear juncture in Czechoslovak historiography, so the 1989 revolution has become a beginning and end-point for historians. Indeed, the very question of whether or not 1989 represents an 'end' or a 'beginning' greatly shapes the choice of sources a scholar selects and the very arguments he or she makes. Foremost among those who perceive 1989 as a point of departure for their work are James Krapfl and Mary Sarotte. Those, such as Michal Pullmann and Simon Kotkin, who regard 1989 rather as an end-point, see 1989 as the year in which Gorbachev's attempts at reform in the USSR, and his encouragement for other countries in Central and Eastern Europe to do the same, can be said to have failed.[133] Such interpretations are as much political as they are as historical. Václav Klaus, in his various public roles (first as Finance Minister, then Prime Minister, and Czech President), has strongly shaped Czech debates around the revolutionary role of dissident by claiming that the 'Communist system collapsed...[it was] not defeated'.[134]

In 1989, Václav Klaus, then an economic advisor in the Economic Forecasting Institute, brought economic experience into the heart of Civic Forum, which had been dominated from its inception by philosophers, actors, writers and reform Communists. His argument, very much aimed at his political rival, Václav Havel, suggested in a speech in September 1996 that revolution was inevitable because 'it was in an advanced stage of decomposition.' The Communist regime simply 'melted down', something of

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[132] V. Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Phoenix, 2010), pp. 369-370.

[133] M. Waller, *The End of the Communist Power Monopoly* (Manchester, 1993), p. 213.

[134] V. Klaus, *Renaissance: The Rebirth of Liberty in the Heart of Europe* (Washington DC, 1997), p. 38.

which ‘some of our brave colleagues in the post-Communist world do not like to be reminded.’[135] Klaus’s political rivalry with Václav Havel, alongside his own vehement beliefs in the market system, no doubt inspired this pronouncement. Klaus’s argument was less a critique of late-Communism than a thinly veiled attack on the 1989 Revolution as ‘idealistic’ (meaning amateurish) and also as having not fully succeeded. Although the system had ‘melted’ away, it had not been overthrown by an alternative, which thus justified his own determination to pursue his own alternative right-wing, liberal market vision for Czechoslovakia (and latterly the Czech Republic).

One final constant that appears in explanations for the collapse of Communism, not only in Czechoslovakia but also across the rest of the region, is the role of Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1985 to 1991. Former *Civic Forum* member, Jiří Honajzer, in his study of the movement, has claimed that it was ‘the onset of Gorbachev’s “perestroika” in the then USSR’ that was the spur to a growth in independent initiatives in the late 1980s.[136] Milan Otáhal, perhaps surprisingly as one of the leading Czech historians of contemporary Czech history, goes further, considering Gorbachev to be the central figure in contributing to revolution in Czechoslovakia, with dissidents and other players relegated to a much more minor role.[137] One of the most crucial decisions Gorbachev took in relation to policy towards Central and Eastern Europe was to renounce the so-called ‘Brezhnev Doctrine’ in speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1988. Since 1968 and the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia, the policy of ‘limited sovereignty’ confirmed the widespread view of ‘quiescent’ Communist countries which

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[135] Klaus, *Renaissance*, p. 38.

[136] J. Honajzer, *Občanské fórum: vznik, vývoj a rozpad* (Praha, 1996), p. 14.

[137] See, for example, M. Otáhal, ‘Czechoslovakia behind the Iron Curtain (1945-1989)’ in M. Teich, ed, *Bohemia in History* (Cambridge, 1998); M. Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc*, p. 121.

were essentially 'satellites' of the Soviet Union. As Padraic Kenney has argued in his study of dissent throughout the region, *Carnival of Revolution*, however, 'Gorbachev deserves praise more for *reacting* to these revolutionary events in a rational and creative way, rather than for instigating them himself.'[138] Kenney's work, using oral history, has shown that the opposition in most countries found Gorbachev's role 'more ambiguous.'[139]The testimonies he has collected of 'constant arrests, beatings, and harassment' mean that 'the temptation to think of the "Gorbachev years" of liberalisation and glasnost simply evaporates.'[140]

When the role of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (*KSČ*") has been examined at all, it has invariably been from the point of view of the top-level leadership of the Party and not the grassroots and local active party leaderships. Existing work on the *KSČ* focusses much more on structures and processes within the Party, though these do give us some hint to how the *KSČ* reacted in response to the November events.[141] Zdeněk Suda suggests that the overthrow of the *KSČ* in 1989 only affirms his thesis of the lack of reflexivity in the *KSČ*. The refusal of the Husák and Jakeš leadership even to consider reform was, he suggests, utterly typical of the *KSČ* from its inception, through its responses and behaviour during the Prague Spring and military invasion, to the 1989 revolution. At every stage, from the KSČ's foundation in 1921 to the political crisis of 1989, the leadership failed to predict and adapt quickly enough to the changing political situation. The KSČ leadership hoped that Gorbachev's reforms, like those of Krushchev's, 'would soon reach [their] limits, these limits being the preservation of the

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[138] Kenney, *The Burdens of Freedom*, p. 5.

[139] Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*, p. 121.

[140] Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*, p. 33.

[141] Z. Suda, 'Czechoslovakia', in R. F. Staar, ed, *1990 Yearbook on International Communist Affairs.* (Stanford, Cal., 1990); Zdenek Suda, *Zealots and Rebels: A History of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia* (Stanford, 1980).

communist party monopoly in the USSR as well as in the countries of the Soviet bloc.'[142] What remains unexplored, however, is the tiers below the top functionaries in Prague and Bratislava. The modern-day successors to the *KSČ* remain reticent about the revolution. There has been, as yet, with the partial exception of Pullmann, no willingness on the part of historians to approach the KSČ as a complex political organisation and to look seriously at how the Party—locally, regionally as well as nationally—responded to the rapidly unfolding crisis of November and December 1989. This thesis intends to do just that.

That Czech, Slovak and English-language writing about the 1989 Czechoslovak revolution has been largely restricted to Prague and focussed almost entirely on dissent and opposition to the *KSČ* is no coincidence. The post-1989 historiography that developed about the 1989 'Velvet' revolution in Czechoslovakia was predicated on preexisting assumptions and debates, particularly among Western scholars, about the supposed role and influence of dissent under Communist rule. Furthermore, the post-1989 political context in which this historiography emerged actively discouraged any significant reassessment either of the 1989 revolution or of the Communist regime itself. Therefore, is it little wonder that historians' efforts to explain the nature of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia during the 1970s and 1980s have primarily been understood through the experiences and writing about those who chose to dissent against it, rather than the *KSČ* itself. Without such a scholarly imbalance being redressed, Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution and the years of Communist rule cannot be properly or fully understood.

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[142] Suda, *1990 Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, p. 321.

Chapter Two:

Restructuring the Socialist State

Between 1986 and 1989, the Czechoslovak Communist Party (*KSČ*) attempted to 'restructure' society, politics and the economy, which inadvertedly started a revolution, bringing about the Party's own demise. The *KSČ*'s revolution, which centred around themes of 'restructuring' (*přestavba/prestavba*) and 'democratisation' (*demokratizace/ demokratizácie*), were borrowed from the Soviet Union's own policies of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (literally publicity, or 'openness'). They mirrored, too, similar reforms throughout the Eastern bloc. Borrowing both the language and policies of Soviet reform, the *KSČ* leadership sought to reform Czechoslovak society along similar lines, yet also tried to shape *přestavba* to suit its own ends. These reforms eventually extended over four main areas: the economy, political reform, social reforms (including education and the environment), and Party reform. As Michal Pullmann has shown in his own recent analysis of Czechoslovak *přestavba*, the policy led to a breakdown in the ideological language of 'Normalisation' which had prevailed since 1970 and which, he argues, had until then provided the country with much of its political stability in the intervening years. As well as showing the causal links between Czechoslovak *přestavba* and Soviet *perestroika*, Pullmann's study draws on newspaper articles, magazines, government and Party documents to demonstrate that *přestavba* and the new political language it provided ended this stability. *Přestavba*, he argues, gave rise to different interpretations of the policy not only from within the normal Party leadership and cadre circles, but also in society and among opposition and dissident

groups, precipitating the rise of opposition against the *KSČ* and the collapse of Communism itself.[1]

As the first historical analysis of *přestavba*, Pullmann's approach has analysed *přestavba* primarily from the perspective of decision-making elites within the *KSČ* (the Presidium, Central Committee, the government and its committees). This chapter instead offers an alternate view of Czechoslovak *přestavba*: it takes the policies and decisions of top Party officials and traces them down to the local Party functionaries who were expected to implement them. As Pullmann has argued, *přestavba* could (and indeed was) interpreted differently, with competing visions of reform emerging both from with the Party elite itself, and from opposition groups.[2] The fact that different ideas of 'democracy' and 'elections' were no longer the property of Communists or any other group in society is not surprising. And although Pullmann's contention that competing versions of 'reform' (in its loosest sense) came to the fore during the late 1980s is interesting, but has not been developed to include the events of the 1989 revolution.

This chapter understands *přestavba* differently. It argues that, at its heart, *přestavba* was about devolving responsibility and accountability, particularly to lower regional and district Party committees, but also to other political institutions of the state administration. The presidium sought to fundamentally redefine the Party's position in society. It sought to distance the *KSČ* generally—and the Party leadership in particular—from the day-to-day running of the state, whilst simultaneously remaining in power.

Experts familiar with the *KSČ* and its jargon may immediately assume that 'responsibility' (*odpovědnost*/*zodpovědnosť*), a watchword of the Communist regime,

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[1] See M. Pullmann, *Konec experimentu* (Praha, 2011), pp. 185-215, pp. 218-225.

[2] Pullmann, *Konec experimentu*, especially pp. 168-169.

predates *přestavba.* Whilst true, this chapter argues that the period between 1986 and 1989 not only represented a different interpretation of these words, but actually resulted in their partial implementation, too. When the *KSČ* came into power in 1948, the country retained the outward pretences of a parliamentary democracy. Thus Czechoslovakia was not technically a one-party state, but governed by a coalition 'National Front' government. The federal and republican assemblies, as well as the regional and district National Committees (*národní výbory*/*národné výbory*) had deputies from the five political parties which made up the National Front coalition: the Czechoslovak Socialist Party (*Československá strana socialistická*), and the Czechoslovak People's Party (*Československá strana lidová*), which existed in the Czech Socialist Republic; and the Freedom Party (*Strana slobody*), and the Slovak Renewal Party (*Strana slovenskej obrody*), which existed in the Slovak Socialist Republic. The *KSČ*, as the fifth and largest of these parties, technically only represented the Bohemian crown lands; a federal, or regional (*zemská*) Slovak Communist Party (*Komunistická strana Slovenska*, or *KSS*) existed in Slovakia. Like all the other parties of the National Front, the *KSS* took its lead from the *KSČ* Presidium and Central Committee (the Party leadership), although Slovak members were also represented in both these bodies. Whilst for much of the Communist period in Czechoslovakia the formal political system mattered little, during *přestavba* and over the course of the revolution the National Front took on a new significance.

Přestavba did not aim to radically alter the existing constitutional setup, but instead modify the *KSČ*'s existing relationship between the state administration (the republican and federal governments, and regional and district national committees) and itself. A situation had developed whereby the *KSČ* at all levels had taken responsibility for all aspects of the state's governance: from creating new policies, implementing

them, to asserting their effectiveness and resolving any conflicts which arose as a result. The Party leadership envisioned that as a result of *přestavba*, the Party would still retain its 'leading role' by developing new policies and reviewing existing practices. However, it would distance itself from the day-to-day running of the state, which would fall instead to national committees. The principle of 'responsibility'—which was to be a vital element in *přestavba*—was soon applied not just to the political organisation of the state, but also to economic and social policy, as well as the Party's own internal organisation.

From the beginning of this revolution in 1986, to its culmination and the loss of Party control in November 1989, no one—either in the Party among the leadership, regional and district Party functionaries, the rank-and-file membership or in society at large—suspected what the ultimate consequences of these reforms might be. The climax of it during November and December 1989 was fought around the very ideas which the Party had been openly discussing in society for several years.

The first steps towards *přestavba* in Czechoslovakia were taken at the seventeenth Czechoslovak Communist Party congress, held between 24-28 March 1986. This was the first clear indication given by the *KSČ* leadership that it intended to introduce at least a measure of reform, following the lead already provided by the Soviet Union's perestroika, which had been announced a month earlier.[3] Gustáv Husák, who had been general secretary of the *KSČ* since 1970, as well as Czechoslovak President since 1975, declared the congress to be taking place at a time of 'momentous change'.[4] Husák pointed to the 'weaknesses and shortages' which were holding the country back, and said that 'new problems and demands' were coming at the Party from

[3] Pullmann, *Konec experimentu*, p. 62.

[4] G. Husák, 'Přednesená generálním tajemníkem ÚV KSČ soudruhem Gustávem Husákem dne 24. března 1986', in *XVII. Sjezd Komunistické strany Československa, 24.-28. března 1986* (Praha, 1986), p. 13.

many directions.[5] Possibly in a sign of Husák's own reluctance to begin any significant reform programme in Czechoslovakia, however, it was up to Lubomír Štrougal, *KSČ* Presidium member and Czechoslovakia's Prime Minister, to explain to the Party what, if any, changes the leadership planned. According to Pullmann, Štrougal appears to have been the first among the leadership to pick up on the signs of reform coming out of the Soviet Union. In April 1985 he had made a speech in Košice in which he identified a 'host in insufficiencies' in the economy which required a 'reevaluation…so deep' that it would 'not be possible to imagine it'.[6] His address to the Party congress—made on behalf of the *KSČ* leadership—was more cautious. He declared that Czechoslovakia needed much greater technological development and innovation for the 'acceleration' of its economic development.[7] Štrougal described this programme as the 'further development', 'modernisation' and 'reconstruction' (*rekonstrukce/rekonštrukcia*) of the economy.[8] Amongst the leadership's actual proposals to actually achieve this included increasing spending on investment, including on electronic hardware and other 'large-scale innovative programmes'; proposals to double the growth of personal consumption; and more government spending on environmental protection—a move which was at once both economically motivated and to appease increasing concerns about the damage done by heavy industry to the Czechoslovak countryside.[9]

Aside from these fundamental, predominantly economic problems outlined by Štrougal, Husák also laid out the general themes on which much of the *KSČ*'s attention

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[5] Husák, *XVII. Sjezd Komunistické strany Československa*, p. 13.

[6] Pullmann, *Konec experimentu*, p. 58.

[7] L. Štrougal, 'Zpráva o Hlavních směrech hospodářského a sociálního rozvoje ČSSR na léta 1986-2000', *Rudé právo* (26 Mar. 1986), p. 3.

[8] L. Štrougal, *Rudé právo* (26 Mar. 1986), p. 3.

[9] L. Štrougal, 'Report on the Guidelines of Economic and Social Development of the ČSSR for the Period 1986-1990 and Outlook up to the Year 2000', in *17th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Prague, 24-28 March 1986* (Prague, 1986), p. 174.

would be focussed over the next five-year plan: increasing the 'authority' and 'accountability' of regional and district national committees; 'greater attention' to education, health, culture; and the writing of a new constitution.[10] The change in tone and the decision to announce a 'challenging'[11] economic programme at the congress was the collective devision taken by the entire Presidium. This was despite, as Miloš Jakeš, a Presidium member at the time claims, significant reluctance from Gustáv Husák.[12] Although Husák (and almost certainly some others in the leadership) were reluctant to change the Party's tone towards reform, the announcements took place only two weeks after the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) had held its own twenty-seventh congress, between 25 February and 6 March 1986. Addressing the CPSU for the first time since his election as General Secretary the year previously, Mikhail Gorbachev offered the first outline of the new CPSU policy of *perestroika.* And just as would happen at the *KSČ* congress a few weeks later, Gorbachev only offered vague criticisms of existing practices rather than concrete policies or even a defined vision of change.[13] The main difference between the two congresses was that whereas Gorbachev had given his policies a name, *perestroika*, in Czechoslovakia, the Party had merely referred to the 'acceleration', 'speeding up' or 'rebuilding' (*přebudování*/ *prebudovanie*) of the economy. The Czech translation of *perestroika—přestavba*—was therefore only used in translation of Soviet policies, not in relation to the *KSČ*'s own programme.[14]

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[10] G. Husák, *XVII. Sjezd Komunistické strany Československa*, p. 13, pp. 34-35.

[11] L. Štrougal, *Rudé právo* (26 Mar. 1986), p. 3.

[12] M. Jakeš, cited in M. Vaněk, and P. Urbášek, eds, *Vítězové? Poražení? II. díl, politické élity v období tzv. normalizace* (Praha, 2005), p. 198.

[13] Pullmann, *Konec experimentu*, pp. 42-46, and pp. 56-57.

[14] Pullmann, *Konec experimentu*, p. 60-63.

Immediately after the seventeenth Party congress and for the remainder of 1986, as Michal Pullmann has suggested, the *KSČ* leadership were 'waiting' to see what would happen. The leadership's reluctance to reform reflected many deep uncertainties within the leadership: it was not immediately clear whether or not the CPSU had actually began to reform, or if *perestroika* was not just another 'ideological campaign' which could end as quick as it began, with purges to catch the unsuspecting.[15] The Party also still bore the effects of the failed 1968 Prague Spring reform effort, and the subsequent armed intervention gave the Party leadership even greater reason to be cautious. (Even the word 'reform', which was so closely associated with the Prague Spring, never entered the Party's lexicon during the entire *přestavba* period.[16])

Instead, the *KSČ* leadership's ideas for limited reform remained tied to the economy. On 9 January 1987, *Rudé právo*, the Central Committee's daily, announced that the *KSČ* Presidium and the federal government had endorsed the 'principles of reconstruction of the economy' (*přebudování hospodářského mechanismu*).[17] To achieve the required 'qualitatively new level of development' in Czechoslovakia, the leadership suggested, among its other thirty-seven recommendations the report made, to 'increase the responsibility' of organisations (i.e. companies and cooperatives); to 'effectively satisfy consumer demands'; and to 'sharply limit' central administration and management, with the aim of creating space for 'conceptual work' and which would, in turn, strengthen 'economic methods of management' and raise 'responsibility and authority of organisations' below.[18] Although mainly limited to economic reform, even at this early stage *přestavba* was conceived as devolving responsibility from the centre.

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[15] Pullman, *Konec experimentu*, p. 62.

[16] Pullmann, *Konec experimentu*, p. 67-68.

[17] 'Zásady přebudování hospodářského mechanismu', *Rudé právo* (9 Jan. 1987), p. 3.

[18] 'Zásady přebudování hospodářského mechanismu', *Rudé právo* (9 Jan. 1987), p. 3.

Although economic reform was the earliest and most developed aspect of *přestavba*, and which Michal Pullmann has analysed in great detail, it was not the only area of Czechoslovak society which was affected by reform. This only became apparent, however, after a Central Committee session of the CPSU in January 1987, at which Gorbachev had set out what Soviet *perestroika* would mean in practice.[19] As Michal Pullmann has discovered, only two weeks after this meeting, in a note to Soviet embassies on 2 February 1987, the CPSU declared its expectation that other Socialist countries were expected to launch their own reformist programmes. Explicitly mentioned were reforms surrounding the economy (including the election of company directors), ideological and Party reform (including the conception of 'Socialism'), restructuring Party work, a greater spread of information and openness, and democratisation of the system of governance. Following on from this, as Pullmann has correctly pointed out, the term *přestavba* began to be used in relation to a specific Czechoslovak version of 'restructuring'. But as the Party and government set about implementing its reforms to restructure the economy, it simultaneously continued to work through its five-year plan and integrate this into a new, wider conception of *přestavba.* And the seventeenth Party congress had already laid out where change would be coming from next: increasing accountability among the regions and districts, reform in education, culture, and a new state constitution.

It was in economic policy, however, that the Presidium's conception of *přestavba* first emerged. A government committee for the Management Planning of the National Economy was set up in mid 1987 to flesh out the rough proposals, and provide suggestions for actual economic policies.[20] The committee, first headed by Ladislav

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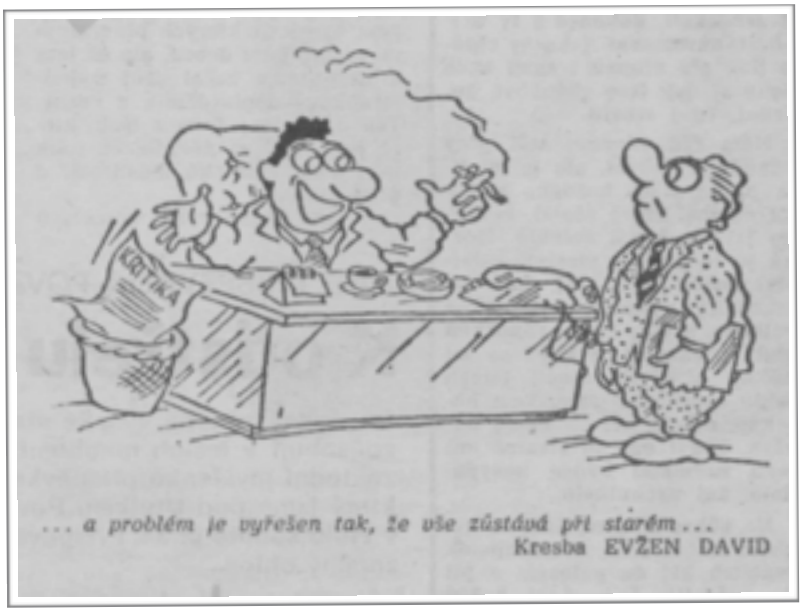
[19] Pullmann, *Konec experimentu*, pp. 62-63.

[20] Pullmann, *Konec experimentu*, pp. 66-67.

Matějka, only later to be replaced by Jaroslav Matějka, led to a joke mocking the government's lack of direction and unwillingness to reform, and which asked: 'What is necessary to start economic restructuring in Czechoslovakia? To swap Matějka for Matějka').[21] *Rudé právo*, on the other side, chose to mock its own cadre, particularly those officials and managers who it blamed—at least, for the moment, in cartoon form—for dragging their heels and resisting *přestavba* (pic. 1).



Picture 1: '...And the problem is solved by everything remaining as it is...'. *Rudé právo* (*Haló sobota* supplement), (19 Dec. 1987), p. 1

The most significant legislation from the government committee for the Management Planning of the National Economy was the State Enterprises Act (1988).[22] The law transformed existing national enterprises (*národní podniky/národné podniky*), and renamed them as state enterprises. This change affected only larger companies and cooperatives, and those which, as the law stated, played 'a leading role in the development of the economy'.[23] In keeping with the overall aims of *přestavba*, the law

[21] 'Matějka kontra Matějka', *Lidové noviny* (January, 1989), p. 11.

[22] Zákon č. 88/1988, 'O státním podniku'.

[23] Zákon č. 88/1988, preamble.

granted greater independence and responsibility to firms, allowing them to keep profits to reinvest in the business. The implementation of the law, which eventually took effect on 1 January 1989, was overseen by regional and local National Committees. In particular, the election of directors and the creation of 'workers councils' (*řada pracovního kolektivu*) within each firm were important aspects of the new law especially if, as the *KSČ* leadership planned, the state enterprises were to become autonomous and responsible for their own affairs. These multi-candidate elections were not held through direct election as one might expect, but through election committees. The entire workforce would vote for delegates to an election committee, which itself would then vote on the final choice of director and the representatives of the workers' management council (a typical voting assembly could have around 200 delegates for a workforce of over five thousand).[24] The Presidium's publicly stated aim, in this example of expanding 'socialist democracy' to workplaces, was to elect 'capable, professionally and politically-committed' people, who could 'overcome outdated approaches' and 'solve new tasks'. The obvious implication being that previously, representatives were selected based on their political reliability.[25]

There were cases where workplace elections seemed to produce tangible results. In the Hradec Králové brewery, a new, independent (i.e. non-Communist) director was elected over two other Communist candidates. The new director, Jiří Vlček, recalled that, once elected, the other candidates behaved decently towards him and they continued to 'work for the success of the brewery'.[26] Vlček quickly began to find new ways of running the firm. Once a month he held an 'open door' day, whereby colleagues

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[24] Státní oblastní archiv (hereafter, SObA) Třeboň, 'JčKNV 1960-1990', box 763, 'Zápis 1. schůze rady Jč KNV ČB', (10 Jan. 1989), f. 63.

[25] 'Usnesení 5. zasedání ÚV KSČ', *Rudé právo* (20 Mar. 1987), p. 1.

[26] J. Vlček, interview transcript published in J. Vedlich, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové*, p. 234.

and workers could come to him with questions or problems. Later, he ordered production to start of a new, non-alcoholic beer, opened a brewery shop, and launched a different beer, named by customers in a public competition. The innovation which Vlček brought to the firm and the freedom he was given, gave him, as he himself recognised, a power that previous directors had been 'not allowed to have'.[27] Vlček's experience as an independent director working within the Communist hierarchy was not unique. Even in cases, such as in Plzeň, where Party functionaries expressed disappointment with the election of non-Party directors, they still demonstrated willingness to cooperate in the interests of the companies.[28]

Whilst there might have been a spirit of cooperation in firms, the State Enterprise Law only increased the sense of confusion about who was responsible for what. Throughout 1989, the Presidium, regional, and district committees attempted to clarify exactly what powers the workers councils, directors and state had in the running of state enterprises. The law itself had still stipulated that the five-year plan was still the 'central guide'[29] for state enterprises, despite Jan Fojtík, the Party's Ideological Secretary claiming that the Party would no longer 'take responsibility for the management of the economy' and that 'complete economic planning' would 'not be possible'.[30] Furthermore, in the town of Jablonec nad Nisou, in northern Bohemia, where eleven state companies had been established under the new statute, the newly-created workers' councils were already flexing their muscles. Within a matter of months, councils began demanding greater power. The councils demanded that they

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[27] J. Vlček, in J. Vedlich, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové*, p. 234.

[28] SObA Plzeň, 'KV KSČ Plzeň', box 446, 'Zápis ze 40. zasedání sekretariátu zpč. KV KSČ', (14 Nov. 1989), f. 204.

[29] Zákon č. 88/1988, articles 8 and 9.

[30] 'Odpovědi Jana Fojtíka na otázky UPI', *Lidové noviny* (Jan. 1989), p. 22.

should not just represent the ordinary workforce, but be expanded to represent all 'key workers' in the enterprise, such as supervisors and foremen. They also demanded changes to the management structure, so that supervisors would no longer be directly subordinate to the director and would, in fact, have greater independence over their own departments. On the other side, directors were privately admitting to Party functionaries that they 'were scared' of the new workers councils.[31] Quite apart from the unexpected demands these democratically elected councils were making, local Party functionaries worried that if they have into their demands, it would divide the workforce.[32] *Přestavba*, rather than dramatically changing how people worked, changed the relationship between members of the workforce instead. The Party's demands for greater 'responsibility' were greeted with hope, scepticism, passivity, fear, or demands for more authority, depending on which section of the workforce was involved.

Conflict between the workforce and management was also taking place in the context of wider unrest about the state of the economy. Rumours circulated around the country throughout 1989 as far afield as Plzeň and Opava, expressing fears about price rises.[33] Party members seemed specifically concerned about the planned rise in the cost of newspapers, planned for 1 January 1990, and the knock-on effect this would have on the Party's ability to effectively communicate its policies among the population.[34] The 'Summary Prognosis for the Scientific, Technical, Economic and Social Development

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[31] Státní okresní archiv (hereafter, SOkA) Jablonec nad Nisou, 'OV KSČ Jablonec nad Nisou', inv. č. 71, box 40, 'Zápis 20.9.1989', 'Zpráva o činnosti předsednictiva OV KSČ', f. 13-14.

[32] SOkA Jablonec nad Nisou, 'OV KSČ Jablonec nad Nisou', 'Zpráva o činnosti předsednictiva OV KSČ', f. 14.

[33] SObA Plzeň, 'KV KSČ Plzeň', box 446, 'Zápis ze 40. zasedání sekretariátu zpč. KV KSČ', (14 Nov. 1989), f. 223; SOkA Opava, 'OV KSČ Opava', box 259, 'Zápis 36. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ Opava', (7 Sept. 1989), f. 130.

[34] SObA Plzeň, 'Zápis ze 40. zasedání sekretariátu zpč. KV KSČ', (14 Nov. 1989), f. 203; Městský archiv Praha, 'OV KSČ Praha 2: Předsednictvo-2', inv. č. 924-928, box 165, '41. zasedání POV KSČ v Praze 2', (22 Nov. 1989), f. 12.

of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic to 2010', published by the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences' Prognostics Institute did little to dispel this rumour. Later versions of it (many of which circulated during the revolution) claimed that redundancies across all sectors, from state administration, to engineering, coal, precious metals and uranium mining, would require around half a million job losses alone.[35]

The *KSČ* leadership's plans to democratise the workplace and to increase management autonomy and accountability were not limited to the economy. In October 1987, two months before they put their initial proposals for *přestavba* to the Central Committee, the Presidium discussed suggestions for the 'activation' (*aktivizace*) of Czechoslovakia's political system. Included in these discussions were plans for greater 'openness' in the political life of the country, and improving the 'all-round awareness of people and their wide participation' in social affairs.[36] What all this Party jargon actually meant was only elaborated upon six months later, at the April 1988 meeting of the Central Committee. Miloš Jakeš, who had replaced Gustav Husák as General Secretary of the Party in October 1986, claimed that the 'activation' of the National Front and its 'democratisation' aimed to 'strengthen' the 'independence, competence and responsibility' of the organisations within it.[37] The Presidium, Jakeš said, wanted to move away from 'administrative directives and commands' and towards the membership and wider *cadre* taking an 'active and creative approach' to solving society's problems. The Party needed greater 'openness' in policy; 'constructive criticism and self-criticism' and 'broad public access to information and control' had to

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[35] SOkA Teplice, 'Soudobá dokumentace po roce 1945', box 44, 'Návrhy Prognostického ústavu ČSAV', [f. 1].

[36] Národní archiv České republiky (hereafter, NA ČR), 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (PÚV KSČ, 1986-1989)', P 47/87, bod 5, 'Návrhy směřující k aktivizaci Národní fronty a organizací v ní sdružených a ke zvýšení jejich účasti na tvorbě, realizaci a kontrole politiky', (14 Oct. 1987), f. 9.

[37] M. Jakeš, *The Party in the Conditions of Restructuringand the Development of Socialist Democracy*, (Prague, 1988), p. 11.

be improved if *přestavba* and *demokratizace* were to be achieved.[38] Furthermore, he declared, 'all cadre work' had to be 'democratised'.[39] Apart from existing plans to elect 'leading workers' in firms, cadre selection of state representatives and elections in National Front organisations were to involve secret ballots, elections based on a larger number of candidates, leading workers accounting for their work to national committees but also to workers' collectives and voters.[40]

More generally, the concept of 'democratisation' to which the Presidium increasingly referred, and which now went hand-in-hand with *přestavba* in Party rhetoric, was about distancing the Party, and specifically the leadership form the day-to-day management of nearly every aspect of the state's affairs. The aim was to increase the National Front's role in 'the framing, realisation and supervision' of policy.[41] The increasing role of national committees in policy and decision-making inevitably raised questions about whether the Communist Party's privileged 'leading role' (*vedoucí úloha*), as defined by article four of the country's constitution, was justified. Aware of the concerns about the potential threat this posed to the Party's position, Jakeš maintained that, despite changing the role of the National Front, the aims of the Party and state (the government) were 'identical'. What had to change was the way problems were approached. The Party was no longer to be responsible for finding solutions to problems which lay within 'the competence of other components of the management structure' (in other words, the National Front).[42] In Party jargon, this was called a 'fight

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[38] Jakeš, *The Party in the Conditions of the Restructuring*, p. 11.

[39] Jakeš, *The Party in the Conditions of the Restructuring*, p. 53.

[40] Jakeš, *The Party in the Conditions of the Restructuring*, p. 53.

[41] *9. zasedání ústředního výboru Komunistické strany Československa ve dnech 8. a 9. dubna 1988. K práci strany v podmínkách přestavby hospodářského mechanismu a rozvoje socialistické demokracie*. (Prague, 1988), p. 23.

[42] Jakeš, *The Party in the Conditions of the Restructuring*, p. 14.

against substitution', or assuming a task without having responsibility for it. Instead, the Party would 'initiate, stimulate and support' both the government, its administration (civil service) and national companies, and the wider economic sector.

The Presidium envisioned the Party moving away from being managers of society, where it had to 'constantly supervise and critically evaluate' how committees, companies, and agricultural cooperatives implemented Party programmes and whether or not their 'whole activity and results contribut[ed] to the interests of society'.[43] Instead, Jakeš declared that a new 'creative approach' was needed to implement Presidium directives. In step with increasing the authority and responsibility of National Front and Party representatives at all levels of the state, Jakeš emphasised that Party members could not expect that the Presidium would issue directives and order to how to act to cover every situation. The 'waiting for restructuring', which he said had become a commonly held opinion throughout the country alongside the perception that 'reform' would 'come from above', was a 'dangerous illusion' hiding one's own 'helplessness and passivity'.[44] National Front and Party representatives had to be 'capable of acting independently'.[45] In effect, the Party would take a back seat, guiding and setting the general policy line, leaving it up to local national committees (of which Communists were members, of course), to decide how those policies should be implemented on the ground. To this effect, Jakeš declared at the ninth Central Committee meeting in April 1988 that *přestavba* and democratisation needed to be 'translated into reality' without 'waiting for further instructions'.[46] Jakeš's address also showed he had assumed two things. First, that the wider Party membership and functionaries in the national

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[43] Jakeš, *The Party in the Conditions of the Restructuring*, pp. 14-15.

[44] Jakeš, *The Party in the Conditions of the Restructuring*, p. 12.

[45] Jakeš, *The Party in the Conditions of the Restructuring*, p. 35.

[46] *9. zasedání ústředního výboru Komunistické strany Československa*, p. 23

committees, who had long been used to being 'led' from above, had both the ability and desire to implement such changes and take on the responsibilities expected of them. Second, it showed that the Presidium had adopted an approach to reform whereby *přestavba* would be implemented first at the lowest levels of the Party, only before being gradually introduced throughout the Party hierarchy (presumably culminating at the eighteenth Party congress in 1990). As is happened, both the Presidium's assumptions were misplaced.

The proposals closely resembled what the Party under Dubček's leadership had intended to introduce in April 1968, a fact which, once the proposals were announced did not go unnoticed by the Party membership.[47] Similarities included the Presidium proposing the 'activation' of the National Front, something which the Party had discussed in April 1968, and which was also a partial return to the national committees' original function in the pre-1948 Third Czechoslovak Republic.[48] In this sense, the 'activation' was actually the 're-activation' or 'revitalising' of the national committees' role. The proposals also showed that *přestavba* was not going to be limited to economic restructuring and that the main spheres for change as outlined by Gorbachev at that start of 1987 was going to be taken up by the Party leadership. Although the Presidium had borrowed directly from the Soviet Union in naming its new policy as *přestavba*, no similar translation was made of *glasnost*. Instead, the Party leadership, as early as October 1987 had discussed 'deepening public information' and about the 'openness' (*otevřenost*/*otevrenosť*) of journalists in their reports.[49] Between 1987 and

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[47] The point was usually made in relation to inner Party debates about whether or not to re-admit Communists expelled after 1968. See NA ČR, KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (PÚV KSČ 1986-1989), P122/89, k informaci 11, 'Vnitrostranická informace 76', (20 Jun. 1989), f. 6.

[48] M. Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State that Failed* (New Haven and London, 2009), p. 179.

[49] NA ČR, KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (PÚV KSČ 1986-1989), P124/89, bod 5, 'Kontrolní zpráva o plnění opatření přijatých předsednictvem ÚV KSČ 21. října 1987 k prohloubení veřejné informovanosti', (7 Jul. 1989), f. 1, and ff. 12-13.

1989, the leadership's *demokratizace* slogan subsumed any discussion of greater 'openness' and criticism in society. Significantly, it would come to play a more important role in *přestavba* in the *KSČ*'s wider conceptions for the future of Czechoslovakia than economic restructuring.

The April 1988 Central Committee meeting was a turning point in the development of Czechoslovak *přestavba* and *demokratizace.* District Party committees now had to find ways to 'creatively' implement what the Central Committee had decided. As one Party functionary complained, for too long the Party had been responsible for 'arduously solving' many 'longstanding problems'.[50] Unrealistic demands were placed on it, leading to resentment and frustration among Party members. Young people, in particular, wanted problems solved which the Party it was 'impossible for the Party to achieve'.[51] The Party's job was not to solve every problem of an individual's life, but rather to 'supervise' and keep the Party at a distance from the workings of the state. This was to make the district National Front committee a 'co-creator' of policy.[52] The National Front—which was not just a political coalition but made up of social organisations, too, would be 'active' in workplaces and wider society, where there was the best chance to where there was the best chance to understand 'actual problems and insufficiencies', to 'suggest solutions' through its own capabilities and experiences.[53] The new proposals sought to bring the the National Front deeper into the political process. District Party committees were also expected to devolve power to other associated sections of the National Front which was intended to bring practical

[50] SOkA Liberec, 'OV KSČ Liberec II', box 214, svazek 175, a. j. 503, 'Zápis z 35. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci', (16 Aug. 1989), f. 12.

[51] SOkA Liberec, 'Zápis z 35. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci', (16 Aug. 1989), f. 12.

[52] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'OV KSČ Litoměřice', box 246, inv. č. 6, 'Zápis z jednání předsednictva OV KSČ Litoměřice' (4 Oct. 1989), f.157.

[53] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'Zápis z jednání předsednictva OV KSČ Litoměřice' (4 Oct. 1989), f.157.

help. At the grassroots level (e.g. *SSM* committees and trade union organisations in factories), the Party also planned to end written communiqués and reports with National Front organisations unless it had been mutually agreed to do otherwise.[54] The reports were just one example of the Party's constant supervision and involvement in the policy process. By ending this practice, the idea was that it would encourage national councils to take responsibility for the decisions they were taking, rather than deferring to the local *KSČ* committee.

Central to the Presidium's plans to democratise political life in Czechoslovakia involved elections to the federal assembly, the Czech and Slovak republican assemblies, and regional and district National Committees. The plans involved encouraging the use of secret ballots and multi-candidate elections (as had begun to be used in state enterprises), and were intended to have led to 'leading representatives' being 'held to account for their work'.[55] Importantly, plans to democratise the National Front—unlike the plans to restructure the economy—did not require legislation. Instead, they merely required the reinterpretation of existing laws, many of which were based on liberal democratic foundations, although the Party had interpreted them rather differently. In late 1987 and early 1988, the Presidium began to encourage rather than force National Front parties and organisations to use secret ballots and multi-candidate elections. Even then, there was considerable reluctance to do so. For example, within the Revolutionary Trade Unions Movement (*Revoluční odborové hnutí*), multi-candidate, secret ballots were held with the hope of raising 'political, specialist and moral requirements' of the functions. But even in the Communist stronghold of Ostrava, only around twenty per

[54] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'Zápis z jednání předsednictva OV KSČ Litoměřice' (4 Oct. 1989), f. 161.

[55] Jakeš, *The Party in the Conditions of the Restructuring*, pp. 52-53.

cent of elections took place in the manner which the *KSČ* leadership expected.[56] Based on on these and many other reports to the same effect, the Presidium could only conclude that a 'large number' of officials and Party members still 'did not regard secret elections as a form of deeper democracy' and that it would be necessary to give the matter 'much greater attention' in order to implement the policy more widely.[57] Yet, as functionaries in northern Moravia pointed out, the problem was that many office bearers no longer wished to put themselves forward as candidates. Even if the Party managed to attract new candidates to replace outgoing ones, there were only just enough cadre to fill the required positions, let alone a greater number in order to provide for multi-candidate elections.[58]

A wider trial of multi-candidate elections took place during thirteen by-elections to the Federal Assembly and republican national councils in April 1989. *Rudé právo*, in an assessment of the experiment, complained that in the past there had been no relationship between constituents and parliamentary representatives. Elections had become a 'formal matter', electors could not 'judge which candidate had better qualifications' and therefore 'did not seek control' over their deputies once they were elected. The multi-candidate elections, which offered a choice of two or three candidates, made sure 'no one from the centre' was imposing a choice on local committees.[59] In a sign of how difficult the new election procedure was for some officials, an analyst on Czechoslovak Radio offered the view that, for those candidates

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[56] Městský archiv Ostrava, 'MěV KSČ Ostrava', box 71, '8. schůze plenárního zasedání MěstV KSČ Ostrava', (12 Oct. 1989), f. 18.

[57] Jakeš, *The Party in the Conditions of the Restructuring*, pp. 35-36.

[58] Městský archiv Ostrava, '8. schůze plenárního zásedání MěstV KSČ Ostrava', (12 Oct. 1989), f. 18.

[59] 'Volby jako experiment', *Rudé právo* (26 Apr. 1989), p. 3.

who lost, it 'did not mean that they were, in fact, worse than those who won'.[60] The Party also acknowledged that although secret, multi-candidate elections offered evidence of the 'activation' of the National Front and better 'awareness' among voters of their representatives, it 'did not yet mean that elections were democratic'.[61] The trial was only a small part of the Party's wider plans to democratise society, and in doing so, devolve responsibility away from the Party hierarchy.

The 'activation' of the membership was not merely rhetoric devised by the leadership, nor was it confined to elections. In a speech to the *KSČ*'s municipal committee in Prague, Presidium member Miroslav Štěpán explained how district committees themselves needed to lay down 'clear positions concerning political problems and how to solve them' within their local area. Neither could such debates just be confined to meetings within the Party, but had to engage with 'the wider *aktiv*', or in other words, with functionaries and office bearers across all the organisations in the National Front. 'The Party', he went on to add, had to get back into 'daily contact with grassroots organisations, and with the people'.[62]

One example of district *KSČ* committees trying to reach out to the National Front and their wider local populations with questionnaires. In Liberec, in northern Bohemia, the town's district committee used such questionnaires as a means to encourage discussion on draft proposals concerning the environment. The district committee consulted community and housing committees, known as civic committees (*občanské výbory*), farm cooperatives and local companies before the district committee made any decision about how to proceed. The result allowed the Party in Liberec to

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[60] University of Glasgow Library, 'Radio Free Europe Situation Briefings', 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 11' (18 May 1989), p. 3.

[61] *Rudé právo* (26 Apr. 1989), p. 3.

[62] Městský archiv Praha, 'OV KSČ Praha 2 Předsednictvo-2', inv. č. 924-928, box 165, i.č. 1172, 'Mimořádné zasedání POV KSČ v Praze 2', (4 Aug. 1989), 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', f. 10

claim ‘genuine, informal support among citizens’ for their proposals.[63] Whether or not the support was ‘genuine’, the questionnaires served a dual purpose. First, it allowed National Committees, as well as other organisations in the National Front, to raise ‘their own initiatives, subjects and criticisms’ for discussion, and simultaneously allow for different ‘viewpoints, opinions and criticisms’ to resolve local problems. Secondly, and more importantly from the Party’s perspective, questionnaires would create greater ‘responsibility’ among National Front functionaries. They would return to their respective organisations with the proposals which the National Committees had discussed, and ‘actively help in solving’ those very problems.[64]

Similar attempts to improve the work of civic committees were apparently thwarted as National Committee representatives in Liberec expected that resolutions would come via ‘orders from above’ (in other words, from Party functionaries).[65] A similar attempt in Litoměřice to widen ‘public discussion’ on the ‘Programme of district organisation of the Socialist Youth Union and its Pioneer Organisation for 1989-1991’ met with an even worse response: not a single reply or amendment was offered to its draft document, despite the fact that local people had apparently been calling for a greater share in the ‘creation of policy and greater information’ about local decisions. It was a ‘typical example’, the district committee reported, of how for a long time people were used to ‘passively accepting’ proposed documents from the Party, and suggestions being offered everywhere else except ‘through the appropriate channels’.[66]

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[63] SOkA Liberec, ‘OV KSČ Liberec II’, box 214, a. j. 504, ‘Zápis z 36. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci’, (30 Aug. 1989), f. 25.

[64] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), ‘Zápis z jednání předsednictva OV KSČ Litoměřice’, (4 Oct. 1989), f. 168.

[65] SOkA Liberec, ‘Zápis z 36. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci’, (30 Aug. 1989), f. 27.

[66] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), ‘Zápis z jednání předsednictva OV KSČ Litoměřice’, (4 Oct. 1989), f. 157.

Encouraging 'joint responsibility'[67] for decisions was an attempt to ensure that Party functionaries were no longer a lightning rod for criticism whenever something went wrong. Stretching from the leadership's call for greater 'dialogue' to local attempts to introduce this in the form of questionnaires, at all levels of the Party, representatives continued to struggle to find a suitable way to deal with public grievances and find solutions to them. At all levels of the Party, functionaries increasingly found themselves presented with the question of what *přestavba* actually meant, and requests to discuss it. 'Discussion fora' became a common method of doing this, such as the one which took place in Lovosice between *KSČ* district functionaries, eight editors of *Rudé právo* and the Lovoš United Revolutionary Trade Union club to discuss 'openness in the media'.[68]

Whether or not such fora actually provided 'discussion' and what the outcomes of such meetings were is uncertain. In another case, a weekend educational course for new members of the Slovak Freedom Party in Bratislava and Prešov, members openly discussed the possibility of the Party working outwith the confines of the National Front. A significant number of them also voiced disagreement with the leading role of the *KSČ* and that this should be reflected during the formation of a new constitution.[69] When Party members publicly faced such criticism, the results were indicative of the wider mood that prevailed within the Party at the time. Party functionaries in Teplice, for example, received reports that many Party members had shown 'distaste' for the kind of open debate which the discussion fora produced. And this was not just because of their own individual passivity as regards discussing Party policy. More often than not, Communists had gone to meetings 'unprepared' for the problems about which they

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[67] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'Zápis z jednání předsednictva OV KSČ Litoměřice', (4 Oct. 1989), f. 157.

[68] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'Kronika města Lovosice 1989', f. 12.

[69] Archiv bezpečnostních složek Ministerstva vnitra České republiky (hereafter, ABS MV ČR), 'A 34/1', inv. j. 1425, 'Denní informace XII S-SNB Bratislava', (8 Nov. 1989), f. 352.

would be asked, and for the negative speeches and the criticisms directed towards them. The criticism directed towards them, the reports claimed, 'troubled' Party members. Yet at the same time, Communists were refusing 'to take their own share of responsibility' for the blame directed towards the Party by the public.[70] Allowing discussion fora, and other examples of 'dialogue' only heightened tensions among the membership who appeared both unprepared and unwilling to do the bidding of the Party leadership.

Whilst the results of economic restructuring and democratisation were long-term projects whose success or failure were difficult to judge, *přestavba*'s permeation into social and cultural policy appeared more quickly and obviously. In drafting its proposals on *přestavba* in 1987, the Presidium had signalled that it planned to allow 'greater openness' in politics and people's ability to participate in the 'administration and managing of social affairs'.[71] Whereas economic and constitutional restructuring was brought about through legislation (either existing or drafting of new laws), cultural and social policy changed and adapted in the climate of *přestavba* through the decisions of managers, Party officials, committees and artistic professionals (directors, scriptwriters, musicians, writers, artists, actors) themselves. This was particularly the case in the print media and the film industry where, since 1968, though not subject to official censorship laws, were instead controlled through informal practices, selection committees and self-censorship.[72]

Přestavba's effects in cultural and social policy appeared much more quickly, as previously-banned films could be released in a relatively short period of time, compared to the drafting and implementation of a new law. This gave the impression that the film

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[70] SOkA Teplice, 'Okresní výbor KSČ v Teplicích 1945-1989', box 204, '40. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ Teplice', (4 Oct. 1989), f. 6.

[71] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (PÚV KSČ, 1986-1989)', P 47/87, bod 5, (14 Oct. 1987), f. 9.

[72] P. Bren, *The Greengrocer and his TV* (Ithaca and London, 2010), pp. 29-30. Interview with Zdeněk Čermák, in Vaněk, and Urbášek, eds, *Vítězové? Poražení? II. díl*, pp. 97-98.

industry was 'pushing the limits' of Party policy.[73] (The same could equally have been said of some youth-orientated magazines or theatre performances.) In 1989 alone, seven new directors had films produced and screened in Czechoslovakia, taking advantage of the 'greater openness in the arts and public life' which leadership promoted.[74] Films dealing with previously taboo subjects included *Proč?* (1987), which addressed hooliganism among football fans; *Bony a klid* (1988), which told the story of a young man falling in with a group of black marketeers, and *Kopytem sem, kopytem tam* (1989), which tackled the emerging HIV/AIDS epidemic.[75] Though the films in their own ways furthered the spirit of criticism which *přestavba* promoted, they also presented the viewer with the (overwhelmingly negative) consequences of the main protagonists' actions. Though the films themselves were cutting-edge for the time, on the whole they remained concerned with specific topics considered acceptable for public discussion under *přestavba*, offering a limited critique of society at that time.

More significant than the films produced were the Party's guardians of the film industry: those who sat on screening committees who reviewed works before their distribution, commissioning directors, and other Party cadre within the industry. Together they were able to effect a more direct and immediate influence in cultural policy. Further evidence of the reach of *přestavba* within the Czechoslovak film industry came when the director Věra Chytilová, who had continually faced problems as far back as 1966 with the films she tried to direct, found it again possible to get films commissioned.[76] Similarly, previously banned films from the 1960s included *Vlasy*

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[73] University of Glasgow Library, 'Radio Free Europe Situation Briefings', 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 21', (7 Dec. 1988), p. 27.

[74] 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 21', pp. 27-28.

[75] *Proč*. Dir. Karel Smyczek, Československý filmexport, 1987. Film; *Bony a klid.* Dir. Vít Olmer, Československý filmexport, 1988. Film; *Kopytem sem, kopytem tam*. Dir. Vera Chytilová, Československý filmexport, 1989. Film.

[76] 'Czechoslovakia situation report no. 21', p. 28.

('Hair') and *Hoří má panenko* ('The Fireman's Ball') from exiled director Miloš Forman, and *Obchod na korze* ('The Shop on Main Street') by Elmar Klos and Ján Kadár, all of which appeared in Czechoslovak cinemas throughout 1988.[77] Also, the selection policy of foreign film distribution was became increasingly relaxed with more 'daring' choices being made.[78] According to Alois Humplík, a leading official in the Czechoslovak Film Company, this was 'deliberate policy' on the part of officials.[79] Asked by the exile-published magazine *Listy* what he would like to criticise, Humplík mentioned, among other things, 'the irrationality' behind the rejection of some Western films. Humplík, who sat on a selection committee himself, went as far as to suggest that the names of the members who sat on selection committees 'should perhaps be made public'.[80] By way of increasing accountability for their decisions, he said that those who sat on the selection committees for foreign films should be judged not just on what films they select, but similarly 'on those they reject', too, with those decisions being made public.[81] Although Humplík may have offered a more daring vision for the film industry than had he spoken to a Czechoslovak publication, the central idea behind the changes remained greater openness in decision making and increasing accountability for those who took those decisions.

The relaxation of cultural policy within the theatre world had already mirrored those of the film industry: some banned actors were performing again, and plays considered taboo were suddenly being scheduled for production.[82] Even selected scenes

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[77] 'Czechoslovakia situation report no. 21', p. 30.

[78] 'Czechoslovakia situation report no. 21', p. 29.

[79] 'Czechoslovakia situation report no. 21', p. 30.

[80] 'Czechoslovakia situation report no. 21', p. 30.

[81] 'Czechoslovakia situation report no. 21', p. 29.

[82] P. Oslzlý, 'On Stage with the Velvet Revolution', *TDR* 34 (Autumn, 1990), p. 103.

from some of Václav Havel's plays were beginning to be performed in public.[83] Also, members in the Union of Dramatic Artists exploited the use of secret ballots when, at the beginning of June 1989, the Union held its statewide conference. During a 'heated' discussion about the 'manipulation of culture' in Czechoslovakia, and a majority of candidates critical of the Party ended up winning elections to the Union's representative committees.[84] Democratisation, too, provided opportunities to challenge existing representatives in elections, for those who wished to take advantage of it.

Changes brought on by the onset of *přestavba* were also increasingly obvious in the press. Only two weeks after the Soviet Union, on 16 December 1988 the Czechoslovak government ceased jamming Radio Free Europe broadcasts (the BBC and Voice of America had not been jammed in Czechoslovakia and were thus unaffected by the changes). The decision, as so often was the case, was not as simple as blindly following the Soviet Union's example. According to Ideological Secretary Jan Fojtík, the *KSČ* had been 'waiting' for the Soviet Union to take the decision for some time. The leadership's reasons for ceasing to jam Radio Free Europe was that it had wanted to show its 'goodwill' in relation to the international situation, and 'strengthen confidence' abroad for 'developing mutual understanding among all nations'. Also, Fojtík claimed, the the influence of radio as a propaganda tool had lessened since the 1950s when the Party was 'building Socialism'. Quite apart from the increasingly obsolete jamming equipment used and the expense of replacing it, the interference which transmitters produced affected the Party's plans to increase the use of satellite technology.[85]

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[83] R. Kotlaba in J. Rokoský, ed, *Sametová revoluce v Ústí nad Labem: svědectví studentů po dvaceti letech* (Ústí nad Labem, 2009), p. 48.

[84] P. Oslzlý, 'On Stage with the Velvet Revolution', p. 103.

[85] University of Glasgow Library, 'Radio Free Europe Situation Briefings', 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 8' (14 Apr. 1989), pp. 19-21.

In the press, mentions of *přestavba* and *demokratizace* became a daily occurrence, especially throughout 1989. Between 1987 and 1989 (based on a search of the Czech National Library catalogue), over one hundred and fifty separate Czech and Slovak titles were published with Czechoslovak přestavba as their main focus. (A similar number of works or translations discussed perestroika from the Soviet perspective, or from elsewhere in the Eastern bloc.) Communist dailies such as *Rudé právo* and *Mladá fronta* had similarly began to tackle the same social concerns with which the film industry had begun to grapple. At the beginning of September 1989, *Rudé právo* opened up on homosexuality, publishing a letter from a gay man who criticised the press for not 'dedicating any attention' to the life of gay people.[86] Evidence of genuine debate and disagreement among different sections of the press also emerged. Radio Free Europe 'situation reports' noted that a 'war of words had opened up on economic reform between the more 'conservative' magazine *Tribuna*, and the 'radicals' of *Hospodářské noviny* and *Politická ekonomie.*[87] And occasionally, the effects of greater openness in magazines produced startling results. When *Mladý svět*, a magazine published by the Socialist Youth Union, started giving much greater space for contemporary music and environmental concerns, it was estimated by the press bureau that the readership had increased from one hundred thousand to close to a million since the onset of *přestavba.*[88]

The newspapers and magazines of the Socialist Youth Union provided the strongest evidence of just how strong the criticism of Party representatives had become. The Socialist Youth Union's *Smena*, on the anniversary of 17 November, handed control

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[86] 'Otevřeně o jednom skrytém problému', *Rudé právo* (*Hálo sobota* suppliment), (9 Sept. 1989), pp. 8-9.

[87] University of Glasgow Library, 'Radio Free Europe Situation Briefings', 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 21' (18 Aug. 1989), p. 16.

[88] Z. Čermák, in M. Vaněk, and P. Urbášek, *Vítězové? Poražení? II. díl*, p. 100.

of its weekend edition to the journalism students of the Philosophical Faculty at Prague's Charles University. To commemorate the anniversary of the closing of all Czech-language universities in the Bohemian crown lands (the area of today's Czech Republic), the authors explained that they had been taught to 'live honestly' and to 'speak the truth', and thus decided to ask the opinions of the generation who 'instilled these things into us.'[89] One anonymous interviewee could only offer that 'you're young. It is up to you to change it. We are the creators of this period. You change it. You fix it.'[90] The grandparents of students in 1989 had witnessed the establishment of a Socialist state in 1948. Their parents had experienced the events of 1968 and the introduction of Normalisation throughout the 1970s. For these two age cohorts, there was a paralysis among these two generations to bring about change, and that only the emerging generation—both inside the Communist Party and in society at large—could bring it about.

Changes to the Communist Party's structure, membership and methods of work underpinned all that the Party leadership hoped to achieve during *přestavba.* However, Party reform has remained completely overlooked by scholars. In part, this is because many of the changes in social and economic policy were about redefining the Party's relationship with the rest of society. And yet, although Party reform shared many similarities with these other reforms, it was also a distinct element of the *přestavba* programme. At the 1986 Party congress, the leadership made no reference to changing the methods of Party work or the Party's structure beyond the usual demands to encourage the 'healthy growth of the Party', to 'further improve' the quality of the Party

[89] M. Zgančíková, and K. Ovečková, 'Povolenie na vlastný názor', *Smena na nedeľu* (17 Nov. 1989), p. 2.

[90] 'Povolenie na vlastný názor', *Smena na nedeľu* (17 Nov. 1989), p. 2.

membership, and to increase the Party's 'moral authority'.[91] It was not until the Central Committee meeting of April 1988 that the implications of restructuring upon Party became clear. Mirroring plans to democratise the National Front, General Secretary Miloš Jakeš announced to the membership the decision to increase the use of secret elections within the Party. As with other aspects of *přestavba*, however, the Presidium decided that instead of enforcing a uniform policy across the Party hierarchy, it should be left up to local Communists to decide whether or not to use secret ballots in elections. Furthermore, Jakeš placed emphasis on democratising elections within district and regional committees, making no mention of applying the policy to the Central Committee or Presidium.[92] The result was that the policy was applied inconsistently, and more importantly, reinforced the perception that the Party leadership were resisting reform, despite forcing it upon the Party's lower structures.

The effects of *přestavba* through both increased criticism in the press, as well as in economic and social spheres served to highlight the poor state of the Party's cadre as it attempted to renew itself. In 1988, a review of the Party's membership declared that there were 1,717,016 Party members in the country.[93] In March 1989, Radio Free Europe suggested that the Party was 'seriously question[ing]' the 'quality of the cadre'. As leading Party committees tried to 'delegate more responsibilities' to the lower levels, it had only revealed that the *KSČ* 'was anything but a smoothly working, effective political body'.[94] As Miloš Jakeš later complained, more than seventy per cent of the membership in 1989 had joined the Party after 1970, and therefore had never

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[91] Husák, in *XVII. Sjezd Komunistické strany Československa*, p. 46.

[92] Jakeš, *The Party in the Conditions of the Restructuring*, p. 54.

[93] 'Strana v podmínkách přestavby a rozvoje socialistické demkracie', *Rudé právo* (9 Apr. 1989), p. 1.

[94] University of Glasgow Library, 'Radio Free Europe Situation Briefings', 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 4' (2 Mar. 1989), p. 7.

experienced of the 'bourgeois republic' of 1918-1939, fought Fascism during the Second World War, or taken part in the Party's 'battle to build Socialism'. He accused many members as having joined out of 'pragmatism, personal ambition and interests' and thus, he was able to conclude, were unwilling or unable to defend Socialism when the time came.[95] Regardless of what Jakeš—or any one else—thought about individual members' motivations for joining the Party, the quality of the Party's existing grassroots membership was an immediate concern, especially as they were the very sections of the Party which the leadership expected to be at the forefront of *přestavba.*

To tackle both the 'quality' of the Party's cadre and address the generation gap which had opened up in the Party—the average age of which had gone above forty-five for the first time—the Presidium announced a series of changes to overhaul its membership. Most significant among these was the decision to limit the *KSČ* General Secretary and *KSS* First Secretary to 'not more than two consecutive terms' (or ten years) in office. Additionally, leading secretaries (*vedoucí tajemnicí*) in both regional and district committees would not be able to 'keep their posts for no more than three consecutive terms'. Also, the Party began to relax its policy of specifically encouraging workers to join its ranks, and instead told Party functionaries to recruit members 'regardless of their age and kind of social stratum'. What was most important was to admit those who were 'sincerely interested in joking the Party' and were 'willing to defend and fight for [its] principles'.[96] Proposals to extend multi-candidate elections and secret ballots for the Party, as had been suggested for the National Front parties, did not require any change to the Party statutes and had even taken place prior to 1986d.[97]

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[95] M. Jakeš, *Dva roky generalním tajemníkem* (Praha, 1996), p. 83.

[96] Jakeš, *The Party in the Conditions of the Restructuring*, pp. 53-54.

[97] It is not clear how widespread secret ballots were within the Party before 1987, but according to Jakeš, they did at least occasionally take place. See Jakeš, in Vaněk, and Urbášek, eds, *Vítězové? Poražení? II. díl*, p. 186.

Many other changes, however, required the Party statutes to be overhauled. Despite this fact, Jakeš claimed that it was 'already possible' and 'indeed necessary' to put these reforms into practice immediately without waiting for the next Party congress to approve them.[98]

Upon receiving these orders from the Central Committee, regional and district committees set about finding their own solutions to the new methods of work which the Presidium required. As *Rudé právo* announced on 2 February 1989, the Party was to begin a series of 'discussions' among its entire grassroots membership. The aim, ostensibly, was to 'activate every Communist' and to 'assess his or her activity and engagement' in the Party. Also, it aimed to find out members' opinions on the 'activity of their local organisation' and 'its implementation of inner Party democracy'.[99] Radio Free Europe, on the other hand, suggested that the discussions were causing 'uncertainty' and 'fear' among the membership. Not only were the discussions 'designed to test the loyalty of Party members to the leadership', but raised the real prospect that a limited purge of the membership would take place before the Party congress in 1990.[100] In Liberec, at least, functionaries there had begun to question the value of such 'conversations' as the best means to assess the cadre. It was 'not correct', they suggested, to judge a Communist on how they act at Party meetings, but they should be evaluated by how they appear 'outwardly, in the collective, where they work, where they earn a living'.[101] In western Bohemia, for example, regional functionaries found that a majority of basic organisations' fundamental duties, such as assessing the

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[98] Jakeš, *The Party in the Conditions of the Restructuring*, p. 54.

[99] 'Besedy s každým členem a kandidátem', *Rudé právo* (9 Feb. 1989), p. 1.

[100] University of Glasgow Library, 'Radio Free Europe Situation Briefings', 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 10' (5 May 1989), p. 14.

[101] SOkA Liberec, 'Zápis z 35. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci', (16 Aug. 1989), f. 14.

cadre's competencies, their social development and other personnel matters within the Party were not being carried out and that at its lowest levels, Party members were 'sitting tight'.[102] The idea behind the Party 'discussions' was that Communists were supposedly comfortable expressing opinions or agreeing with the Party line at Party meetings, but were reluctant to put forward the Party's position among non-Communists where it was needed most. The lack of defined criteria upon which judgements would be made left the entire 'discussion' procedure wide open to interpretation, and at the whim of the local functionary who organised it.

Other difficulties appeared in the Party's attempts to improve the quality of its cadre yet at the same time keep up with centrally-set Party recruitment targets. According to inner Party reports, in early 1989, signs of passivity among the membership were most obvious in southern Moravia and Bratislava. Judged by one example of its own measures of activity, the *KSČ* leadership had received five hundred and seventy-seven celebratory statements in commemoration of the forty-first anniversary of 'Victorious February' (when the *KSČ* came to power). Only eight of these came from southern Moravia region, and only two from workplaces in Bratislava, with neither its regional, city or numerous district committees sending any telegrams. Though this was a trivial measurement of Party 'activity', for the Party leadership in Prague it was evidence of a deeper passivity among (at least some of) the membership.[103]

In an attempt to reverse this situation, local functionaries declared that the Party would no longer seek to recruit workers 'at any cost',[104] but rather to take those 'who

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[102] SObA Plzeň, 'KV KSČ Plzeň', box 446, 'Sekretariát KV KSČ', 'Zápis ze 40. zasedání sekretariátu zpč. KV KSČ', (14 Nov. 1989), f. 153.

[103] 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (PÚV KSČ, 1986-1989)', P104/89, k info. 3, 'Vnitrostranická informace 65','Ohlasy na Provolání předsednictva ÚV KSČ k. 41. výročí Vítězného února, 10.3.1989', (13 Mar. 1988), f. 1.

[104] SOkA Liberec, 'Zápis z 35. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci', (16 Aug. 1989), f. 14.

had authority' within the workforce.[105] In Liberec, the leading Party secretary in the district explained to his colleagues that members' meetings should 'enforce cadre policy' of the Party more strongly and only accept new members who could handle the 'responsibility' of being a Party member. Perhaps more surprisingly, one Communist functionary explained to his district Presidium that as the *KSČ* sought to reshape its role in society it would 'no longer be a mass party'.[106] The difficulty functionaries had in recruitment was exemplified by one computer technician, who was neither particularly career-minded nor politically-orientated, but who was nevertheless approached by his local Communist Party Chairman and asked to join the Party. The chairman asked him to 'think about your future' and that the Party 'needs people like you'. The technician responded diplomatically, telling him: 'I like football, but I cannot play it'.[107] Even though he tacitly agreed with the Party's policies, he had no desire to join. Other district committees around the country reported similar responses. In Prague, one main reason for not joining the Party included employees not wanting to work in leadership positions, which would have brought with it an 'increase in responsibility' in their work and also for the Party.[108] The *KSČ*'s Prague 2 district committee, which had much of Prague city centre under its authority, struggled with recruitment in through its various Party organisations, especially in educational institutes and schools, some of which had completely failed to recruit a single Party member in the past year.[109] At the same time as the Party struggled to recruit new members, others were leaving. Apart from old age, in northern Moravia the district Party in Opava reported members leaving on the

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[105] SOkA Liberec, 'Zápis z 35. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci', (16 Aug. 1989), f. 10.

[106] SOkA Liberec, 'Zápis z 35. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci', (16 Aug. 1989), f. 14.

[107] Interview with anon. Prague technician by David Green (Prague: 16 July, 2008).

[108] Městský archiv Praha, '9. plenární zasedání OV KSČ v Praze 2', (1 Nov. 1989), f. 25.

[109] Městský archiv Praha, 'OV KSČ Praha 2: Předsednictvo-2', inv. č. 924-928, box 165, '8. plenární zasedání OV KSČ v Praze 2', (20 Sept. 1989), f. 25 [recto].

grounds that they felt that the new democratisation process had 'resulted in attacks' on them at work.[110]

The unwillingness to join the Party among significant number of the population had a knock-on effect for district functionaries, such as those in Jablonec nad Nisou, in northern Bohemia, who reported major difficulties in finding enough 'cadre reserves'.[111] Thanks to democratisation, instead of just having to find one candidate to fill a Party position, Party functionaries now needed to convince at least two Party members to stand in elections. Out of twenty-eight grassroots organisations in the town during the summer of 1989, seventeen Party chairpersons were elected by competitive election, with the remaining eleven positions uncontested.[112] Particularly in smaller firms and workplaces, district parties found that not only were there an insufficient cadre reserve to draw upon for candidates, but that Party members had 'fears' about the current political situation and were reluctant to take on any responsibility within the Party.[113]

Přestavba became an attempt by the leadership of the Party to redefine the Party's role and place in society. In Party speeches and leadership directives to other sections of the Party, 'restructuring' was not just avoiding a slow decline into 'satisfaction' and 'stagnation', but making everyone aware that it was no longer acceptable to expect answers from above.[114] The increasing criticism of the leadership, the mounting problems that this seemed to produce, and the unwillingness the vast Party membership to work to overcome these problems came to a head on 17 July 1989, when

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[110] SOkA Opava, 'OV KSČ Opava', box 259, 'Zápis 38. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ Opava', (5 Oct. 1989), f. 121.

[111] SOkA Jablonec nad Nisou, 'OV KSČ Jablonec nad Nisou', inv.č. 71, box 40. 'Zápis 20.9.1989', 'Zpráva o činnosti předsednictiva OV KSČ', f. 16.

[112] SOkA Jablonec nad Nisou, 'Zpráva o činnosti předsednictiva OV KSČ', f. 5.

[113] SOkA Jablonec nad Nisou, 'Zpráva o činnosti předsednictiva OV KSČ', f. 5.

[114] genmjr. Sochor, quoted in Pavel Žáček, 'Poslední reorganizace zahraniční rozvědky Snižování početních stavů Hlavní správy rozvědky SNB v letech 1988-1990', *Securitas imperii* 15 (1/2009), p. 194.

Miloš Jakeš addressed local Party members in Červený Hradek, Southern Bohemia. The entire speech, only a small part of which was originally broadcast on Czechoslovak Television, was handed over to Radio Free Europe and subsequently broadcast in full. Tapes of the broadcast soon began circulating around parts of the country.[115] Jakeš's speech, which was played for laughs, entered into Czech folklore, not least for the embarrassingly colloquial language which he used in parts, and for his famous description of the leadership as being 'a fencepost in a field' (*kůl v plotě*), three words which Paulina Bren has even suggested marked the end of Communist rule in Czechoslovakia.[116]

Taken in its entirety, however, the speech maintained a consistent view of what the *KSČ* leadership had tried to achieve through restructuring, albeit in a crude manner. The speech, though remembered almost exclusively for Jakeš's bumbling style and those three words, actually showed that *přestavba* was not just about restructuring the economy and democratic change. The *KSČ* leadership perceived *přestavba* to be about shifting responsibility from the top to the membership below. Directors, local functionaries, trade union members 'must realise', Jakeš claimed, 'that they are jointly responsible for the political situation' and that the *KSČ* did not have a 'whip' which it could either 'extend out' or 'use to repress' as it saw fit.[117] Jakeš, in addressing fellow members of a democratically centralist party, vented his frustration at lower sections of

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[115] University of Glasgow Library, 'Radio Free Europe Situation Briefings', 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 21', (20 Oct. 1989), p. 9; See also, A. Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington, KY, 2000), p. 302.

[116] P. Bren, *The Greengrocer and his TV*, p. 6. One could also argue this point with evidence recorded by the *StB*, whose officers noted that students during the march in Prague on 17 November 1989 had at one point chanted 'Nechceme být kůl v plotě'. See ABS MV ČR, 'A34/1' inv. j. 460/A, 'Informace o průbehu a výsledcích bezpečnostní akce 17.11.1989 a zvniku Občanského fóra' (19 Nov. 1989), f. 2.

[117] The full version of the speech was first broadcast on Czech Television and Slovak Television on 21 November 1999 as part of a wider tenth anniversary retrospective on the revolution. Numerous audiovisual versions and transcripts of the speech exist, especially online. See *http://www.totalita.cz/txt/txt_o_jakesm_text_hradek_01.pdf* (last accessed 24 October, 2013), p. 11.

the Party, who he perceived to be too passive and not adequately following through decisions taken by the leadership. Mentioning the Presidium's decision in 1988 to allow Alexander Dubček's trip to Italy, during which he had given his first public interview since 1970, Jakeš complained that the leadership had come under considerable flak from the wider membership for having done so. When Dubček had requested permission to Spain and also return to Italy in early 1989, the Presidium rejected this request but then came under pressure from foreign governments and the Socialist International for that very decision. As Jakeš pointed out, in such cases the Presidium had to know there was 'support from below' so that the leadership could reply to demands saying, '"No, it is not us [i.e. the *KSČ* presidium] who wish it to be so. It is the people who demand it, too, and we agree with the people and we fulfil their will", and that it is not simply that we are on our own, like a fencepost in a field'.[118] Throughout this section and many other parts of his address, Jakeš was not complaining that the leadership was cut off from the rest of society. He was, in fact, arguing from a very different position, and one entirely consistent with the Party's democratic centralist organisation. It was Party members that had failed visibly to show its support for Party decisions, and that it was the membership that needed to be politically revitalised in order to change the situation.

A further implication of Jakeš's speech was that he explicitly said that the *KSČ* leadership were not capable of acting indiscriminately against political opposition without even tacit support from the wider membership. From late 1988 until November 1989, the approach to political opposition and dissent varied widely. Apart from Dubček's partial rehabilitation in 1988, on 10 December 1988 an opposition demonstration was permitted in Prague to mark Human Rights Day and occurred without incident, but also caused a great deal of uncertainty among opposition circles

[118] *http://www.totalita.cz/txt/txt_o_jakesm_text_hradek_01.pdf* (last accessed 24 October, 2013), p. 11.

over whether or not this was the 'first step' towards 'acknowledging the legitimacy of independent initiatives' by the regime.[119] Internal Party reports criticised the demonstration and questioned why the Presidium allowed the demonstration to take place. Just over a month later, however, security forces adopted an uncompromisingly hardline stance towards its opponents during the so-called 'Palach week' (*Palachův týden*) demonstrations which took place between 15-21 January 1989. This annual protest week commemorated student Jan Palach's self-immolation in protest against the passive acceptance of the majority of citizens towards the ending of the 'Prague Spring' and return to the more hardline policies of 'Normalisation'. The demonstrations had become a focus of anti-regime sentiment, and the protests of 1989, by most accounts, produced some of the most repressive and violent responses yet seen from the security forces.[120] During the 16 January demonstration, Václav Havel was arrested and sentenced later in February to nine months imprisonment.[121]

The membership's views which were transmitted back to the Presidium were first seemingly decisive: the Central Committee had received three hundred and seventy declarations of support, calling the demonstrations amongst other things 'counterrevolutionary' and a 'provocation', and that Communists were 'prepared' to 'stand against the destruction of Socialism'.[122] A little later in the report, the real detail emerged. Only 'around half' of Communists in Prague supported the 'energetic intervention of the security forces', but many others 'remained of an uncertain position', whereas others asked if the demonstrations 'should not perhaps have been controlled by

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[119] 'Pražská demonstrace na Žižkově', *Lidové noviny* (Dec. 1988), p. 2.

[120] V. Havel, 'Pravda a perzekuce', *Lidové noviny* (Jan. 1989), pp. 1-2.

[121] J. Suk, *Politika jako absurdní drama: Václav Havel v letech 1975-1989* (Praha, 2013), pp. 281-287.

[122] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', P104/89, k informace 3, 'Vnitrostranická informace 60' (9 Feb. 1989), 'Informace o politické situaci v krajích k 8. únoru 1989', ff. 11-12.

other means'.[123] In comments to the leadership which would sound eerily familiar ten months later in November 1989, Party members complained that the statement regarding the demonstrations made by Prague's Mayor was not only 'too late', but was both 'unconvincing' and 'too formal'. Most Communists were 'not satisfied' by the leadership's ability to cope ideologically and with sufficient propaganda. And leading officials in the state and Party were unable to give a clear position with which it could convince workers about the necessity of the police action.[124] The January Palach-week demonstrations had shown that a significant proportion of the membership were deeply unhappy with the way that the regime was choosing to control dissent. Internal Party reports also showed that the membership was increasingly frustrated with the leadership's propaganda response, considering it to be too slow and inadequate. The regime may have been characterised as directionless and unsure about how to handle protests against it. But one reason for for its apparent uncertainty came not just from the pressure those protests applied, but also form the membership of the Communist Party itself.

The Party leadership's responses to political opposition did begin to change notably during the Summer and Autumn of 1989, but little evidence exists to suggest that its relationship to the wider Party membership changed. In dealing with political opposition at home, a report published through the Soviet news agency *Novosti* in March 1989 suggested that the *KSČ* leadership was finding 'its own ways of working with independent organisations'.[125] This was evident most notably in July 1989 when the independent 'Art Forum' was officially registered and accepted into the National

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[123] NA ČR, 'Informace o politické situaci v krajích k 8. únoru 1989', f. 13.

[124] NA ČR, 'Informace o politické situaci v krajích k 8. únoru 1989', f. 14.

[125] University of Glasgow Library, 'Radio Free Europe Situation Briefings', 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 4, (2 Mar. 1989), p. 9.

Front, and made membership of the Forum no longer illegal.[126] A similar approach seemed to have been adopted towards the annual pilgrimage to Levoca in Slovakia. In stark contrast to the repression shown in previous years, the gathering in 1989 attracted over sixty thousand worshipers with both a 'lively' atmosphere among the faithful and a 'relaxed attitude' from the authorities. The leadership's decision to prevent the prominent Czech cleric Cardinal František Tomášek, a leading supporter of dissident and opposition movements from attending, exemplified the new approach of isolating and persecuting the 'ringleaders' of such initiatives, rather than the group in its entirety.[127]

The next challenge to the Party's authority came with the petition 'Several Sentences' (*Několik vět*). It began circulating in Spring 1989 and called for, among other things, the release of political prisoners; freedom of association; the end of 'censorship' and the 'manipulation' of culture and the media; to respecter religious beliefs; the legalisation of 'independent initiatives'; that all projects for the protection of nature be 'put before the public and all political parties for their assessment'; and 'free discussion of Czechoslovak history, including the 1950s and the Prague Spring.[128] The petition also expressed frustration at the use of the words '*přestavba*' and '*demokratizace*', stating that the actions of the Czechoslovak leadership since January 1989 had 'defied everything that makes up a democracy'. Comparisons between what the leadership said and what the reality was on the ground, including repression during Palach week and the arrest and imprisonment of Havel brought it to the attention of a wider audience. One computer technician in Brno recalled reading the petition and feeling that he

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[126] University of Glasgow Library, 'Radio Free Europe Situation Briefings', 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 15' (14 Jul. 1989), p. 13.

[127] University of Glasgow Library, 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 15', (14 Jul. 1989), p. 27.

[128] 'Několik vět', *Lidové noviny* (Summer, 1989), p. 2.

'simply had to do something' and signed it, narrowly avoiding dismissal thanks to the revolution later in the year.[129] Another signatory in Ústí nad Labem recalled reading through the petition and 'thought it sounded fine'. Given that 'this was in the context of *glasnost*, which was being spoken about a lot at that time, we all signed it', believing that 'no one could have had any problems with it'. At the end of August, when we returned from their holidays, he had his colleagues were 'a little surprised' at the 'allergic reaction among Communists' and the 'massive campaign' which the Party apparatus unleashed against the signatories.[130]

The *KSČ* leadership, aware of its own membership's divisions concerning its response to opposition groups and even its own general passivity in the context of *přestavba*, could do little else but launch a campaign against the petition. Among the Party membership, the Presidium sent out a letter to all committees and organisations to try and ensure Party officials either raised the subject of 'Several Sentences' at meetings, or in places where no meetings were planned, arrange to organise one to do so.[131] In some cases, Party members were keen to be seen to be upholding the Party line. Some complained that the Ministry of Culture had not taken any action against artists who had signed the petition and had not had their work 'curtailed'.[132] Instead, it was down to the membership at meetings, committees and in workplaces to sign condemnatory statements against the 'Several Sentences' petition. In Liberec, the district Party committee also took the decision to hold meetings earlier in order to 'ensure conformity' among the membership concerning *Několik vět* 'anti-Socialist'

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[129] Interview with Brno technician by David Green (Ivančice, 19 July 2008).

[130] R. Kotlaba, in J. Rokoský, ed, *Sametová revoluce v Ústí nad Labem*, p. 47.

[131] SOkA Jablonec nad Nisou, 'OV KSČ Jablonec nad Nisou', inv. č. 71, box 40, 'Zápis 20.9.1989', 'Zpráva o činnosti předsednictiva OV KSČ', f. 2.

[132] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'OV KSČ Litoměřice', inv. č. 6, box 246, 'Zápis z jednání předsednictva OV KSČ Litoměřice', (4. Oct. 1989), f. 128.

platform.[133] But just as the condemnatory statements apparently showed the membership standing resolutely behind the leadership, the failure to adopt a similar position elsewhere was equally telling. As one member pointed out, the membership needed information on 'Several Sentences' in order to 'correctly react among the population'.[134] Despite many other calls to publish the petition in the press in a way that would enable to the Party to undermine its contents, the leadership chose not to do so. In Litoměřice, a host of workplace organisations did not pass a resolution or adopt any position in relation to the Presidium's letter, and like many other places Communists chose simply to 'acknowledge' the Presidium's take on the matter.[135] For those who had not read it, the leadership's attacks on the petition made it seem more radical than it actually was. And the apparent refusal of the Presidium to listen to reports from the membership about its propaganda efforts only served to highlight the increasing gulf which existed between the wider membership on one hand, and functionaries and the top leadership on the other.

To add to the complexity of the situation which the leadership faced in 1989, *StB* reports revealed that the groups most likely to challenge the *KSČ* were not those which were most radical in their demands, but those which reflected alternate visions of *přestavba*. Opposition to the *KSČ*, the report claimed, came from four main directions: 'reform Socialists', including ex-Party members expelled in 1968; 'bourgeoisie ideologists' which included the likes of Charter 77 and the Movement for Civic Freedom (*Hnutí občanské svobody*); Christian groups, including outspoken clergy such as František Tomášek and Václav Malý; and also extremist tendencies, although this

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[133] SOkA Liberec, 'OV KSČ Liberec II', box 214, svazek 175, a. j. 503, 'Zápis z 35. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci', 'Informace o politické situaci', (16. Aug. 1989), f. 2.

[134] SOkA Liberec, 'Informace o politické situaci', (16. Aug. 1989), f. 3.

[135] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'OV KSČ Litoměřice', inv. č. 6, box 246, 'Zápis z jednání předsednictva OV KSČ Litoměřice', (20 Sept. 1989), f. 131.

more often than not was limited to threatening phone calls and letters, rather than individual or sustained acts of violence.[136] In mid-November 1989, the *StB* estimated that around sixty 'informal' (i.e. illegal) groups existed in Czechoslovakia, although in reality only around a third were considered 'active' in their opposition.[137] The *KSČ* also faced a credible threat from the *Obroda* group, which, although predominantly active in Prague, Bratislava, Brno, Plzeň and Jihlava had support among the wider public. The threat so such that the security services considered quite plausibly that *Obroda* could 'within a very short time' become 'the strongest opposition force in society'.[138]

Analysis undertaken for the *KSČ* Presidium earlier in 1989 also suggested that organised opposition groups and independent initiatives were operating along similarly reformist lines to *Obroda*, and very much within the rhetoric of *přestavba.* Most worryingly for the leadership, research found that more than three quarters of groups were in favour of 'cadre changes' in the Party, with around sixty per cent also openly supporting a free press, changes to the voting system and a reassessment of the 1968 Prague Spring. However, only a third favoured some privatisation, and only a third wanted to repeal the Party's 'leading role', with around half of groups preferring to see it 'redefined'. To put it another way, concerning the two most overtly ideological questions of the time—the Party's leading role, and economic reform—two-thirds of dissident groups had no outright disagreement with the direction in which the *KSČ*'s

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[136] Although the report was dated 20 Nov. 1989, its general findings and its conclusions were clearly written in the days prior to 17 November and thus reflect the immediate pre-revolutionary period, rather than the post-17 November one. ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 460/B, 'Statobezpećnostní situace a činnost neformalních skupin v ČSSR 20.11.1989' (20 Nov. .1989), f. 6. One notable exception in the final category of 'extremist tendencies' was an incident on 8 February 1989 when a bomb was detonated in the National Front Regional Office in Ústí nad Labem. It has never been discovered if this was a genuine terrorist attack, as the Party claimed at the time, or if it was the work of the *StB*, in order to create the pretext for greater repression. See 'Teroristický čin', *Rudé právo* (9 Feb. 1989), p. 1.

[137] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 460/B, 'Statobezpećnostní situace a činnost neformalních skupin v ČSSR 20.11.1989' (20 Nov. 1989), f. 6.

[138] SOkA Liberec, 'OV KSČ Liberec II', box 214, a. j. 508, 'Zápis z 40. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci', (25 Oct. 1989), f. 34.

own reform programme was heading.[139] Instead, the research seemed again to indicate the tension lay not in major ideological differences, but the perception among opposition groups that that leadership was unwilling to engage in reform.

The *StB*'s aim, as the report showed, was to 'paralyse the organisational centres of illegal political structures', including their 'political isolation', to 'limit their integration to illegal church organisations', and 'the internationalisation of their activity'. However, the report also highlighted to the Presidium that it needed to 'work through a long-term integrated political concept' of what reform meant and what the extent of it would be. In order to reduce the influence of illegal groups, the Party had to have a political programme which would both limit the appeal of opposition groups, but simultaneously prevent them from undertaking activity. In its conclusion, the report stressed that the security forces alone could not reduce the influence of independent initiatives, and that only by 'strengthening the activity' of the Party and state organs, of the 'entire National Front', of the 'mass media' and 'all the instruments of propaganda and agitation' could the Party hope to achieve this goal.[140]

One reason why the *StB* emphasised the necessity of having the entire National Front united behind the *KSČ* leadership lay in reports that more vocal opponents of the Party were attempting to 'intensively infiltrate and influence the activity of official social structures'. Through organisations such as the Socialist Youth Union, environmental and conservation groups and even political parties in the National Front, this 'infiltration' was shaping and influencing public declarations and positions of these organisations, creating dissatisfaction, unhappiness and a destabilisation of the social

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[139] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', 'Dálnopisná sdělění a dopisy ÚV KSČ', 'Informace o vystoupení s. M. Jakeše v Čs. televizi dálnopis ÚV KSS, KV, MěV a OV KSČ', (21 Nov. 1989), [f. 8] [currently unarchived].

[140] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 460/B, 'Statobezpećnostní situace a činnost neformalních skupin v ČSSR 20.11.1989' (20 Nov. 1989), f. 6.

situation'.[141] The leadership's demands to 'activiate' the National Front had, it seemed, been taken seriously. One of the earliest indications had come in May 1989, in a speech made by the Czechoslovak Socialist Party chairman, Jan Škoda. For years the other parties of the National Front had exerted very little influence at all upon the *KSČ* and had generally upheld their role within the coalition dutifully. However, in what Radio Free Europe noted as an attempt at carving out some political space for the Socialist Party, Škoda argued that the other parties of the National Front should be allowed to propose legislation independently of the *KSČ*, and gain 'greater political responsibility' in doing so.[142] The other parties in the National Front also seemed to be putting across similar arguments. In a briefing document circulated among functionaries of the district *KSS* committee in Levice, western Slovakia, the situation was presented in stark terms. Local National Front organisations had begun to hold the *KSČ* Central Committee 'to its word' about 'the application of the principles of freedom of information of the press, radio and television'. As local KSS officials complained, 'some time ago' the other parties of the National Front started to 'demand much greater space' than the four pages which they received within the local Communist weekly newspaper. Although the official claimed these demands were 'unreal' and 'impossible', he added that the 'constellation of facts' and 'mundane details' which the local paper regularly printed had 'worn thin'. Local people no longer believed in anything they were told and both 'anonymously and openly they let us know it'.[143] The Party leadership and the *StB*, which increasingly perceived previously loyal organisations including the likes of the

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[141] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', P 102/89, bod 5, č. 6886, 'Návrh opatření proti nepřátelským aktivitám nelegálních skupin', 27.1.1989. p. 26.

[142] University of Glasgow Library, 'Radio Free Europe Situation Briefings', Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 15', (14 Jul. 1989), pp. 3-5.

[143] Štátný archív v Nitre (pobočka Levice), 'OV KSS', 'Zápisnica z 11. zasadania Okresného výboru KSS v Leviciach', (15. Nov. 1989) [currently unarchived].

Czechoslovak Socialist Party and Socialist Union of Youth were turning against them, had not foreseen this implication of *přestavba.*

The October Central Committee meeting which tackled environmental questions and how to resolve them was widely condemned among Communist committees as having been 'far too general' and not answering 'specific problems'.[144] And there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the top sections of the Party, particularly within regional presidia and within the Presidium in Prague were not ignorant of the criticism of *přestavba*.[145] At the same time, reports coming into the Party that workers were 'losing trust' with the Party, and that the 'society quickly needed to solve...problems particularly in the economy and in politics to strengthen the authority of the Party'.[146] Only gradually did parts of the Party hierarchy begin to realise that criticism of the existing situation was beginning to become too much and that the Party needed to 'compliment, appreciate and thank' a lot more than it was doing.[147]

In one attempt to overcome the Party's defensiveness, the regional Party secretariat in western Bohemia discussed how to combat negative perceptions of *přestavba* among workers. But again, a break down in responsibility for policy and decision making failed. Reports indicated that in factories and workplace committees the tasks of *přestavba* were not divided up according to individual workplaces and were 'not concretely worked though'. Furthermore, individual Party members were criticising the top Party leadership which was considered 'a sign of weakness' among those

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[144] Městský archiv Praha, 'OV KSČ Praha 2: Předsednictvo-2', inv. č. 924-928, box 165, '41. zasedání POV KSČ v Praze 2', (22. Nov. 1989), f. 11.

[145] For example, see SObA Plzeň, 'KV KSČ Plzeň', box 446, 'Sekretariát KV KSČ', 'Zápis ze 40. zasedání sekretariátu zpč. KV KSČ', (14 Nov. 1989), ff. 188-190;

[146] SObA Plzeň, 'Zápis ze 40. zasedání sekretariátu zpč. KV KSČ', (14 Nov. 1989), f. 203.

[147] SObA Plzeň, 'Zápis ze 40. zasedání sekretariátu zpč. KV KSČ', (14 Nov. 1989), f. 189.

members who were also failing to change their work practices.[148] Workplace committees, one regional functionary complained, were not 'paying attention' to the 'situation' among their own staffs, and that they needed to 'emphasise the positive results' of *přestavba*. Party members further down the hierarchy in district and workplace committees had to make sure that the Party's policies and orders were 'divided up into concrete tasks and stages', and consequently make sure they assess both the workplace as a whole, and individuals to judge its success.[149] The western Bohemian committee's assessment only highlighted the fact that the Party hierarchy still expected its grassroots Party members to defend the Party against criticism, put across its policies and implement them.

Many of the underlying themes of *přestavba* came together during a series of ecological demonstrations which spread through northern Bohemia in early November 1989. They showed the effect of the greater 'openness' of debate on the ecology, the changing nature of the security services' response to protest, as well as the authorities' ability to handle 'dialogue'. Northern Bohemia was one of the regions of Czechoslovakia most greatly affected by acid rain and the open-pit mining of brown coal—considered amongst the most environmentally-harmful fossil fuels. In early November 1989 a series of demonstrations took place around the town of Teplice, involving many hundreds of people demanding better protection of the environment. The first of these demonstrations, apparently organised by sixteen-year old Zbyšek Jindra, centred on the poor air quality around the region, intensified by the cold, damp

[148] SObA Plzeň, 'Zápis ze 40. zasedání sekretariátu zpč. KV KSČ', (14 Nov. 1989), f. 188.

[149] SObA Plzeň, 'Zápis ze 40. zasedání sekretariátu zpč. KV KSČ', (14 Nov. 1989), f. 188.

autumn air.[150] Around four hundred people gathered at that first demonstration, chanting slogans such as 'Give us oxygen', 'Let our children live', and 'We want clean air'.[151] More generally, the ecological demonstrations both in Teplice and elsewhere were not centred around key dates or anniversaries, and were thus much more spontaneous and surprising than others at the time. Padraic Kenny has argued that the demonstrations were a sign that 'resistance had spread from beyond the usual large cities' and into the regions and smaller towns.[152] But coming less than a month after the Central Committee's discussion on ecological policy, the demonstrations seemed less to do with 'resistance' against the regime, and much more based on putting pressure on the Central Committee to listen to local people's concerns.

The northern Bohemian protests were worrying for the Party leadership not least because of the apparent ease with which the demonstrations spread from one town to another. A second demonstration took place in Teplice only a day after the first, on 12 November, this time attracting around five hundred participants. A local schoolteacher, Jana Dvorksá, called on the demonstrators to make their demands be known in relation to ecological matters so that a committee could be formed to draft proposals which would then be handed on to the Teplice National Committee.[153] In a sign that the situation was becoming more serious, the third day of demonstration in the town resulted in official estimates of around 1300 participants—nearly three times as many as the day before. The scale of the demonstration seems to have unnerved the authorities

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[150] Sulphur dioxide levels in the surrounding environment had risen to between five and ten times the level considered acceptable to the government. See ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv. j. 1419, 'Denní informace S-StB Ústí nad Labem', 10594, (10 Nov. 1989), f. 429; SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'Kronika města Lovosice 1989', p. 6.

[151] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1419, 'Denní informace S-StB Ústí nad Labem', 10635, (12. Nov. 1989), f. 431.

[152] P. Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 300-301.

[153] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1419, 'Denní informace S-StB Ústí nad Labem', 10636, (13 Nov. 1989), f. 432.

who, for the first time during the protests took the decision to forcibly disperse the demonstrators. However, it did not stop around two hundred and fifty people making their way to the local Teplice Communist Party offices. There they were met there by the chairman of the local party, Antonín Váňa, who surprisingly agreed to a meeting in the Winter Stadium in the town the following week, on 20 November, to discuss citizens' concerns about the environment.[154] This was one of the first signs that the Party was willing to open dialogue up even to those who were not part of the official political structures of the National Front. The decision also appears to have been taken by Váňa himself, and without seeking approval from further up the Party hierarchy.

Much less documented, however, was the fact that the demonstrations in Teplice, which ended in promises of dialogue with the *KSČ*, seem to have encouraged the spread of similar protests to other towns in the region. On 15 November, the StB received reports that several workers in the metalworks factory Koh-i-Noor in Děčín were planning a demonstration for 17 November concerning the environment.[155] The demonstration attracted around two hundred people and again ended with promises for another demonstration the following Friday.[156] Other demonstrations took place in Northern Bohemia at the same time, in Litvinov (15 November)[157] and Most (16 November),[158] all of which focussed on environmental concerns of the local population. The Teplice demonstrations specifically highlighted how the regime chose to deal with

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[154] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1419, 'Denní informace S-StB Ústí nad Labem', 10715, (14 Nov. 1989), f. 436.

[155] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1419, 'Denní informace S-StB Ústí nad Labem', 10759, (15 Nov. 1989), f. 440.

[156] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1419, 'Denní informace S-StB Ústí nad Labem', 10850, (17 Nov. 1989), f. 449.

[157] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1419, 'Denní informace S-StB Ústí nad Labem', 10857, (19 Nov. 1989), f. 462.

[158] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1419, 'Denní informace S-StB Ústí nad Labem', 10802, (17 Nov. 1989), f. 445.

the demonstrations in different ways. Most of the demonstrations passed off without police intervention, and the decision by the local Party chairman to respond to the protestors with the announcement of a public meeting suggests two things. First, that when public protests not organised by dissident circles or Charter 77 were organised, the regime now seemed more willing to listen. It again showed that on the areas of debate which the Party had allowed to open up, in particular the environment, demands for dialogue seemed much more likely to be heard. That is not to suggest that Party representatives would take on board any of the demands made at such a meeting, but it did at the very least prove to people in the region that it was possible to hold the Party up to its own rhetoric.

The northern Bohemian demonstrations showed that protest could be contained by negotiation. Security analyses of the situation in Czechoslovakia presented both cautious optimism about recent successes against opposition groups, alongside deep uncertainty about the future, particularly as other allied countries and Socialist parties plunged deeper into crisis. The *StB* reported that from the perspective of opposition groups, the last few months of demonstrations (from August to October) had been 'a fiasco', largely due to them 'being unsuccessful in obtaining the support of the public', despite 'having received the usual support from Western broadcasting organisations'.[159] Specifically, the 28 October demonstrations on Czechoslovak Independence Day had been 'a great disappointment for the organisers', and apart from the three thousand

[159]Although these security reports are dated after the considered 'start' of the revolution, the information and the tone of the report strongly suggests that it was drafted before 17 November, for a meeting on 20 Nov. As such, I consider them pre-revolutionary documents, in spite of the date. ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 460/B, 'Statobezpećnostní situace a činnost neformalních skupin v ČSSR', (20 Nov. 1989), ff. 14-15.

demonstrators in central Prague 'there was practically no disruption of peace and public order' throughout the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.[160]

In late October and early November 1989, the Party leadership seemed to be preparing to make further reforms to tackle the growing discontent with the pace of reform. As Jan Fojtík told the American news agency United Press International, the leadership was preparing 'highly critical material' concerning problems with the economy which 'should have been solved years ago, but which were not'.[161] Though there was a tendency among some Communist officials to exaggerate the Party's (and their own) reformist credentials to those in the West, a glimpse into just how critical the congress might have been lay in a documentary made by Fedor Gál which was to be shown during the congress, but completion of which was interrupted by the revolution. Delegates would have been shown numerous people dismissive of *přestavba* as 'just a word'. And economists were interviewed, including Miloš Zemen, who likened Czechoslovakia to an aeroplane which had been 'in freefall for years', during which time everyone had been enjoying the sensation of floating around as if nothing was wrong. Only when a different pilot grabbed the controls and pulled the plane out of the dive 'did everyone realise what an amateur had been in the cockpit beforehand'.[162]

The proposals put to the Presidium on 8 November provided another indication that the Party leadership planned to launch further structural changes and counter the perceived weaknesses with *přestavba.* The push towards even deeper restructuring came from General Secretary Miloš Jakeš and Party Ideology secretary Jan Fojtík, both of whom led discussion on the document, an indication of just how seriously the Presidium

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[160] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 460/B, 'Statobezpećnostní situace a činnost neformalních skupin v ČSSR', (20 Nov. 1989), ff. 14-15.

[161] 'Odpovědi Jana Fojtíka na otázky UPI', *Lidové noviny* (Jan. 1989), p. 22.

[162] *Letová správa OK 89-90.* Dir. Iľja Ruppeldt. Slovenský filmový ústav, 1990. Film.

were reassessing the Party's position. Whilst the document did not take the final, most radical step—an ending of the Party's leading role in society—it did show the Party breaking from the 'complacency, fastidiousness, formalism and bureaucracy' which it now viewed to have overcome the Party since the mid-1970s.[163] This had 'inhibited initiative, repressed healthy criticism' and were 'compounded by accumulating problems' in other neighbouring Communist countries, as well as 'in the entire system'.[164] The draft proposals—as much as they were a criticism of the past—placed the strongest emphasis on a Party which took its principles 'from the current climate': They were to 'respect progressive internationalism, the mutual interests of all countries, the necessity to solve collectively a range of serious global problems'. For some, the proposals would have changed little: Marxism-Leninism still remained the basic tenants on which the Party stood. Yet the interpretation of such principles and the tone of the Party had changed radically. Socialism was to be created 'from a dialectic in the interests of all classes and all humanity'.[165]

The *KSČ* leadership has been criticised for not taking restructuring seriously and being too slow in its implementation. The first charge against it is, as the revised party programme shows, is misplaced. The Party was indeed changing radically, but in a way which was consistent and logical with its own ideological standpoint. Party critics implied that only a liberal style of democracy would constitute a display of 'seriousness'. The Presidium's conception was to 'promote the widest forms of direct democracy', moving away from Party-based policy discussion towards wider popular consultations, including statewide referenda to act both as consultative and decision-

[163] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', P 138/89, bod 1, 'Návrh zásad programu Komunistické strany Československa', (8 Nov. 1989), f. 11.

[164] NA ČR, 'Návrh zásad programu Komunistické strany Československa', (8 Nov. 1989), f. 12.

[165] NA ČR, 'Návrh zásad programu Komunistické strany Československa', (8 Nov. 1989), f. 12.

making exercises.[166] Most radically, the leadership proposed both the republican and federal governments to be composed not only of representatives of the National Front, but of independents, too.[167] The Party leadership were attempting to restructure the Party, yet prevent a coup which would result in the re-establishment of a bourgeoise-style liberal democracy, which the Party had done so much to eradicate since 1948.

For critics of the *KSČ* leadership, its democratisation plans were always dubious given that the Party had refused either to negotiate with its 'internal enemies' or give up its monopoly of power. The Party could not have been expected to have done the former, given that most oppositional groups were on the ideological extremities of the *KSČ*, and small in number. In the second respect, however, the leadership seemed increasingly prepared to tolerate an even wider conception of democratisation than it had done earlier in 1989. Though not entirely clear, the leading role of the Party clearly seemed up for negotiation: The National Front was to be regarded as 'an open system' to which any organisation could become part of (as long as it agreed with the politics of the coalition).[168] At the same time, the document also suggested that the leading role of the Party in society 'can be justified', if it could have been shown to be 'a force that serves the working class, the working people, and their interests in the most self-sacrificing way.[169]

The *KSČ*'s reform programme of *přestavba* and *democratizace* had sought to redefine the relationship between the Party and the rest of society. Based on similar Soviet reforms of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the *KSČ* leadership attempted to both 'restructure' Czechoslovak society, and the Party's relationship with it. Between 1986

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[166] NA ČR, 'Návrh zásad programu Komunistické strany Československa', (8 Nov. 1989), f. 20.

[167] NA ČR, 'Návrh zásad programu Komunistické strany Československa', (8 Nov. 1989), f. 20.

[168] NA ČR, 'Návrh zásad programu Komunistické strany Československa', (8 Nov. 1989), f. 18.

[169] NA ČR, 'Návrh zásad programu Komunistické strany Československa', (8 Nov. 1989), f. 22.

and 1989, the leadership's economic and social reforms, alongside democratic changes and reform within the Party itself, sought to put greater responsibility onto the wider Party membership and the National Front. In avoiding any significant cadre changes at the top of the Party or government, the leadership hoped to maintain both its 'leading role' within the Party and wider society until the Party congress in 1990.

Chapter Three:

From Restructuring to Revolution

Přestavba, the Czechoslovak Communist Party (*KSČ*)'s version of *perestroika*, had sought to redefine the relationship between the Party and Czechoslovak society. Since 1986, the *KSČ* leadership had tried—with varying degrees of success—to shift more responsibility onto factory directors, local Party functionaries, and the National Front, the large coalition of political parties and social organisations. Among the leading organisations within the National Front was the Socialist Youth Union (*Socialistický svaz mládeže*/*Socialistický zväz mládeže*, hereafter *SSM*), the union which defended the Party's interests among young people aged between fourteen and twenty-nine, and acted as a 'training ground' for *KSČ* membership.[1] This chapter assesses the *SSM* during *přestavba*, between 1986 to 1990. Students, who made up a significant section of the *SSM*'s membership, are often credited with having played a crucial role in Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution: as one observer at the time remarked, 'students started it'.[2] Yet historians have tended to downplay the role of the *SSM* during the revolution, instead emphasising its internal struggles prior to November 1989 and subsequent demise during the revolution itself.[3] Additionally, Prague students' accounts dominate interpretations of the 'student revolution', with only occasional glimpses offered elsewhere.[4] This chapter argues that young people's role in the revolution (not

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[1] University of Glasgow Library, 'Radio Free Europe Situation Briefings', 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 4', (2 Mar. 1989), p. 8.

[2] T. G. Ash. *Inside the Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague* (New York, 1999), p. 79.

[3] See M. Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc v českých zemích, 1968-1969* (Praha, 1993); M. Otáhal and M. Vaněk, *Sto studentských revolucí* (Praha, 1999); M. Benda, M. Benda, M. Klíma, P. Dobrovský, M. Pajerová, Š. Pánek, and R. Kříž, *Studenti psali revoluci* (Prague, 1990).

[4] Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc*, p. 70.

just students), and indeed the very nature of the revolution throughout Czechoslovakia cannot be understood without considering the *SSM* and the political context of *přestavba*. That students came to play a leading role in Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution was no coincidence.

The Socialist Youth Union was one of the most important and influential organisations in Czechoslovakia. Established on 11 November 1970, two years after Warsaw Pact troops had crossed Czechoslovakia's borders to end the so-called the 'Prague Spring', the Union was originally created as an umbrella group to oversee young people's groups and activities in Czechoslovakia. It merged and replaced the previously-existing eighteen youth and student groups into a new 'single, voluntary, social organisation', to be the 'representative of the young generation' in Czechoslovakia. In practice, this meant that all youth groups from the Communist Party's version of the Scouts, the Pioneers (*Pionýrská organizace/ Pionierská organizácia*), to student magazines and clubs had to operate under the *SSM*'s constitution. The *SSM* was 'organisationally independent' of the Communist Party; in other words, it would elect and hold to account its own representatives.[5] But as one of the organisations under the National Front, it was explicitly required in its own constitution to take its lead 'from the programme and goals' of the *KSČ*.[6] Like many other National Front organisations, the Union also had a federal governing structure divided into Czech, Slovak and federal organs with district and regional committees. It also had different councils (*rady*), which represented young people in industrial work, agriculture, in schools and in universities. And just like the *KSČ*, the Youth Union also had a massive bureaucracy and a media at its disposal, not only responsible for two

[5] *Stanovy Socialistického svazu mládeže*, schválené na IV. sjezdu, 3. října, 1987. *http://www.totalita.cz/txt/ txt_ssm_stanovy.pdf.* (last accessed 2 November, 2011).

[6] *http://www.totalita.cz/txt/txt_ssm_stanovy.pdf.*

daily newspapers, the Czech *Mladá front* and Slovak *Smena*, but scores of other newspapers, student magazines, and bulletins across Czechoslovakia. The Union and its various committees permeated through most aspects of Czechoslovak public life, a fact which would have significant consequences once the revolution started.

These basic tenets of the Union, namely its relationship to the *KSČ* and it being the only organisation for youth activity in Czechoslovakia formed main points around which *přestavba* affected throughout the late 1980s. The *KSČ* leadership's decision, taken at the Party's seventeenth congress in 1986, to 'pay attention' to education matters coincided with its new policies centred around *přestavba* and *demokratizace*. No lengthy Party discussion had taken place concerning the education sector since 1980, and as *přestavba* was rolled out into all spheres of public life throughout 1987 and 1988, this fact became increasingly obvious.[7] In the new atmosphere of openness and criticism, the state of the education system was laid bare. In Prague alone, for example, only four middle schools had been built since 1948, the last one constructed in 1973. And if the infrastructure was not bad enough, the city also lacked 380 qualified teachers within primary schools.[8] After the ninth Central Committee plenum in April 1988 had approved plans for *přestavba* and democratisation of society, it took a further year before the Presidium was able to came forward with new proposals for restructuring the Czech and Slovak education systems.

Party functionaries' responses to the new Education Act, which the Central Committee discussed in March 1989 were mixed. The new law was supposed to take effect on 1 September 1990, with 'discussion' taking place throughout the remainder of

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[7] The last notable laws passed concerning the structure and organisation of Czech and Slovak universities was zákon 39/1980, 'O výsokých školách'.

[8] Městský archiv Praha, 'OV KSČ Praha 2: Předsednictvo-2', inv. č. 924-928, box165, 'Mimořádné zasedání POV KSČ v Praze 2', section 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze' (4 Aug. 1989), f. 17.

1989 (although in Party jargon, such 'discussion' was to be confined to the implementation of the law, rather than any debate over its substance).[9] The 'discussion' focussed on two points: the specific, structural reforms which were needed; and the relationship between teachers, students, the *SSM* on the one hand, and the *KSČ* on the other.

In August 1989, the *KSČ*'s municipal committee in Prague was, along with district and regional Party committees around the country, debating not only the educational reforms proposed by the central committee earlier in the year. They were also but having to deal with increasing reports of 'high levels of activity' among non-Youth Union members. Party functionaries were particularly concerned about young people's attempts to 'criticise' and 'voice doubts' about the *SSM*'s ability to represent young people.[10]Although the *KSČ* and other mass organisations been trying to tackle problems with recruitment and passivity in their own memberships, the *SSM*'s membership, the precursor Party membership, was integral to the future health of the *KSČ.* The *KSČ* considered membership of the *SSM* integral to a young person's development, as the *SSM* was expected to 'recommend its best candidates' for membership to the *KSČ*, a move which was also considered 'the highest appreciation of one's activity'.[11] The health of the *SSM* was integral to that of the *KSČ*, too.

Therefore, to restructure the *SSM* and improve its ability to represent and speak for all Czech and Slovak young people, district Party committees and workplace organisations within universities were directed to 'completely change' their work with

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[9] According to Jan Fojtík, *KSČ* Ideology Secretary. See Městský archiv Praha, 'OV KSČ Praha 2: Předsednictvo-2', inv. č. 924-928, box 165, 'Mimořádné zasedání POV KSČ v Praze 2', 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze' (4 Aug. 1989), f. 47.

[10] Městský archiv Praha, 'OV KSČ Praha 2: Předsednictvo-2', inv. č. 924-928, box 165, 'Mimořádné zasedání POV KSČ v Praze 2', 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze' (4 Aug. 1989), f. 27.

[11] *Stanovy Socialistického svazu mládeže*, schválené na IV. sjezdu, 3. října, 1987. http://www.totalita.cz/txt/txt_ssm_stanovy.pdf. (last accessed on 2 November, 2011).

students. Party members within universities had become among the 'most passive' sections of the *KSČ*, and it fell to them to 'devote much greater attention' than had been in the past.[12] At the same time, *SSM* committees were asked to end the previously close relationship it had with school authorities, where teachers claimed were 'continually directing Youth Union committees' in their activity due to their inability to organise themselves, and instead raise their 'independence' and 'heighten their own sense of responsibility' .[13]

The activity of independent students which had worried Party functionaries so much had been spurred on by the very educational reforms the Party had proposed. A petition was started in April 1989 by a small group of students centred around the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics at Charles University, and which lobbied the deans of their faculties for 'student autonomy' from the Socialist Youth Union.[14] Up to that point, students had only been allowed to participate in the running of the university 'by means of the Socialist Youth Union' and the petition hoped that, with educational reform on the Party's agenda, greater representation of all students—regardless of their *SSM* membership—could be achieved.[15] The petitions were circulated just as Václav Havel, a leading critic of the regime, had been imprisoned for anti-Socialist activity and a petition to release him, 'A Few Sentences' (*Několik vět*) had attracted thousands of signatures. Although the students who organised the petition—Marek Benda, Martin Benda, and Martin Klíma—had received encouraging signs from the dean of their faculty, at the start of the new university year in October 1989 the Dean had given no response to their petition. Indeed, there was not even an indication that the petition

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[12] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', f. 28.

[13] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', p. 20.

[14] Benda, *et al*., *Studenti psali revoluci*, p. 16.

[15] Paragraph 53 of University Law, as cited in Benda, *et al.*, *Studenti psali revoluci*, p. 16.

would be considered at some point in the future.[16] What did happened instead was that students across Prague, especially those who were not members of the *SSM* forged new links with one another. Students across Prague had, thanks in part due to the petitions organised earlier in the year, come closer together and several meetings took place to discuss the possibility of creating an alternative, independent student organisation which was dubbed STUHA, or the 'Independent Students'.[17]

As *přestavba* increasingly affected life both inside and outside the Party and its reforms began to be implemented, noticeable changes also took place within universities. Since 1970, being accepted onto a university course had been in part decided by the political reliability of a student's family. Blemishes on that record could have come about in any number of ways, not least having refused to join the Socialist Youth Union during high school.[18] For those children whose parents were Charter 77 signatories, or whose parents had been expelled from the Party after the 1968 Warsaw pact intervention, admission to university became almost impossible.[19] The onset of *přestavba* changed this long-established unwritten rule. In August 1989, Jan Fojtík, the Party's Ideology Secretary, announced to a Party meeting in Prague that the 'democratisation of education' required a more 'personal approach' to each individual student. In practice this meant, he said, 'no one should be expelled' from school, or 'discriminated against' for the actions of their family. Each student had to be allowed to 'develop their own talents' for their own benefit, for the 'benefit of society' and 'one's

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[16] Benda, *et al*., *Studenti psali revoluce*, pp. 15-16.

[17] STUHA was an acronym of *Studentské hnutí*, or the 'student movement', and also the Czech word for 'ribbon'. As the movement never formally declared itself under this title before 17 November, those non-aligned students are usually referred to as the 'Independent Students'.

[18] Otáhal, Vaněk, *Sto studentských revolucí*, pp. 94-95.

[19] Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc*, pp. 46-47.

own happiness'.[20] Exceptions remained, with students who had come to the attention of the *StB* for their own behaviour continuing to struggle to get into university, though even they were apparently able to be admitted onto less-politically sensitive courses like mathematics or engineering.[21] The relaxation of university admissions policy, not only a cornerstone of 'Normalisation' but a strong deterrent to anti-regime activity, mirrored the Party's new approach to dissident groups. Whereas previously the *StB* had targeted the broad network of a dissident group, attention was now focussed on ringleaders and spokespersons.[22] In refusing to persecute entire families, the new admissions policy, already in place when Fojtík spoke in August 1989, was not an off-the cuff measure, but part of a wider policy framework which aimed to overturn those implemented under 'Normalisation'.

In the Party discussion on education, the Party *aktiv*, including party propagandists, heads of grassroots (*základní/základné*) organisations, elected members in trade unions, youth and women's organisations, and national committees (i.e. all those who were *active* in the Party), criticised teachers and educational staff for many of the system's failures. In particular, party members in workplaces had 'unsuccessfully dealt with the demands for independent, creative work' which the Party had asked of them. Just as with the implementation of *přestavba* in other sectors, the 'formal aspects' (i.e. bureaucratic and procedural matters) dominated over any actual content. Any 'systematic work' to implement Party policy documents was 'missing', along with any 'ability to formulate and fulfil their basic tasks and aims' in any way that responded to

[20] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', f. 44.

[21] Group interview with three anon. Zlín residents (a theatre worker, technician and Svit employee), by David Green (Zlín, 20 Jul. 2008).

[22] K. Williams, and D. Deletant, *Security Intelligence Services in New Democracies: The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania* (Basingstoke, New York; 2001), pp. 44-45.

conditions in individual workplaces.[23] However, the sharpest criticism was saved for teachers, whose methods were described as 'encyclopaedic', and whose attitudes had encouraged the 'feminisation' of education. Teachers took an 'improperly passive' approach to their work, had 'low personal engagement' in their work and were frequently 'incapable of explaining and promoting' the *KSČ*'s policies to other members of staff or their students.[24] Democratisation required teachers to have more autonomy within schools and universities to do their job, but along with more freedom, the Party intended to make them have 'greater responsibility' for their work, too.[25]

As local functionaries directed their criticisms of the education system, and responsibility for changing it, at education staff, those Party members who worked in schools did not remain silent. One local schoolteacher and Party member in Tábor, in southern Bohemia, took the highly unusual step of personally criticising Dr. Synková, the current Czech Minister for Education. The move was particularly remarkable given that singling out individual Party members in the leadership was considered opportunistic and un-Communist. Synková had apparently been caught between criticising the teachers she was responsible for, and at the same time had clearly tried to be seen to support reforms. Yet teachers did not view it that way. Synková had 'greatly disappointed' teachers with remarks at the Central Committee, as 'all teachers' wanted 'to do their work well'. Criticism of teachers in 'a public forum' would 'disappoint' teachers because those who do not understand the pressures teachers were under 'would not know what to make of it'.[26] Staff in Prague questioned exactly how they were to

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[23] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', ff. 23-24.

[24] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', f. 15-17.

[25] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', f. 47.

[26] SOkA Tábor, 'OV KSČ', poř. č. 1, box 26, 'Zápis' (5 Oct. 1989), f. 100.

'raise the authority' of teachers in school. [27] And at a meeting of Bratislava's municipal Party committee, reports from teachers said that though 'problems' discussed at the thirteenth Central Committee meeting 'were well-known', they were 'continually talked about' with no indication of any firm results. They complained that although under *přestavba* the Party leadership claimed that 'a teacher should be creative', the reality was 'different'.[28]

Party members who were not employed in eduction, however, adopted the same line as Dr. Synková. The Party needed to 'straighten the backbone' of teachers.[29] They claimed teachers were shrugging off their responsibility to change their work, with staff claiming each was 'only a servant' and that reform was for 'the director, the organisation, town, district, region, school authorities, the ministry'—anyone but them.[30] According to one district Party official, a 'good teacher' under the new conditions of *přestavba*, required teachers who were able to show their 'professional knowledge' in 'wider social contexts'. A 'good teacher' knew how to 'react immediately to unfavourable questions' from students and staff alike, and voice 'one's own opinion based on Marxism-Leninism, about moral values and the ideals of Socialism'.[31] Party functionaries did not claim that the failures of teachers to respond to *přestavba* within schools and universities had anything to do with either the Party's policies. Rather, as functionaries complained, that teachers and lecturers were teaching 'without any zeal'.[32] Teachers' duties were to uphold the values of *přestavba* and promote them in school,

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[27] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', P113/89, k informaci 12, 'Vnitrostranická informace 71', (12 Apr. 1989), f. 2.

[28] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 71', f. 2.

[29] Městský archiv Praha, 'OV KSČ Praha 2: Předsednictvo-2', inv. č. 924-928, box 165, '8. plenární zasedání OV KSČ v Praze 2' (20. Aug 1989), f. 62.

[30] Městský archiv Praha, '8. plenární zasedání OV KSČ v Praze 2', f. 62.

[31] Městský archiv Praha, '8. plenární zasedání OV KSČ v Praze 2', f. 17 [recto].

[32] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', f. 21.

and respond in an open, confident way. If the Party planned to address failures in teachers' work, functionaries did not consider it the Party's task, whose job was to 'politically guide' the country. Rather, 'responsibility' for this lay within the 'state institutions and National committees'.[33] Party discussion of its education proposals, showed the tensions which *přestavba* had brought out into the open. 'Criticism', which had always been permitted to some extent within the Party, had become a question of shifting responsibility and blame. Teaching staff blamed the Party leadership, and district functionaries blamed Party members in workplace committees.

Students and young people, meanwhile, had responded to the new sense of openness under *přestavba*, but not in the way the Party leadership had intended. For one student from Prague, this was shown in her awareness that teachers in other schools were 'talking openly to their students ... about the regime, and about how it was not morally right, and were more engaged in politics'.[34] Another student, a twenty-six year old apprentice technician, as both a member of *SSM* and a candidate member of the Party in 1989, *přestavba* created only uncertainty. Coming from the north Moravian mining town of Ostrava, he struggled to comprehend 'what *perestroika* meant'. He and his friends wanted 'to change' working practices, but considered 'responsibility for making these changes' to be solely 'for Communists'. He talked about *přestavba* with his student friends and his older co-workers, but 'nobody knew' how 'to change things'.[35] Vasil Mohorita, chairman of the *SSM* Central Committee, echoed such sentiments in a meeting with Prague Party members, rejecting the Party leadership's assumption that such a thing existed as 'young people's problems'. The 'problems'

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[33] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', f. 15.

[34] Interview with Lenka, 20 April 2008, Prague, by David Green

[35] Interview with Bronislav Robenek, 5 July 2008, Ostrava, by David Green.

which *přestavba* highlighted, he claimed, reflected the concerns of 'the whole of society'.[36] Although *přestavba* created tensions, ranging from confusion, anger and frustration, it had also changed the more open and explicit way in which this was being be expressed.

The sense that *přestavba* was confusing and open to interpretation, yet offered the possibility of real change, was an opinion also held by contemporary western observers. The new director of the Czech section in Radio Free Europe, Pavel Pecháček, was cited in *StB* reports declaring that *přestavba* was a definite policy shift within the *KSČ* and that the station could not longer ignore the changes which the Party were enacting. In this respect, reports noted that Radio Free Europe had changed its focus away from the regime's human rights abuses and dissident activities towards a cultural agenda, focussing on 'young people and the intelligentsia', and aimed to emphasise the 'positive aspects of life in capitalist countries'. Radio Free Europe, reports claimed, had begun working on the assumption that the *KSČ*'s eighteenth Party congress, which had now been brought forward by a year to 1990, represented the greatest opportunity for change in Czechoslovakia.[37]

Socialist Youth Union functionaries had also began to change the *SSM*'s relationship to the *KSČ* as they implemented their own programme of *přestavba* within the Union. In Prague universities, particularly in the Charles University Arts Faculty (*filosofická fakulta*) and in the Academy of Performing Arts (*Akademie múzických umění*), groups of 'activist' students began to emerge within the Youth Union who simultaneously pushed for greater openness and reform within the Union and society at

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[36] Městský archiv Praha, 'OV KSČ Praha 2: Předsednictvo-2', inv. č. 924-928, box 165, '9. plenární zasedání OV KSČ v Praze 2' (1 Nov. 1989), f. 72.

[37] Archiv ministerstva vnitra České republiky (hereafter, ABS MV ČR), 'A 34/1', inv. j. 1426, 'Informácia o bezpečnostnej situácii z príležitosti medzinárodného dne študentstva—predložena' (22 Nov. 1989), f. 418.

large. They blurred the distinction between what could be considered 'opposition', and those who had remained closer to the leadership of the Youth Union, sometimes referred to as 'functionaries'. This blurring had only increased after several 'reform-minded' candidates, including its new chairman, Vasil Mohorita, were elected to the Youth Union's Central Committee in October 1987.[38] These elections were also the first multi-candidate, secret elections to take place in Czechoslovakia under Czechoslovak *přestavba*. On 16 March 1989, more reform candidates were elected within the Union's structures, including Jiří Jaskmanický to the Prague Municipal University Council, and Martin Ulčák as First Secretary in the Union's Prague Municipal Committee.[39] These newly-elected representatives began to engage with other activist members in the Union and were able to further push for greater openness and freedom.[40] One of these former functionaries, Jiří Jaskmanický, recalled in an interview ten years after the revolution how at university he had told Union members to behave 'normally'. There had been the possibility 'to do politically what one wanted', even though it had to be 'under some form of organisation' within the *SSM*.[41] Some of this was done through publishing student magazines, including the Student Press and Information Centre (*Studentské tiskové informační středisko*).[42] These reform-minded functionaries in their own way tried to help activists, who sought a negotiated position under the official title of the Youth Union. In other words, activist students—with the help of Union representatives—were able to use the legitimacy of the Socialist Youth Union to publish critical pieces and organise events which otherwise would not have been possible.

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[38] Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc*, p. 68

[39] Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc*, p. 68.

[40] Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc*, p. 68-71.

[41] Interview with Jiří Jaskmanický, 5.5.1997, Centrum orální historie, Praha.

[42] Milan Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc*, p. 122.

The *KSČ*'s policies of *přestavba* also blurred the lines between who could be considered an opponent of the regime, someone who was 'reform-minded', and those who had no interest in changing the status quo. Martin Mejstřík, a student who, in 1989 went on to play a leading role in the revolution, typified the difficulty *přestavba* caused even at the time in categorising someone as either pro- or anti-regime. Mejstřík was closely involved with the student magazine *Kavárna*, a Prague-based publication which brought together a host of different people who 'tried to do something against the regime'.[43] Despite Mejstřík's involvement in *Kavárna*, independent students outwith the union never knew if he could be trusted, for as a fellow *SSM* member claimed, Mejstřík 'always tried to appear as a member of the *SSM*'. On top of this, *SSM* members in Prague, including Mejstřík himself, were equally distrusted by the *KSČ* leadership, who were never entirely sure where these students' loyalties lay.[44] Mejstřík, in this sense was not unique. *Přestavba* allowed one to present oneself in a number of ways, according to the situation. An *SSM* member could simultaneously appear to be a loyal Union member, a radical supporter of *přestavba*, opponent of the Party's 'leading role' or a mixture of all three.

The *SSM* leadership came under pressure during 1989 from the *KSČ* leadership, who sought to reassert the Party's and the *SSM*'s 'leading role' among young people and prevent a repeat of the 1968 collapse of the *SSM*'s predecessor, the Czechoslovak Youth Union (*Československý svaz mládeže/Československý zväz mládeže*). Similarly, young people within the *SSM* were pressurising their leadership to support the membership. Shortly before Christmas 1988, in České Budějovice, students had had their university

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[43] Interview with Jiří Jaskmanický, 5.5.1997, Centrum orální historie, Praha.

[44] Interview with Jiří Jaskmanický, 5.5.1997, Centrum orální historie, Praha; see also ABS MV ČR, *'*A 34/1', inv.j. 1416, 'Denní informace S-StB Praha', (15 Nov. 1989), f. 13.

journal first edited, and finally banned by the *SSM*.[45] In response, Philosophy students had held a series of meetings where participants expressed 'deep distrust' in the *SSM* and its 'very existence as an organisation'.[46] In Prague in January 1989, *SSM* committees in the Academy of Performing Arts collectively condemned the police violence against demonstrators during the 'Palach week' protests. It was also the first time since the *SSM*'s establishment that an entire section of the Union had opposed the leadership. The *SSM* leadership, which had condemned the 'experienced demagogues' who had tried to 'harm our society', refused to acknowledge the committees' concerns.[47]

In an effort to bring the *SSM* and its membership closer to the Party's conception *přestavba* and, in effect, to re-establish the Party's 'leading role' among young people, the *SSM* leadership, alongside the National Front and *KSČ* began a number of 'discussions' with young people throughout 1989. This was first proposed on 27 January 1989, shortly after the Palach week demonstrations, and was part of a fourteen-page document listing a raft of detailed proposals to tackle the ongoing problem of 'hostile activity in illegal groups'.[48] In many ways these were held along the same lines as those Party-organised meetings which took place in workplaces around the same time. The Party's plan was to 'engage' Communists and non-Party members into 'the process of restructuring and democratisation' and start 'dialogue'.[49] These meetings took place among all those the *SSM* represented, not only among students, but artistic

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[45] University of Glasgow Library, 'Radio Free Europe Situation Briefings', 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 7' (3. Apr. 1989), p. 14.

[46] 'Zpráva o jednom studentském fóru', *Lidové noviny* (Jan. 1989), p. 8.

[47] 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 7' (3. Apr. 1989), p. 14.

[48] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1(Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', P 102/89, bod 5, č.6886, 'Návrh opatření proti nepřátelským aktivitám nelegálních skupin', (27 Jan. 1989), f. 8.

[49] SOkA Teplice, 'Okresní výbor KSČ v Teplicích 1945-1989', box 204, '40. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ Teplice' (4 Oct. 1989), ff. 7-8.

professionals, *SSM* workplace committees and farming cooperatives.[50] District Party functionaries expected Communists in schools and workplaces to lead the dialogue sessions to achieve two outcomes. First, they wanted the discussions to concentrate on 'long-term problems and insufficiencies' which employees had. Secondly, Communists at the meetings had to 'make use of reports about the ongoing political situation' and, particularly in conversations with young people, 'explain [the Party's] aims and approach'.[51] Jan Fojtík further added that this 'should not be in any way' be a '*přestavba* campaign' which merely repeated the Party's position, but should be 'a serious discussion' for those involved.[52] What transpired was rather different. Some Party functionaries understood 'dialogue' not merely as a discussion in the usual sense of implementing policy, but rather but a chance to put forward the Party's 'analysis of the political situation' both at home and abroad.[53]

Meetings were being used by functionaries to 'unmask the demagogy' and criticise 'the enemies of Socialism'. For the faculty management, student forums were supposed to give them the chance to exert 'political authority' and 'prove themselves in difficult dialogue'.[54] As a result, on 25 February, *SSM* functionaries in Prague held the first of what was to be a series of 'open discussions' for young people.[55] The response was, according to initial reports in *Rudé právo*, 'overwhelming'. With over two hundred

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[50] SOkA Teplice,'40. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ Teplice', f. 8.

[51] SOkA Teplice, '40. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ Teplice', f. 8; also, for example, see SOkA Jablonec nad Nisou, 'OV KSČ Jablonec nad Nisou', inv.č. 71, box 40, 'Zápis', 'Zpráva o činnosti předsednictiva OV KSČ' (20 Sept. 1989), f. 2.

[52] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', f. 52.

[53] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', f. 52.

[54] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', f. 52.

[55] The 25 February meeting was jointly organised between the *SSM* in Prague and the Independent Peace Association, which was separate from the *KSČ*-controlled Czechoslovak Peace Committee (*Československý mirový výbor/Československý mierový výbor*), a fact which was actually reported by *Rudé právo* at the time. See 'Diskuse nebyla prosta rozporů', *Rudé právo* (27 Feb. 1989), p. 2.

people turning up—twice the number expected—proceedings had to be relayed via loudspeaker to the many more sitting outside the auditorium. Much of the meeting was also spent discussing military service, membership of the Warsaw Pact, and even if the People's Militia, the *KSČ*'s private army, should be abolished.[56] The fact that *Rudé právo* condemned the second meeting as having resembled a 'jousting match', alongside previous criticism of the audience's make-up having not 'met the organisers expectations' that probably resulted in the more limited form which later meetings adopted.[57] Therefore, from 13 April 1989, the *SSM* held various 'Student Fora' (*studentská fóra*) in Prague, which copied the principle of earlier 'dialogue' meetings, but had a stronger focus on 'student' concerns rather than 'public' problems.[58] This did not prevent many unwelcome questions being asked to top Party officials. As the *KSČ*'s municipal committee later noted, although the fora were officially within the structures of the *SSM*, their organisation and discussion were 'often outwith it'.[59] Quite apart from specific concerns about their studies, students were raising 'thorny topical questions' about 'the most difficult themes' related to the history of building Socialism, the political system (both at home and abroad) and of the Party's leading role.[60] What transpired were a series of meetings throughout Prague which merely highlighted to the *KSČ* again the 'passivity' and 'indifference' of the university leadership.[61]

The meetings also represented a change of opinion among the top *SSM* leadership. On 6 March, the search to redefine the *SSM* as both representative of its

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[56] 'Diskuse nebyla prosta rozporů', *Rudé právo* (27 Feb. 1989), p. 2.

[57] 'Jaká diskuse má smysl', *Rudé právo* (9 Mar. 1989), p. 2.

[58] J. Suk with J. Cuhra and F. Koudelka, *Chronolgie zániku komunistického režimu v Československu,* p. 61-62.

[59] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', f. 26.

[60] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', f. 26.

[61] Městský archiv Praha, 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze', f. 26.

membership yet still loyal to the *KSČ* began with a meeting of all district and regional committee chairpersons. Václav Mohorita, quoted in *Mladá fronta*, branded the meet ins 'a counterattack' against beuraucracy', 'formalism' and everything that had a bad influence on society in recent years'. The *SSM* had, in Mohorita's words, to defend everything that was 'in the interests of young people'.[62] What did emerge from the student forums, various student initiatives and increasing opportunities which *přestavba* provided was a further blurring of the lines between 'dissent' and 'reform', with increasing level of cooperation among Union functionaries, activist students and independents. Far from being atypical, the coalescing of the student movement in 1989 reflected wider trends in society. In part, this was evident in increasing cooperation both among dissidents at home and abroad, and especially the activities of the group Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity.[63] But in the context of *přestavba*, where the boundaries between opposition and Party loyalty had become less obvious, even basic changes to the system 'could be organised by dissidents alone'.[64] In one such case, Charter 77 signatory Jarmila Stibicová, along with her husband and other Chartists around Pardubice, a few hours' train journey east of Prague, began to build up contacts with National Front representatives from the Czechoslovak Socialist Party and Czechoslovak People's Party. Together they sought official permission for a 10 December rally, similar to the officially-permitted rally held in Prague a year before.[65]

Whereas opposition to the *KSČ* and *SSM* through magazines and student activity was ambiguous, membership numbers were a critical indicator of the health of the *SSM*. By the time the new university semester had started in late September 1989, the *SSM*

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[62] 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 7' (3 Apr. 1989), p. 13.

[63] P. Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*, pp. 286-287.

[64] Jarmila Stibicová, in J. Řeháček, *Sametová revoluce v Pardubicích*, p. 27.

[65] J. Řeháček, *Sametová revoluce v Pardubicích*, p. 27.

publicly admitted in *Mladá fronta* that fifty-five per cent of young people were not *SSM* members, and of the remaining forty-five per cent who were, a third were considered only 'formally' involved.[66] Within these figures, large variations existed. Even across individual Prague university faculties, Union membership rates varied from between sixty per cent to as high as ninety per cent of students (although even the lower estimate was still significantly above the state-wide average).[67] Though it was clear the *SSM*, as the one organisation supposed to represent the interests of all young people, had a serious membership problem, reasons for this actual decline are less clear. One possible consequence was that consequences for not joining the Union, particularly after a student had been accepted into university, had diminished. In a sign of both of the greater openness which existed after 1987 and the increasing uncertainty many felt towards the *SSM*, one first-year student in the 1989 intake at Charles University's Arts Faculty went to her tutor to discuss the 'dilemma' of joining the *SSM*. The reply, that one had to 'figure it out' for oneself, exemplified the problem many others felt about the political climate. One 'never knew' if being a member of the Socialist Youth Union would be a problem or not because 'it was not like the 1950s when all these things were very hard and strict' and one had at least known where one stood.[68] Like many students, university was a time when one 'started thinking it might not be right to do these things' and that it was 'really stupid to join' the *SSM* but, in the end, 'most people did' regardless. As much as *přestavba* provided students the opportunity to do activities once previously seen as off-limits, it also fostered an even greater sense of uncertainty and

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[66] 'Kde se stala chyba?: Rozhovor MF s vedoucím odboru ÚV SSM pro neogranizovanou mládež', *Mladá fronta* (16 Nov. 1989), p. 2.

[67] Městský archiv Praha, 'OV KSČ Praha 2: Předsednictvo-2', inv. č. 924-928, box 165, 'Mimořádné zasedání POV KSČ v Praze 2', 'Zpravodej MV KSČ v Praze' (4 Aug. 1989), f. 27. For more membership analysis see also 'Czechoslovakia Situation Report no. 7' (3 Apr. 1989), p. 13.

[68] Interview with former Czech Arts student by David Green (Prague, 20 Apr. 2008).

passivity among young people. National committees (the state's administrative organs), noted that, compared to all other mass organisations in Czechoslovakia, 'the greatest absence' was from the *SSM*'s membership.[69]

The increasing uncertainty over the *SSM*'s internal structure and its relationship to the *KSČ* , both of which were a result of *přestavba*, resulted in the *SSM* leadership calling a two-day conference to try and resolve these tensions. The conference, which took place in Prague between 11 and 12 November 1989, just two days after the breaching of the Berlin Wall, intended to show the *SSM* as being 'unequivocally for *přestavba*'.[70] Delegates were far from united and reflected just how far the political situation had changed in two years since the introduction of *přestavba*.

The *SSM*'s daily newspapers, the Czech-language *Mladá fronta* and Slovak *Smena,* published in Prague and Bratislava, respectively, were unable to maintain the illusion behind the headline that the conference was 'unequivocally united' behind the *KSČ*'s policies. Calls, like that from a delegate from southern Moravia, to 'open the door for all', abolish the Union's 'monopoly over youth' and allow freedom of association was such that, as *Smena* described it, he was 'the one speaker whom the delegates would not let finish his speech'.[71] It was, however, the Prague delegates who were held responsible by the Union's papers for giving the debate 'a somewhat different character'.[72] During his speech, the chairman of the Prague Municipal Committee of the Socialist Youth Union (*Městský výbor Socialistického svázu mládeže*), Martin Ulčák, was met with 'a disagreeing roar'.[73] The newspapers singled out Prague delegates

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[69] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'OV KSČ Litoměřice', inv. č. 6, box 246, 'Zápis z jednání předsednictva OV KSČ Litoměřice' (4 Oct.1989), f. 168.

[70] 'Československá mládež je jednoznačně pro přestavbu', *Rudé právo* (13 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

[71] 'Záleží nám na tom, aký je a bude náš domov', *Smena* (13 Nov. 1989), p. 2.

[72] 'Když mladí diskutují', *Nová svoboda* (16 Nov. 1989), p. 3.

[73] 'Záleží nám na tom, aký je a bude náš domov', *Smena* (13 Nov. 1989), p. 2.

specifically as being particularly radical, for having suggested that the *SSM*'s name be changed, as well as it becoming 'a federative organisation' of young people's organisations and for it to embrace 'so-called independent groups'.[74] Although Prague delegates were the most vocal in their criticism, it did not necessarily mean that there were unsympathetic attitudes from delegates elsewhere in the conference. As one participant at the conference recalled, when Miloš Jakeš, the *KSČ*'s General Secretary, spoke, 'there was disagreement [...] but we didn't show it very often'.[75] This silence allowed the *SSM*'s newspapers to present the *SSM*'s divisions as a battle between Prague and larger towns, and the rest of the country. One *SSM* delegate was quoted as claiming that those from the largest cities had one opinion, 'while the regions often talk[ed] about something else'.[76] Another delegate from Cheb, North-western Bohemia, was similarly quoted as explaining that the conference had occasionally become 'a battle of opinions ... between Prague and the countryside'.[77] *Smena* reported that members from Prague 'stood against' the conference and that some of the delegates, 'above all' from the *SSM*'s Prague municipal committee, tried to 'disrupt the smooth flow' of the proceedings.[78] They represented, however, 'only a few' delegates who, it was claimed, sought to raise 'fundamental questions' concerning the Union's future, including the role of democratic centralism and whether basic organisations, the grassroots of the party as found in offices, schools and factories, were 'sufficiently independent'.[79]

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[74] 'Když mladí diskutují', *Nová svoboda* (16 Nov. 1989), p. 3.

[75] Otáhal, Vaněk, *Sto studentských revolucí*, p. 141.

[76] 'Jakou nejdůležitější podle tebe konfrence nastolila? Co si o tom myslíte? Jaký je váš názor? Ptáme se delegátů celostátní konfernce SSM', *Mladá fronta* (13 Nov. 1989), p. 1 .

[77] 'Jakou nejdůležitější podle tebe konfrence nastolila? Co si o tom myslíte? Jaký je váš názor? Ptáme se delegátů celostátní konference SSM', *Mladá fronta* (13 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

[78] 'Záleží nám na tom, aký je a bude náš domov', *Smena* (13 Nov. 1989), p. 2.

[79] 'Když mladí diskutují', *Nová svoboda* (16 Nov. 1989), p. 3.

Although the official press organs of the Union chose to emphasise the apparent division between Prague and the rest of the country, the significant development was that the Union's newspapers were publishing news of such criticism and open disagreement. The conference had shown the divisions in the *SSM* and also that young people in Czechoslovakia were becoming more critical of the direction in which Czechoslovak society was heading. *Smena* went as far as to ask if the *SSM* was 'in crisis?' Though the paper gave no firm answer, it did claim that the 'crisis', which it admitted was 'large', was a Prague phenomenon and thus enabled to paper to dismiss it.[80] The conference showed the was in which the Party press organs were now dealing with dissent among its own rank-and-file membership. Having previously only dealt with political dissidents like Václav Havel, whom it could easily dismiss as 'anti-socialist' and 'bourgeois', the questions the Prague delegates had raised whether the Socialist Youth Union could continue to maintain its monopoly on youth organisation in Czechoslovakia were harder to shrug off. In presenting the Union's crisis in this way, even if this were not in fact true, the Party could hope to dismiss the problems as being confined to the capital, which has long been viewed with suspicion and rivalry from smaller towns across the country.

At the start of the new academic year in October 1989, both the *SSM*'s Municipal Committee and the University Council in Prague had also come to accept students organising independently of the *SSM*. Jiří Jaskmanický, chairman of the Prague Municipal University Committee, described the committee's 'genuine wish not to organise two events' (i.e. one organised by *SSM* and one by the Independent Students), and for 'students to come together'.[81] In a similar vein, Martin Klíma also

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[80] 'Kryštalizovanie stanovísk', *Smena* (13 Nov. 1989), p. 4.

[81] Interview with Jiří Jaskmanický, Centrum orální historie, Praha (28 April, 1998).

acknowledged that 'cooperation' with the *SSM* was necessary for two reasons. First, the *SSM* was 'better prepared' for the 17 November commemorations. And second, and more imporatntly, another illegal demonstration without the *SSM*'s help would merely attract 'the same five thousand people' who turned up to all demonstrations.[82] The first concrete commitment of cooperation between the two was to be a march through central Prague, held a week after the *SSM*'s statewide conference, on Friday 17 November, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the student Jan Palach at the hands of the Nazis.[83] Far from creating divisions among students and fragmenting its organisation, *přestavba* had actually enabled both official and unofficial groups in society to cooperate.

Elsewhere in Czechoslovakia, other forms of remembrance of the 17 November took on a more confrontational stance than that planned in Prague. In Bratislava, the demand for political reform was particularly prominent among the student population. Demonstrations began on 16 November, when around a hundred students gathered on *Mierová námestie* (Peace Square) before setting off on a march through Bratislava. Without playing down students' activity in other forms of protest and demonstration against the regime, it is still accurate to describe this as the first explicitly student demonstration in twenty years.[84] Closely followed by the *StB*, the crowd's first stop was the Slovak National Theatre, where among other things, participants, they were heard chanting 'Freedom', 'We want democracy' and 'Real *přestavba*'. The crowd moved on to the Humanities Faculty of Comenius University where they shouted 'We don't want a nuclear reactor', in reference to a proposed nuclear reactor the regime wanted to build

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[82] M. Benda, *et al*., *Studenti psali revoluci* (Praha, 1990), p. 26.

[83] Interview with Jiří Jaskmanický, Centrum orální historie, Praha (28 April, 1998).

[84] Letová správa OK 89-90. Dir. Iľja Ruppeldt. Slovenský filmový ústav, 1990. Film.

near Bratislava, and 'We want free travel abroad'. During their protest outside the faculty building, the student crowd were addressed by Gejza Šlapka, a *KSS* Central Committee member, who tried to engage with the crowd but who was booed off, with chants that 'February 1948 was on the street'.

The following day, an official gathering organised by the Bratislava Universities' Committee took place on *Hviezdoslavovo námestie* which attracted around three thousand participants.[85] Another official student march took place in Prague on 17 November 1989. Despite the participation of the still-illegal 'Independent Students', the march was not expected by anyone to end in violence, let alone light the spark of revolution. *Mladá fronta* had put out a call for young people and students to gather at the Natural Sciences Faculty on Albertov street in Prague at 4 o'clock that afternoon, and to 'bring with them a flower and a candle'.[86] Although both *SSM* functionaries and the Independent Students' organisers agreed to hold the march jointly, there was debate over the proposed route. Jiří Jaskmanický, a Prague functionary in the University Council, described the Union's willingness to cooperate as 'a great compromise from our side'. Its representatives had backed down on several points, including who would speak and what time the march would begin, and they also carried the burden of responsibility should anything go wrong.[87] Former independent students and historians, however, have since presented the cooperation surrounding the march as both a sign of the *SSM*'s weakness, and that any march that it organised would have not attracted any significant number of participants.[88] Independent students, however, were also using the

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[85] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv. j. 1426, 'Informácia o bezpečnostnej situácii z príležitosti medzinárodného dne študentstva—predložena' (22 Nov. 1989), f. 418.

[86] 'Svíkču a květinu', *Mladá fronta* (16 Nov. 1989), p. 2.

[87] Interview with Jiří Jaskmanický, 5.5.1997, Centrum orální historie, Praha. Also, M. Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc*, p. 126.

[88] M. Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc*, p. 122-126, and M. Benda, *et al*., pp. 20-26.

SSM's status as a way to obtain legal permission for the march. This too, was a sign of their own weakness, since they had been unable until then to agree amongst themselves a united programme. Secondly, having remained a relatively small illegal group, based predominantly in Prague, vulnerable to the tactics and whims of the regime, any public gathering they organised would have come under the immediate attention of the *StB*. Cooperation between both the *SSM* and Independent Students increased the turnout of the march. Those who went to Albertov that evening were greeted by a banner which read 'the Independent students and the *SSM* Municipal University Council', making the dual character of the march clear. As one participant later remembered upon arriving at Albertov, the march represented 'some kind of turning point',[89] though exactly what impact it would have for the *SSM* specifically, and the student movement more generally, was far from clear. Another participant recalled 'people looking out of the windows and joining spontaneously: it was all very quick'.[90]

Reporting of the 17 November march in Prague among newspapers, especially considering all were under Party control, was also disparate. Some newspapers choosing to give a few more details than others; and the conclusions one might have drawn depended greatly on which newspaper one chose to read. On one side, *Mladá fronta* and *Smena*—newspapers which purported to represent the youth of Czechoslovakia—chose to report only the official elements of the previous night's gathering, with no mention of any violence or deviation from the organised route and commemoration.[91] *Rudé právo,* the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, stated that the 'demonstration' at Albertov, for which around fifteen thousand had

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[89] Benda *et al*., *Studenti psali revoluce*, p. 48.

[90] Interview with Lenka, 20 April 2008, Prague, by David Green.

[91] 'Půl století uplynulo od událostí 17. listopadu 1939: A co je dneska statečnost?', *Mladá fronta* (18 Nov. 1989), pp. 1-2.

2. The initial gathering of students in Albertov, Prague, ready to march to Vyšehrad as part of the official 17 November commemorations. *Rude právo* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 1

gathered, 'showed' how students 'longed to speak about their problems and social change' but also 'how easily' this led to 'radicalism'. Once the crowd moved from Vyšehrad towards the city centre, Public Security forces, 'securing of public order', 'ascertained the identity of its participants', 'around one hundred were detained', and by ten o'clock 'order had been restored' to the area.[92] Other National Front newspapers, such as *Zemědělské no noviny* and *Lidová demokracie*, provided much more detail and an indication that the events after the official commemoration were more serious. *Zemědělské noviny*, the newspaper of the United Agricultural Cooperative, reported that on their way to Vyšehrad cemetary, participants carryied handmade placards reading 'If not us, who? If not now, when?', and 'We want to live normally'.[93] The speeches which

[92] 'Odkaz 17. Novemberu', *Rudé právo* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

[93] 'Inspirující odkaz mládeži', *Zemědělské noviny* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 1; 'Síla studentské solidarita', *Lidová demokracie* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 3.

took place at Vyšehrad focused on questions about 'restricting opinions' and the 'actual implementation' of '*přestavba*' and '*demokratizace*' which was 'at the core of Socialism, its strengthening and its development'.[94]

In the Czechoslovak Peoples' Party newspaper, *Lidová demokracie*, even more detail was provided. An anonymous student was quoted as saying that although the students were 'of different opinions', the important thing was to 'take the first step towards the creation of a collective path which unites us'. Students were further reported to have lit candles and 'repeated demands for real dialogue'. After singing the national anthem, the newspaper reported that 'a majority' of the demonstrators 'let the spontaneous atmosphere carry them away' and 'a several kilometre-long procession', which was attracting more and more Praguers to join, 'made off for the city centre'. It was at this point that the march lost its legal status. On *Na Perštýně*, the street which intersected the main thoroughfare of National Avenue, riot units stopped the march and 'called on the assembly to return to the embankment'. Some reports also described how the way back was blocked so that the crowd were unable to escape the police cordon which now surrounded the marchers. Participants sang the national anthem and also the folk song '*Ach Synku, Synku'*, known to be a favourite of T.G. Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia. Some people sat down on the street while others 'handed flowers to the policemen' and 'lit candles.' Close to one hour after the march had first been stopped and 'after multiple repeated calls to disperse' officers of the *Veřejné Bezpečnost* 'firmly intervened'.[95]

It was a small group of 'activist' students, based at the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (*Divadelní fakulta Akademie múzických umění*, *DAMU*)

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[94] 'Inspirující odkaz mládeži', *Zemědělské noviny* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 1; 'Síla studentské solidarita', *Lidová demokracie* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 3.

[95] 'Síla studentské solidarita', *Lidová demokracie* (18 Nov. 1989), p. 3.

who first to decided to go on strike in response to the police violence going on only a few streets away from their faculty building. Although credited with having been the first to declare an intention to strike and having been among the more radical students during the subsequent revolution, the fact that the leading personalities in the group were *SSM* members is usually ignored. Martin Mejstřík, whose speech on behalf of the *SSM* had received a poor reception at the gathering on Albertov only a few hours before gathered along with fellow theatre students outside their faculty that evening to plot how to spread news of the police violence. Together they agreed they would not return to classes on the Monday.[96] The decision by Theatre faculty students to go on strike—and to begin spreading the news the same evening to several theatres in central Prague—also encouraged others, alongside the news that a student had died, to follow suit. Many of the most radical students in the *SSM*, including those in the Theatre Faculty, took a similar line to Mejstřík, who considered that 'SSM ended there' that night on National Avenue, and in effect adopted a position much closer to that of the independent students.[97] Students such as Jan Šícha and Radek Kotlaba from Ústí nad Labem, and Vít Novotný from Hradec Králové who had all taken part in the 17 November march returned to their hometowns with stories of the demonstration;[98] their presence and testimony helping at least bring an air of legitimacy to the students' activities, even if not everyone believed (or were willing to believe) what they had to say. In Bratislava, one student heard the news from phone call from friend he had made earlier in the year

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[96] Otáhal, Vaněk, *Sto studentských revolucí*, p.501, p. 573.

[97] Otáhal, Vaněk, *Sto studentských revolucí*, p. 573.

[98] J. Rokoský, ed, *Sametová revoluce v Ústí nad Labem* (Ústí nad Labem, 2009), p.143; V. Novotný, in j. Vedlich, ed, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové* (Hradec Kralové, 2009), pp. 142-143. Although not a representative sample, secret police reports showed that of the 143 detained on 17 November, 129 were from Prague, with none from either Slovakia or Northern Bohemia. See ABS MV ČR, A34/1, inv. j. 460/A, 'Státnobezpečnostní situace a činnost neformalních skupin v ČSSR 20.11.1989', [f. 4].

through a Maths competition.[99] Lubomír Smatana, who had been one of the few students who had stayed the entire weekend in Prague, returned on 20 November to Plzeň where he found it 'unbelievable that people were going to work normally' and, with his tricolour still pinned to his lapel, he thought he 'looked like an idiot'.[100]

In the evening of Saturday 18 November, more potentially damaging allegations surfaced through the radio broadcasts of first Voice of America, the BBC, and latterly, Radio Free Europe, which claimed that a student had died as a result of the police action on National Avenue. The French news agency, *Agence France-Presse*, also reported that four people had died.[101] However, the name of only one student, Martin Šmíd of the Mathematical Faculty at Charles University in Prague was repeated. *Rudé právo* claimed the rumour of a death was 'deliberate misinformation' which 'did not represent reality'.[102] As it happened, this particular claim by the regime happened to be true. Only upon hearing of the 'death' of Martin Šmíd and speaking to other students did they decide to found a strike committee at the faculty.

The most overlooked and, arguably, most significant force in encouraging and spreading the political unrest to all reaches of the country were members of the Socialist Youth Union. The role it played between 17 November and late December 1989 was disorderly and varied across Czechoslovakia. Nonetheless the *SSM* leadership's position remained consistent with its position throughout 1989: to remain a united, singular organisation. The first consequence of maintaining this position was, however, to come out in support of striking students, and stand against the *KSČ*. The condemnation of violence and declaration of strike action from students in and around Prague was the

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[99] Interview with former Slovak Student by David Green (Glasgow, 11 May 2001).

[100] M. Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni* (Plzeň, 1999), p. 16.

[101] As mentioned in 'Rozhodně proti provokacím', *Rudé právo* (20 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

[102] 'Zámerne šírená dezinformaćia', *Roľnicke noviny* (20 Nov. 1989), pp. 1-2.

first important step taken by Prague students, which then began to spread awareness of the revolution throughout the country. The issuing of statements, announcements and declarations encouraged others to do so likewise, followed a practice used by both the *KSČ* and opposition groups over the best part of the previous twenty years. During this first weekend of 18—19 November, the situation in Prague universities was chaotic and unorganised, as faculty by faculty, students declared their intention to strike. What at first started as a few statements issued by students, theatre workers, some hospitals and a handful of other workplaces over that first weekend, later would turn into a flood of hundreds of thousands of such petitions, statements and declarations as the days after 17 November passed.[103]

Several separate student declarations of strike action were issued on Saturday 18 November, in addition to some theatres also announcing strikes in support of the students' cause. The most radical statement which emerged over 18—19 November came from a so-called impromptu 'discussion club' which took place on Saturday 18 November among employees, students and audience members in the Disk theatre, a part of the Academy of Performing Arts.[104] The statement declared that 'no arguments exist against violence and demagogy' and that the 'only standpoint' was the 'uncompromising demand' for immediate resignation of state and Party representatives, the dismissal of the government and the immediate dissolution of article four of the Czechoslovak constitution (referring to the Party's leading role). Other statements, issued by the 'Central Strike Committee of Prague Universities', the 'Students of

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[103] Many of the petitions sent to the opposition grouping Civic Forum are currently being archived in the *Ústav soudobých dějin* (Contemporary History Institute in Prague). Petitions sent to the main opposition grouping in Slovakia, *Verejnosť proti násiliu* (Public Against Violence), are held in the Slovak National Archive in Bratislava. Petitions and letters sent to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia during this time remain in the possession of the Party's successor, the *Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy* (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia), and are not currently accessible.

[104] Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc*, p. 135.

Prague Universities' and 'the students of the Academy of Performing Arts' also pushed the rhetoric further, describing the march as having been 'brutally suppressed'[105] and as having been a 'shameful massacre'.[106]

The different declarations which students in Prague were writing did not agree, however, about how long any such strike should last. One suggested the strike would not end 'until legal guarantees for the fulfilling...of the demands' were in place.[107] Another statement limited the timeframe of the student strike to just a week.[108] The various statements did, however, share some critical points around which the political struggle with the Communist Party would be based: the 'creation of an independent investigative commission' into the events surrounding the 17 November, engaging in 'dialogue with all sections of society without condition', the legalisation of all media, and the releasing of all political prisoners.[109] The culmination of the students' demands was the proposal for a state-wide work stoppage, or 'general strike' of two hours, from noon to two o'clock on Monday 27 November.[110]

On the face of it, the statement was no more radical than what some other *SSM* members had been saying only a week ago at the state-wide conference; and it certainly was not as far-reaching as the statements issued by the newly-formed Central Strike Committee of Prague Universities. In an attempt to unite the disparate faculties, various

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[105] 'Prohlášení studentů pražských výsokých škol'. 18 November 1989 in Otáhal, Sládek, eds, *Deset pražských dnů* (Praha, 1990), p. 32.

[106] Prohlášení ústředníhoh výboru pražských vysokých škol k zásahu bezpečnostních složek dne 17. listopadu na Národní třídě', in Otáhal, Sládek, *Deset pražských dnů*, p. 31.

[107] 'Prohlášení ústředního výboru pražských vysokých škol k zásahu bezpečnostních složek dne 17. listopadu na Národní třídě', Otáhal, Sládek, eds, *Deset pražských dnů*, p.31.

[108] 'Prohlášení studentů pražských výsokých škol', in Otáhal, Sládek, eds, *Deset pražských dnů*, p. 32.

[109] 'Prohlášení studentů pražských výsokých škol', in Otáhal, Sládek, eds, *Deset pražských dnů*, p. 32; 'Prohlášení ústředníhoh výboru pražských vysokých škol k zásahu bezpečnostních složek dne 17. listopadu na Národní třídě', in Otáhal, Sládek, eds, *Deset pražských dnů*, p. 31.

[110] 'Prohlášení studentů pražských vysokých škol', in Otáhal, Sládek, eds, *Deset pražských dnů*, p. 31.

strike committees and proclamations which now existed in Prague and claimed to speak for students, students met in the *Hvězda* halls of residence in the Břevnov district in Prague on Sunday 19 November to form the Prague Universities' Central Strike Committee (*Ústřední stávkový výbor pražských vysokých škol*). At roughly the same time as this meeting, however, the two main branches of Socialist Youth Union in Prague— the Municipal University Council (*Městská vysokoškolská rada*), and the Municipal Committee (*Městský výbor*)—held a joint meeting to discuss the situation. The meeting resulted in a six-point statement in which the police action was considered 'inadequate and politically ill-advised'.[111] With the Union's University Council having helped organise the march on 17 November, leant their support for it to be legal, and also having had members participate in the march, the statement also demanded that an inquiry had to be set up to investigate what happened and had to consist of 'representatives of students and society'. Furthermore, 'the situation' which the country now found itself in needed a resolution, the only solution to which was an 'open, broad-based societal dialogue with all those who are seeking it'.[112] The meeting issued the statement before the Union's Central Committee had managed to meet and immediately put pressure on the Union leadership to choose either to go against its membership and expose its divisions, or adopt a confrontational attitude towards the leadership of the Party.

Whether or not the joint *SSM* meeting (at which Vasil Mohorita was present) merely preempted a similar statement from the Union's Central Committee a day later, or bounced it into supporting a position against its will is not clear. What is known is that on Monday 20 November, the Union's Central Committee held a meeting and

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[111] 'Společné Prohlášení', *Mladá fronta* (20 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

[112] 'Společné Prohlášení', *Mladá fronta* (20 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

issued its own resolution in support of the striking students. In one respect, the statement again pushed the Youth Union further towards the position of the Prague Universities' Central Strike Committee, calling for 'a quickening of preparations' of amendments concerning freedom of assembly and association (these had already been suggested in late October 1989 at the start of the new parliamentary session), as well as 'amendments to the criminal code'.[113] Although the *SSM* now publicly supported striking students and set itself on a path of confrontation with the *KSČ*'s Central Committee, it still tried to balance loyalties to the students who it purported to represent, and the *KSČ* from whom it was supposed to take its lead. Thus the Union considered 'the resolving of the current political situation' as lying only in the possibility of 'dialogue for all', without which 'the trust of the public towards the reality and honesty of feelings of *přestavba* and democratisation' would be harmed.[114] If Mohorita had any uncertainty about supporting the student strike before, by Monday 20 November he had become the first member of the *KSČ*'s Central Committee publicly to stand in support of the student cause.[115] Standing on Wenceslas Square that same day, Mohorita announced that the Union's Central Committee 'unequivocally' supported the strike committees in the universities and 'guaranteed that no further repression' would be used against any striking students.[116] Vasil Mohorita also promised that not only would the Union's Central Committee would provide loudspeakers for Wenceslas Square but that the Union would make sure to 'send out representatives throughout Czechoslovakia' in order to get all universities and high schools to participate in the

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[113] 'Prohlášení sketretariátu ústředního výboru SSM', *Mladá fronta* (21 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

[114] 'Prohlášení Sekretariátu ústředního výboru SSM', *Mladá fronta* (21 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

[115] Ladislav Adamec also held an informal meeting with representatives of *Most* ('The Bridge') on 20 Nov. without the participation of Havel. However, Adamec's meeting was neither publicised in state media, nor did he publicly speak out in support the protests and strikes in the manner Mohorita did.

[116] 'Bez megafonu, k lidem', *Mladá fronta* (21 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

student strike.[117] This reassurance from Mohorita could only have added courage to the students' cause in Prague.

The Prague student strike, which has been well documented by historians and participants alike, took on its own unique character. This had as much to do with the individual character of each town and city as it did with the political situation prior to 17 November. Life in Ústí nad Labem, in northern Bohemia was, as one resident described it, 'different' to many other towns, because the town was made up of so many newcomers. This, plus the fact that the original town centre was replaced with prefab concrete buildings and a transport depot, meant there was 'little social life, no traditions', and even in Party-organised events such as community litter picks and other 'working saturday' events, 'almost no one went to help'.[118] Students in Ústí and Labem were more passive in their response to the strike because most students were from Ústí. The Education Faculty almost exclusively attracted students from northern Bohemia, the town's student life was poor, and few students had contacts with peers in Prague compared to those of other regions.[119]

Street demonstrations in the rest of the country were not only different in size, but different in their purpose. In Prague, the demonstrations took on a symbolic role, exemplified with Alexander Dubček travelling to Prague on Friday 24 November to speak to the crowds, his first public appearance in Czechoslovakia since 1969. The Prague demonstrations and the television coverage of them were so exceptional that local officials in Varnsdorf, so concerned were they about their effect on the local

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[117] '41. Telegram from the Embassy in Czechoslovakia to the Department of State. Prague, 21 November 1989, 08153', in V. Prečan, ed, *Prague-Washington-Prague* (Prague, 2004), pp. 115-116.

[118] Petra Marková, in Rokoský, ed, *Sametová revoluce v Ústí nad Labem*, p. 72.

[119] Petra Marková, in Rokoský, ed, *Sametová revoluce v Ústí nad Labem*, pp. 72-74.

population, that they turned off the entire town's electricity supply during them.[120] The *SSM* committee in Karviná in northern Moravia wrote to *Mladá fronta* to argue that those attending the demonstrations were being 'manipulated by opponents of our system'.[121] Although few would have considered the situation a 'manipulation', in Prague Civic Forum—the newly established umbrella group for opposition to the *KSČ*—ensured no Party member or government representative addressed the crowds from the Melantrich building's balcony above Wenceslas Square between 21 and 25 November.[122] The heaving, anonymous mass gathered on Wenceslas Square was also not always an atmosphere of joy. One student, in describing the nature of the demonstrations, claimed some some were 'very happy, and some of them very unhappy', others 'tried to provoke', 'some tried to celebrate, and it really was like hell'.[123] In the provinces, the town square demonstrations were, for many people, 'really the only one place to get information' about what was going on, as much about getting actual information about the current political situation as it was about showing support for the opposition.[124] Even people from other parts of the country, particularly in Bohemia, travelled to Prague to experience it.[125]

In the context of a different political and social situation outside Prague, the Socialist Youth Union played an even greater role. Historian Milan Otáhal has also

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[120] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Občanské fórum informáční servis č. 12', f. 7 [recto].

[121] 'Stanovisko předsednictva OV SSM v Karviné', *Mladá fronta* (22 Nov. 1989), p. 2.

[122] Vasil Mohorita remained the only Communist representative to speak on Wenceslas Square between 20 and 25 November. Ladislav Adamec was the only Communist functionary invited to speak on 26 November, though by this time he spoke as Federal Prime Minister, not as a representative of the Presidiumq. Conversely, reports of Communist officials addressing local crowds are numerous. See, for example, J. Řeháček, *Sametová revoluce v Pardubicích*, p. 8. This continued up to the day of the general strike and after, with representatives of the National Committee or *KSČ* addressing the demonstrations each day.

[123] Interview with Jana Špirudová, Prague, 21 April 2008, by David Green.

[124] Interview with Anon. *SSM* student by David Green (Ostrava, 5 July 2008).

[125] Anton, *Listopad v Plzni*, p. 90.

suggested that the *SSM*'s statements 'did not threaten the position of the Communists'.[126] And although this might have appeared to hold true in Prague, elsewhere in the country the Union's statements had a radicalising effect. In Prague the Union's various committees and councils had been comparatively slow to respond to the situation. However, the statements and announcements which they had eventually issued resonated well, not just with Union members, but among other sections of society, too. Their immediate impact appeared to be to galvanise *SSM* members around the country into action supporting the country supporting the Central Committee's statement, and to maintain some unity within the Union. Organisation of the strike committees generally took place at a faculty level, with each faculty in a university establishing its own strike committee. Consultation with other faculties, even with the coordinating strike committees was not a priority. As one student in the Mathematical faculty at Comenius University in Bratislava recalled, interaction with other strike committees was kept to a minimum as 'it was just too busy... We just said "yeah, we are on board". It was not really coordinated, from my point of view... It [dealing with their own faculty's strike] was really like a kind of full-time job'.[127] In setting up strike committees, however, faculties and universities began by offering statements of support, not just to students in Prague, but also to the *SSM*'s position. Accustomed to supporting directives which came from above, *SSM* university councils around the country also fell into line with its Central Committee and issued similar statements supporting both the student strike and Central Committee. In Košice, in eastern Slovakia, for example, around three thousand students of the Košice Technical University met outside the main university building to 'express their full support' for the position of the *SSM* Central

[126] Otáhal, *Studenti a komunistická moc*, p. 142.

[127] Interview with former Slovak student, David Green, Glasgow, 11 May 2011.

Committee and of being against the 'intervention of the anti-terrorist forces' during the Prague student march.[128] Across the country, similar statements and announcements emerged from faculties and universities, the majority being addressed to the Socialist Youth Union.[129]

That it not to say that either the Socialist Youth Union's membership, nor its functionaries around the country, were suddenly won round *en masse*. There at least is some evidence that local *SSM* committees came under pressure from the district and regional *KSČ* functionaries not to support either striking students or the *SSM*'s Central Committee.[130] *SSM* committees, such as in Most, in western Bohemia, took a stand against the Central Committee's position, arguing for the state to 'move firmly against university students and high school students' because of fears that a workers' strike would be 'a catastrophe for the whole republic'.[131] Around North Moravia, and particularly in the heavily-industrialised and mining region of Silesia, both the *SSM* and *KSČ* regional and local committees put up considerable resistance to what was emerging from Prague. The Ostrava's *SSM* municipal committee only half-heartedly backed the position of its Central Committee. Although members supported the general position it took, its own declaration called for the 'normalisation of the situation in Ostrava schools',[132] ominous talk which echoed the *KSČ*'s response to the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968 and resulted in hardline ideology and rhetoric throughout much of the 1970s. And despite all the strikes, a local factory *SSM* committee in Lovosice still went

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[128] 'Šli jsme za studenty', *Svobodné slovo* (22 Nov. 1989), p. 4.

[129] Wheaton and Kavan estimate that thirty per cent of these came from *SSM* committees. See B. Wheaton and Z. Kavan, *The Velvet Revolution: Czechoslovakia, 1988-1991* (Boulder, Oxford; 1992), p. 68.

[130] SOkA Liberec, 'OV KSČ Liberec II', box 215, 'Zápis z 42. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci' (22 Nov. 1989), f. 10.

[131] SOkA Liberec, 'OV KSČ Liberec II', box 215, 'Zápis z 42. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci' (22 Nov. 1989), ff.13-14.

[132] 'Stanovisko předsednictva městkého výboru SSM v Ostravě', *Nová svoboda* (22 Nov. 1989), p. 2.

ahead successfully with their planned a question and answer session for high school pupils on the 'Great October Socialist Revolution', though, mercifully, ending with a disco.[133] Only in these few cases did *SSM* committees publicly refuse to back their leadership. Elsewhere, in places where no public statements appeared, the reaction from *SSM* functionaries was like that of many others: to wait and see what would happen.

As a result, through its statements and actions of its local functionaries and membership, the *SSM* encouraged the student strike and greatly aided its cause outside Prague. Its influence was, in part, due to the fact that its position was not as radical as those from the Prague student strike committee. It neither supported calls for a general strike nor explicitly demanding an end to the Party's leading role. In just one example, in Ústí nad Labem, in northern Bohemia, on 20 November a student assembly was called with representatives of the *KSČ* Regional Committee, the *SSM* and with the dean of the Pedagogical faculty present. According to *StB* reports, when the students presented the ten-point declaration from the Prague universities' Central Strike Committee, the leadership of the *KSČ* succeeded in influencing the situation in a manner so that 'the petition was not successful' and failed to achieve a majority in favour. However, the position immediately changed when students decided instead to unite behind the *SSM*'s statements issued from Prague.[134] The fact that the *SSM*'s statement did not support the call for a strike on 27 November was its very strength and enabled students to find a consensus where previously there had been none. It remained, of course, a provocative statement for many Party functionaries. Likewise, in Liptovský Mikuláš the first statement to be published all supported the *SSM*'s position; and in Lovosice, the *SSM* was the main organiser for strike action and provided many of the

[133] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'Kronika města Lovosice 1989', p. 13.

[134] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1419, 'Denní informace S-StB Ústí nad Labem' (20 Nov. 1989), f. 456.

activists for demonstrations in the town.[135] For students in other parts of the country, where previously there was no evidence of *SSM* members supporting radical reform as in Prague, let alone a more radical independent student movement, the *SSM* statements encouraged them to do so. At the very least, they appear to have given young people the legitimacy they need (i.e. in the form of an order from their Central Committee), to support the student strike.


SPORTOVNÍ HALA V Č. BUDĚJOVICÍCH 23. 11. OD 18 HODIN

Sportovní hala se ve čtvrtek po 18. hodině stala diskusním fórem. Ano, skutečným diskusním fórem, na něž mládež nepřišla jen vyslechnout, ale sama se prát. A ptala se tvrdě, bez obalu, na rovinu. Shromáždění se stalo školou reálné politiky i pro profesionální stranické funkcionáře. Jen málokteří ji absolvovali na výbornou. Foto na stránce L. PRISTAŠ

From the first declarations of student strikes over the weekend of 18 and 19 November on Prague, to Wednesday 22 November, *Svobodné slovo* cited up to 80,000 students across the country had gone on strike.[136] *Rudé právo*, on the other hand, had only went so far as to admit there was a 'crisis situation'[137] developing across the country. Although this headline figure suggested the strikes had had the intended effect—to prevent teaching from taking place—participation in the student strike was substantially lower than the number not attending classes. Party reports suggested that among final-

[135] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv. j. 1427, 'Denná situačná správa', (23 Nov. 1989), f. 258; Státní okresní archiv Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'Kronika města Lovosice 1989'. p. 16.

[136] 'Šli jsme za studenty', *Svobodné slovo* (22 Nov. 1989), p. 4.

[137] 'Setkání s pracujícími okresu Chanutov', *Rudé právo* (24 Nov. 1989). p. 2.

year students, and for those won the strike could have been damaging the completion of their studies, there was a lack of support for the strikes, with some classes having actually taken place.[138] The reports also backed up claims from other sources that about one third of students were regularly involved in the strike, with the remainder 'staying at home'.[139] For other students, however, the atmosphere in the Faculty of Arts was less about revolution and overthrowing the regime, and much more prosaic. As one recalled, 'I was sitting somewhere reading Gogol, and it was possible that something [against the regime] could happen, but I still didn't believe it was possible. But in the end my decision was, "OK, it's definitely better than studying dialectics or something like that, so let's do our best and we will see'.[140] Parents, too, put pressure on their children and 'forced them to go home and wait' because they had decided 'it was too dangerous'; and many students from Prague (and elsewhere) 'stayed at home as [the revolution] was a kind of holiday for them'.[141]

This pattern of negotiation and seeking official permission for marches appeared in many other towns and cities, particularly across Slovakia. In Slovakia's second largest city, Košice, eastern Slovakia, students from all faculties on 21 November met with the Mayor and General Secretary of the municipal *KSS* committee. At the meeting, students requested official permission for a demonstration in the town on 24 November, to which the mayor agreed. Negotiations in Košice between students and Party and state representatives took place daily, sometimes lasting up to five hours.[142] Similarly, on the same day in Prešov, just to the north of Košice, an 'officially permitted demonstration'

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[138] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 95' (20 NOv. 1989), f. 9 [currently unarchived].

[139] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 95', f. 9

[140] Interview with Jana Špirudová by David Green (Prague, 21 April 2008).

[141] Interview with Jana Špirudová by David Green (Prague, 21 April 2008).

[142] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1428, 'Denní informace S-ŠtB Košice' (22 Nov. 1989), f. 184.

of around a thousand students from the Philosophical Pedagogical and Mechanical Engineering faculties led a rally on Slovak Republic square.[143] This was no trivial matter: concerns remained about the possible use of force against demonstrators throughout November and December 1989, and the *SSM*'s ability to secure 'official permission' for such protests could only have swelled its numbers. In Karlovy Vary, the famous spa town in Western Bohemia, the *SSM* district committee called upon the local parties of the National Front to engage in 'dialogue' with the public.[144] And in Plzeň, during a meeting of Civic Forum on 26 November, it 'occurred to no one' that *SSM* members would take the initiative and independently acted as a go-between, organising a meeting between the mayor of Plzeň and Civic Forum—the first tentative steps to dialogue and negotiation in the city.[145] The *SSM*'s ambiguous status, neither dominating opposition demonstrations nor remaining in toe to the *KSČ*, allowed it to act as a negotiator, as a bridge between sides and a genuine political force in the revolution, whether the other sides acknowledged this or not.

In places where Communist functionaries, state representatives and university management adopted a hard line towards the student strike, the response was merely to encourage an even stronger reaction from students and from the *SSM*. Many of the testimonies which exist—frequently overlooked, despite many times by participants mentioning the same thing—show that it was that the reaction of local Communist functionaries which was the decisive factor in how radical local strikes became. At the University of Education in Hradec Králové, one of the vice deans labelled one of the student ringleaders of the strike as 'an agent of Western secret services', and another as

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[143] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1428, 'Denní informace S-ŠtB Košice' (24 Nov. 1989), f. 191.

[144] J. Nedvěd, *1989: Cesta ke svobodě: Revoluční listopad v Karlových Varech* (Karlovy Vary, 2009), p. 30.

[145] Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni*, p. 87.

being ‘of bourgeois decent’.[146] The ensuing discussion then got so wild, that one of the students was thrown physically from the podium by the Vice Dean. The whole incident, according to one student at the meeting, ended up being one of the crucial factors why all the students present supported the strike.[147] In other parts of the country, where a less extreme and more conciliatory approach existed, there seemed to be a less confrontational dimension to the revolution and, this changed the nature of the strike and the revolution. In Nový Bor, in northern Bohemia, for example, one of the earliest cases of an *SSM* committee abolishing itself and setting up a strike committee occurred when around four hundred residents gathered on 22 November to hear a number of announcements. The local *SSM* chairman also announced that the local engineering school was going on strike because ‘it had been refused the possibility of dialogue’ with the leadership of the school. The failure to compromise ended with *SSM* committee members deciding to ‘dissolve itself’ and forming a three-member strike committee.[148] In other parts of the country, where a less extreme and more conciliatory approach existed, there seemed to be a less confrontational dimension to the revolution, and the nature of the strike and the revolution changed accordingly.

The *SSM*’s role was often that of a facilitator, bringing students in the faculty together to actually discuss student concerns. But ‘independent’ students who were not members of the *SSM* also perceived the usefulness of the organisation to their cause. Some sought to exploit the organisation and its official status during the revolution, not only to spread word of the events in Prague, but also to avoid any political consequences of their actions. *StB* reports confirmed cases of students using the title of

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[146] Robert Novák, in J. Vedlich, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové*, p. 133.

[147] Robert Novák, in J. Vedlich, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové*, p. 133.

[148] ABS MV ČR, ‘A 34/1’, inv.j. 1419, ‘Denní informace S-StB Ústí nad Labem’ (23 Nov. 1989), f. 476.

Union Member (*svazák*) as a way either to gain access to state representatives, or as a means to legitimate their political activity. In Litoměřice, an hour north-west of Prague, for example, the *StB* detained two students on 21 November for distributing the 'Pronouncement of students of Prague Universities' (issued by independent students). According to the reports, upon being questioned by officers, the students claimed that they were 'carrying out the activity on the order of their university strike committee', which was 'working under the *SSM*'.[149] This seemed to be part of a wider tactic, used across the entire country, to make use of the National Front to pressurise the Communist Party into dialogue. In information in telext documents sent by Civic Forum to the regions, people were actively encouraged to 'make use of existing structures' (i.e. the *SSM*, trade unions, etc.), in pursuit of the democratisation of political life.[150] Throughout *přestavba*, the *KSČ* had been urging the *SSM* to 'activate' its largely 'formal' membership base. It seems that, during November and December 1989, this is exactly what happened.

With the ability to organise meetings, equipment, buildings and, crucially, printing equipment, *SSM* functionaries were a useful and welcome partner in the strikes. In Bratislava at the Mathematical faculty of Comenius University, one student who had been collecting signatures all day on Monday 20 November went to then student dorms of the Mathematical faculty for a meeting 'organised by some guys from the Communist Youth Movement'. This was not, however, considered a provocative act, but in fact 'was credible' because they were 'reasonable guys'.[151] In Plzeň, the majority of students remained unwilling to call themselves 'members' of Civic Forum, even after

[149]ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1419, 'Denní informace S-StB Ústí nad Labem' (22 Nov. 1989), f. 479.

[150] SObA Třeboň, 'JčKNV 1960-1990', 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4,'Občanské fórum informáční servis č. 14', f. 11 [recto].

[151] Interview with former Slovak student, David Green, Glasgow, 11 May 2011.

the general strike and did not want to forge closer links between it and the student movement. Marcel Hájek, a student who had been at the core of the student strike in the city, realised that 'many students... linked Civic Forum to independent initiatives, especially Charter 77', and on that basis 'did not not want to cooperate with them'. Instead many students thought it 'much more advantageous' to 'join with progressive members of the *SSM*'.[152] Many students who were not members of the *SSM* still regarded the Union as serving a function and therefore worthy of support. Although the *SSM* as an entire organisation would be unable to sustain such a position, during the last weeks of November 1989 it had regained much of its position and influence among young people once more.

A much-overlooked fact about the Socialist Youth Union remains that it was not just a representative organisation for students. Historians have completely overlooked the fact that the *SSM* was the representative of all young people in Czechoslovakia, regardless of whether or not they were at university. The Socialist Youth Union not only had committees in schools and universities, but in many workplaces, factories and cooperatives around the country. After the 17 November, this had important consequences for how strike activity developed among the population. In the prefab factory in Veselí nad Lužnice, for example, district *SSM* had been thrown out of the factory and told that 'workers did not want to hear anything from *SSM* members'. But here, as elsewhere, it did not matter that *SSM* members could not gain access to the factory. The *SSM* already had another *SSM* factory committee there, and were able to participate *de facto* in the meetings which took place and decide their own agenda. The result, in the case of Veselí nad Lužnice, did not end well for the *SSM*. Its members (who were also employees of the factory) were 'jeered' by other staff, apparently

[152] M. Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni*, p. 99.

because of rumoured close links the *SSM* had formed with Civic Forum in the town.[153] Nonetheless, in Prague, *StB* reports noted that even though 'in a majority of cases' students were being prevented from entering factories to speak to workers, they were still able to have their demands and proclamations presented to the workforce through *SSM* workplace committees.[154]

The *SSM*'s ability to access workplaces to speak to workers was not unique to its role in the revolution. Members of the Communist-controlled Revolutionary Trade Union also incorporated with *SSM* members to help encourage support for the general strike. In Výsoké Mýto, in eastern Bohemia, the town's *SSM* and trade union committees 'worked together' to help establish a united strike committee to represent the workers of the town. According to one participant, the cooperation in Výsoké Mýto worked well for two reasons. First, the strike was not perceived as a matter of 'departing from one's left-wing views', and therefore transcended ideology. Second, the strike was seen as a 'common revolt' against the manner in which the regime 'intervened forcibly against peaceful demonstrators', as well as the 'desire for free, open discussion'.[155] The *SSM*'s position in workplaces around the country was not unique. Local *StB* officers in Žebrák visited the local manufacturing plant and threatened to detain the main organiser of the petition going around the factory in support of Civic Forum. The manager, sympathetic to his activities, appointed him to a position in the plant's trade union committee, where he was able to continue his activities undisturbed.[156]

District and regional functionaries in the Communist Party were not ignorant of the threat the Socialist Youth Union membership posed. Reports came into Prague from

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[153] SOkA Tábor, 'OV KSČ', box 26, Poř. č. 1, 'Zápisy' (25 Nov. 1989), f. 17.

[154] ABS MV ČR, 'A/31', inv. j. 1416, 'S-StB Praha' (21 Nov. 1989), f. 42.

[155] Jiří Sova, in J. Vedlich, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové*, p. 179.

[156] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Občanské fórum informáční servis č. 12', f. 7 [recto].

all over the country that the *SSM*'s statement, alongside Vasil Mohorita's appearance on Wenceslas Square on 20 November 'deeply complicated the situation'. Communists and functionaries 'roundly condemned' the *SSM*'s statement, which they had little idea how to counteract.[157] On Wednesday 22 November, *Nová svoboda*, the newspaper of the North Moravian Regional *KSČ* Committee, warned its readers to 'beware' of people alleging to be students who were, in fact, 'provocateurs' travelling to different parts of the region to spread discontent. These agents would typically introduce themselves as being 'from Prague Performing Arts Faculty' or from Prague's Socialist Youth Union committee, and then 'claim to be eyewitnesses' to the intervention of 17 November.[158] Similarly, the head of the *SNB* (in charge of both the police and secret police) in Plzeň exclaimed how the Plzeň *SSM* committee not only provided petrol so that students were able to travel to other districts, but had members 'handing out leaflets and statements' and supplying paper at a time when it was difficult to buy in large volumes on demand. The demonstrations were being 'financed by state means' and the Socialist Youth Union was helping so much, he explained, that it was 'fulfilling their [the students'] aims'.[159]

Occasional reports from around the country also suggested that whilst the *SSM* was no longer supporting the *KSČ*'s 'leading role' in society, young people were gaining support from many other unlikely sections of society. In Zvolen, meanwhile, a town of about fifty thousand in central Slovakia, the management of the local university, the University of Forestry and Wood Technology, and its rector, in particular, had strongly resisted students' attempts to strike. Offers of help came from an unexpected place: National Security Corps (*SNB*) officers. Not only did officers inform students where

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[157] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 86' (21 Nov. 1989), f. 3 [currently unarchived].

[158] 'Pozor na provokatéry!', *Nová svoboda* (22 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

[159] M. Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni*, p. 51

their posters and materials were being taken down and who was doing it, they also gave students lifts to housing estates which were further away from the town and harder to reach.[160]

For local Communist Party representatives, the situation by Wednesday 22 November was clear: the Party was fighting for 'the future of Socialism'. Party representatives and the entire Party *aktiv* had to separate 'students' out to prevent their demands reaching workers.[161] Apart from the *SSM* complicating this, the Party's task was made harder by school and university staff, many of whom went beyond engaging in 'dialogue' with students and providing material help. In Plzeň, the dean from the local Medical Faculty handed over the keys of the faculty building to striking students to use its copying facilities. And even the head of Marxism-Leninism came in to give his support.[162] Students of the Pedagogical faculty in Ustí nad Labem also had the support of senior staff who approached the strike committee to 'offer help and whatever else [they] needed'.[163] Reports to the *KSČ* Presidium confirmed that, in 'many cases', young lecturers 'were often more radical than the students themselves'.[164] The Party's ability to control the situation had been greatly complicated by the *SSM* and even its own cadre in universities. As one local official remarked, unless the Party was able to convince *SSM* committees to reverse their position, the Party would have no choice but to 'abolish the *SSM*'.[165] The only alternative was to continue to allow the *SSM* to exist

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[160] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'OF Litoměřice 1989-1990', 'Občanské fórum Litoměřice č. 17' (19 Dec. 1989), p. 1 [currently unarchived].

[161] SOkA Liberec, 'OV KSČ Liberec II', box 215, 'Zápis z 42. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci', (22 Nov. 1989), f. 13.

[162] M. Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni*, p. 25.

[163] M. Bilá, in *Sametová revoluce v Ústí nad Labem*, p. 12

[164] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 86' (21 Nov. 1989), [f. 3] [currently unarchived].

[165] SOkA Liberec, 'OV KSČ Liberec II', box 215, 'Zápis z 42. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci', (22 Nov. 1989), f. 10.

and try to persuade its local representatives not to support the *SSM* leadership. If the *KSČ* failed to do this, the future of the Party would be in jeopardy.

The *KSČ* also tried to spread disinformation about the strikes in the hope that students would return to classes and the general strike be cancelled. A meeting held on 25 November between the Czech Ministry of Education and representatives of the Statewide Student Committee were the first negotiations held to discuss student demands. After the meeting, however, Party officials issued a press statement which informed the country of the 'expectation' that university students will end the strike on Sunday 26 November.[166] Communists tried to start teaching anyway, regardless of whether or not students wanted to attend, but with little effect.[167] In other parts of the country, local Party committees apparently had doctors turn hip at student halls of residence in Ústí nad Labem and declare that a case of jaundice had occurred.[168] In Plzeň, too, students had to combat the night-time activities of Party members and the People's Milita, who spent several nights trying to remove any posters left unguarded by the groups of students who had been posted around the town to prevent them from doing so.[169]

It was no coincidence that the Socialist Youth Union was the main force behind the spread of student strikes throughout Czechoslovakia in November and December 1989. Before 17 November, the *SSM* had become one of the most radical organisations within the National Front. Its members took advantage of the increasing freedom which *přestavba* offered to push for even greater reform both of the *SSM* and those taking

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[166] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 95' (30 Nov. 1989), [f. 10] [currently unarchived].

[167] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 94' (29 Nov. 1989), [f. 7] [currently unarchived].

[168] J. Svítalský, in *Sametová revoluce v Ústí nad Labem*, p. 106.

[169] Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni*, p. 47.

place throughout society. Throughout this, the *SSM* leadership had to balance multiple pressures: its own members' desires for more reform, increasing influence of independent students, and pressure from the *KSČ* to remain a single, united organisation. The march in Prague on 17 November 1989 that sparked the revolution was a culmination of these tensions. under *přestavba.* It represented neither the strength of the independent students, nor the final decline of the Socialist Youth Union. Instead, it represented the cooperation of all sides in the search for greater compromise. In the days after the violent suppression of the 17 November march, this compromise and cooperation continued, as the *SSM* sided with other striking students in condemnation of the police violence. The *SSM*, as a statewide organisation, greatly spread news of the revolution and encouraged its members to organise and participate in the student strikes. Elsewhere, *SSM* workplace committees subverted People's Militia guards to continue this activity in many workplaces, factories and cooperatives throughout the country. The *SSM* legitimised the actions of other students, individuals and organisations, helping them to lose their fear of repression, or to act as a barrier against it, should the revolution have been suppressed. In all these ways, as an official organisation of the National Front, the *SSM* greatly helped to undermine the authority and 'leading role' of the *KSČ* throughout Czechoslovakia.

Chapter Four:

The Czechoslovak Communist Party's Revolution

The Czechoslovak Communist Party (*KSČ*)'s policies of *přestavba* (restructuring) and *demokratizace* (democratisation), had sought to place greater responsibility onto the lower Party ranks. In doing so, the *KSČ* leadership had simultaneously increased the independence of National Front organisations to the extent that, when Czechoslovakia was engulfed in political crisis after 17 November 1989, the Party found it was opposed by those very organisations upon which it counted on for support. Questions of political responsibility, authority and who was best to lead Czechoslovakia out of political crisis reverberated around the country during the revolution.

Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution has been understood as a power struggle with the *KSČ* on one side, and students, theatre workers, and the two main coalition opposition groups, Civic Forum (*Občanské fórum/Občianské fórum*) and Public Against Violence (*Veřejnost proti násiliu/Verejnosť proti násiliu*) on the other. By being willing to consider that the *KSČ* might have relinquished power, rather than having it wrested away, allow a different picture to emerge. As the political crisis engulfed both the Party and state, the effects of *přestavba* continued to have a destabilising effect on the Party. Instead of being able to take responsibility in their own regions, Party functionaries throughout Czechoslovakia looked to the Party leadership for a solution to end the demonstrations. At the same time, the Party leadership expected functionaries and the wider membership to take the lead in their own locale. The many tensions which had arisen within the Party as a result of *přestavba* continued to grow. They finally climaxed

not only in the loss of the Party's 'leading role' in government, but also among its own membership.

The immediate situation facing the *KSČ* leadership on 18 November, the day after the student march and police violence, was not beyond its control. The perception that the 17 November march was, according to students, a 'massacre', could be plausibly dismissed as hyperbole. The police violence had been less, or at least no worse than that used during so-called 'Palach's week' (*Palchův týden*) demonstrations in January earlier in the year.[1] One eyewitness had suggested that foreign journalists, rather than students, were the main targets of the police violence dished out on National Avenue.[2] And according to *StB* reports to the Presidium, seventy-three different provocative slogans were chanted during the march. Cries of 'Abolish the People's Militia', 'Free elections', 'Enough lies', and 'We don't want Jakeš' could only have confirmed underlying concerns of the role that opponents of the Party had played in organising the march.[3] More worrisome for the Presidium were rumours that a student, Martin Šmíd, had died during the police violence on National Avenue. However, not only had these rumours proved to be false, the authorities had managed to track down two young men of the same name, and both of whom were alive.[4] On top of all of this, a smaller demonstration which had taken place in central Prague on 18 November only

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[1] K. Williams, and D. Deletant, *Security Services in New Democracies: The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania* (Basingstoke, New York; 2001), p. 40.

[2] Edward Lucas, a British journalist, made this claim to Petr Uhl, though neither he nor Uhl made reference to this in their reports. See P. Žáček, 'Fáma o smrti Martina Šmída a její vyštetřování. Rekonstrukce vyštřovacího spisu Státní bezpečnosti', *Securitas imperii* 16 (2010), p. 142.

[3] Archiv Bezpečnostních složek Ministerstva vnitra České republiky (hereafter, ABS MV ČR), 'A34/1' inv. j. 460/A, 'Informace o průbehu a výsledcích bezpečnostní akce 17.11.1989 a zvniku Občanského fóra' (19 Nov. 1989), f. 2; ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1416, 'S-StB Praha' (19 Nov. 1989), f. 20; On the influence of independent students, ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1416, 'S-StB Praha' (15 Nov. 1989), f. 13.

[4] For a summary of the television report broadcast on Sunday 18 November, see 'Pokus vyvolat společenský neklid', *Rudé právo* (20 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

attracted around eight hundred participants and ended peacefully.[5] And on 19 November, as the Party Presidium discussed its official response to the unrest, the *StB* had indicated no signs of unrest elsewhere in the country.[6] Both Jakeš and Miroslav Štěpán, the Party's leader in Prague, and both of whom were implicated in the decision to use violence (even though both denied they authorised it), explained how they at the time felt personally absolved of any responsibility for the actions of the security services.[7] All of this goes some way to explaining the Presidium's mood of defiance as it gathered to assess the situation on Sunday 18 November. On paper, they could reasonably assume the situation was still under their control.

On the other side, dissident groups had the a similar reaction to the Presidium. Initial condemnatory statements from dissident circles also gave cause for alarm, but not panic. Charter 77 spokespersons Tomáš Hradílek, Dana Němcová and Saša Vondra issued a statement on 18 November that called for the resignations of those responsible for the 'brutal intervention against their own citizens' and for dialogue between the authorities and all sections of society.[8] Saša Vondra later admitted that as they drafted the Charter 77 statement, they considered the 17 November march as a 'regular protest' and expected nothing to come of it.[9] Only a day later, as news of Martín Šmíd's 'death'

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[5] Národní archiv České republiky (hereafter, NA ČR), 'KSČ-ÚV 1945-1989 (PÚV KSČ, 1986-1989)', 'Dálnopisná sdělění a dopisy ÚV KSČ', 'Informace o situaci v souvislosti s ackemi nepřátelských sil v Praze 17.-19.11.1989' (20 Nov. 1989), f. 3 [currently unarchived].

[6] Reports actually did indicate that several theatres had also announced strikes including those in Liberec and Žatec, but it concluded that 'in other places in the ČSSR there have been no reports of distruption of the peace or public disorder'. See, ABS MV ČR, 'A34/1' inv. j. 460/A, 'Informace o průbehu a výsledcích bezpečnostní akce 17.11.1989 a zvniku Občanského fóra' (19 Nov. 1989), [f. 3].

[7] Both Štěpán and Jakeš have claimed the affair to be a plot by the *StB*. Štěpán claimed that the head of the SNB in Prague phoned him at nine-thirty on the evening of the 17 November and told him the march had passed 'without serious incident and that the city was calm'. See M. Štěpán, *Zpověd vězně smaetoové revoluce*, p. 83. Jakeš's account differs in that he denies having been contacted by Štěpán, also is similar in that he was told by Lorenc that the demonstration had ended peacefully. See Jakeš, in M. Vaněk, P. Urbášek, *Vítězové? Poražení? II. díl*, p. 202.

[8] 'D594: 1989, 18. listopad, Praha - Prohlášení k situaci v zemi po brutálním zásahu policie proti pokojné demonstraci 17. listopadu. (dokument č. 77/89)', in B. Císařovská, V. Prečan, eds, *Charta 77: Dokumenty 1977-1989, Svazek 2* (Praha, 2007), p. 1172.

[9] S. Vondra, in M. Otáhal, Z. Sládek, *Deset pražských dnů, 17-27. listopad 1989* (Praha, 1990), p. 661.

and forthcoming student strikes spread, the response had changed as two new movements emerged. Civic Forum, established on Sunday 19 November in Prague, issued four demands: firstly, that all Presidium members linked to the 1968 Warsaw Pact intervention and who were deemed 'responsible for the many years of devastation' in society resign immediately; that Miroslav Štěpán, First Secretary of the *KSČ*'s Prague Municipal Committee, and František Kincl, Czechoslovak Minister of Interior, both of whom were held responsible for the police violence on 17 November, resign; thirdly, that a commission be established to investigate the events surrounding the student march on 17 November; and that all political prisoners be released. A few hours before, a meeting of around five hundred people from artistic circles in Bratislava produced a short statement condemning both the police violence during the march and demanded an investigation into the events. It was only a day later, however, that this collective gave themselves a name: Public Against Violence. Its more detailed resolution, November, called on society to have 'open societal dialogue', and 'real' rather than 'merely-proclaimed democracy'.[10] Citizens, they claimed, had to end society's 'stagnation' and 'decline' by 'taking matters into their own hands'.[11] Two of the main principles of *přestavba*, 'responsibility' and 'dialogue', were central to both Public Against Violence's and Civic Forum's demands. The slogans were also both lauded by the Presidium, but would soon be responsible for their *en masse* resignation.

As Civic Forum met on Sunday 19 November, the *KSČ* Presidium had also been meeting and had resolved to make a short television statement to warn students, Prague, and the rest of the country against any escalation of the situation. Debate over who

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[10] See 'Protestná rezolúcia osobností slovenského kultúrneho života', in J. Žatkuliak, V. Hlavová, A. Sedliaková and M. Štefanský, eds, *November 1989 a Slovensko: chronológia a dokumenty 1985-1990*. Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku, 1999, p. 324.

[11] 'Prvé vyhlásenie občianskeho hnutia Verejnosť proti násiliu', in *November 1989 a Slovensko*, p. 325.

should actually speak reflected the unease and already shifting responsibility among the Presidium's members. Jakeš, who offered one account of the meeting (as no known minutes of it exist), suggested that President Husák ruled himself out on the basis of 'not feeling predisposed' to the task. Ladislav Adamec, the federal Prime Minister, also avoided the duty, declaring the whole incident 'a Czech affair'.[12] Thus the responsibility fell to František Pitra who, in a moment not lost on those watching, spoke in his capacity as Prime Minister of the Czech republican government. The statement he read acknowledged that as a result of *přestavba*, young people had become among 'the most critical' in society. Over the past few days, he continued, they had been 'taking advantage of every opportunity' to bring about 'destabilisation and disruption' to Prague. In a complete rejection of calls for an inquiry into what had happened on 17 November, Pitra explained that the public 'had been informed' about the events that evening, and it was actually the 'disinformation' about a student's death that 'ought to anger each one us'. The whole affair was, apparently, a complete misunderstanding: everyone should just continue with daily life. Most people in Czechoslovakia, as Pitra affirmed, depended on 'peaceful development' for the economy to grow, and so that society 'better satisfies the needs of our peoples' and that 'certainty and peace prevail'.[13] The short statement, which intended to keep a lid on the situation, had the opposite effect. Pitra's appearance of a member of the Czech republican government—and not a top representative of the Party like Jakeš, or of the federal government like Adamec—led to 'universal calls' among the wider membership the very next day for

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[12] M. Jakeš, *Dva roky generálním tajemníkem* (Praha, 1996), p. 110-111. It is possible that there are records of this meeting, and of others after 17 November in the Presidium. However, after 17 November 1989 Party archives (particularly those of the Presidium) were classed as belonging to the Party, not the state, and so presumably still lie in the hands of the *KSČ*'s successor Party, the *KSČM*. Information from author's private correspondence with the National Archives of the Czech Republic.

[13] 'K aktuálním otázkám, televizní projev předsedy vlády ČSR F. Pitry', *Svobodné slovo* (20 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

either the General Secretary or President to make an address.[14] The opportunity to calm the situation had passed: as a result, the speech merely escalated the political crisis.

As the Presidium had failed to offer any compromise or hint of concession, the Party leadership unwittingly helped to radicalise workplaces in which the situation had perhaps been containable. This was especially the case among theatre workers, many of whom were the first to join in strike action with students. National Avenue in Prague, where the confrontation on 17 November had taken place, had four theatres on it. Some workers there had had an ariel view of the scene (possibly even having a better view than the police), so that eyewitnesses were able to phone friends and colleagues and get them to spread the news.[15] Unlike the Performing Arts students' decision to take immediate strike action, the first reaction among theatre workers was to start 'dialogue'. The Czech Culture minister, Milan Kymlička, paid a visit to Prague's National Theatre on the afternoon of Sunday 19 November, where he met with actors and staff, and reassured them that the government would announce an investigative commission into the events of 17 November later the same day. Kymlička was well placed to open up negotiations with theatre workers, having remained one of the few respected government or Party officials throughout *přestavba*. Indeed, he remained one of the few whose resignation was not actively sought during the revolution.[16] Staff at the National Theatre promised Kymlička that if a commission were to be announced, then the theatre would not go on strike. Having seen Pitra's broadcast—which made no mention of any

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[14] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV 1945-1989 (PÚV KSČ, 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 86' (21 Nov. 1989), f. 1 [currently unarchived].

[15] It was exactly because of actors in the *Nová scéna* being able to see what was going on that spurred the first news of the unrest reaching Plzeň at around 2 o'clock on Saturday 18 Nov. See M. Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni* (Plzeň, 1999), p. 11. The four theatres on National Avenue are *Národní divadlo* (National Theatre), *Nová scéna*, *Divadlo Metro* and *Divadlo Retuda*.

[16] '79. Telegram from the Embassy in Czechoslovakia to the Department of State. Prague, 7 December 1989, 08556', in V. Prečan, ed, *Prague-Washington-Prague* (Prague, 2004), p. 247.

investigation—staff stood up on stage later the same evening to address the waiting audience, telling them that the theatre would be joining the students' strike.[17]

In a similar way, the Josef K. Tyl Theatre in Plzeň had an equally indecisive and hesitant response to the prospect of strike action. One actor, who sought to justify strike action to her colleagues, explained that they would be striking 'against the oppression of culture'. The 'national culture', she argued, 'must be free ... so that it can spiritually uplift the nation'. In words taken straight from Marx and Engels, she demanded that 'every person has the right to work according to his or her own abilities'.[18] Yet the actual decision to strike was based less on ideals than the end result suggested. As actress Inka Brendlová recalled, on being told what had happened to students in Prague there was no consensus among staff about what they should do.[19] The result among the competing voices was a compromise: a spokesman for the cast would read a copy of a short statement obtained from Prague, then 'wait and see' what the audience's reaction would be before deciding about any possible strike.[20] In the end, 'many more left', than stayed in the audience. Among those who left included those who were there for the opening night officially representing the *KSČ* and National Front. Although it was not difficult to see why local functionaries had walked out, the 'tense atmosphere' and the uncertainty if the performance would take place contributed to others walking out. Despite this protest, the theatre decided to go ahead with the performance anyway, and did not decide to go on strike until the following night.[21]

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[17] NA ČR, 'Doplnující informace k situaci v Praze v souvislosti s demonstracemi 17. a 18.11.1989 a k požádi události' (20 Nov. 1989), f. 7.

[18] Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni* (Plzeň, 1999), p. 82.

[19] Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni*, p. 11-12.

[20] The statement was the 'Theatre Workers' Announcement' from the Realist Theatre in Prague. See 'Prohlášení ze zasedání pražských divadelníků v RDZN v Praze dne 18.11.1989', in Otáhal, Sládek, eds, *Deset pražských dnů*, pp. 38-39.

[21] Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni* (Plzeň, 1999), p. 12.

As news concerning the 17 November march and the student and theatre workers' strike spread, the *KSČ* leadership's main priority was to control what was being written and said in the media. On 20 November, over four hundred journalists met in Prague to declare their support for the student strike and condemn the police violence. A new independent journalists' union was also established at the meeting.[22] *Svobodné slovo*, the Czechoslovak Socialist Party newspaper, alongside *Mladá fronta* and *Smena*, the *SSM*'s dailies, had already published further details of the 17 November demonstration on Monday 20 November.[23] This was a break from the *KSČ* leadership's position and thus marked the beginning of the disintegration of Party control over the media.

Similarly, Czechoslovak Television, which had become more influential and important in a rapidly changing political situation, came under increasing scrutiny from both sides. When strikes and demonstrations broke out around the country on 20 November, at the offices of the *KSČ* secretariat in central Prague, Communists from around Czechoslovakia were phoning in to complain about the 'shocking'[24] television coverage, even asking 'if there were any Communists left' at Czechoslovak Television.[25] In response to this, on 23 November, security forces moved to take control of the television station and removed Libor Bartla, the acting director. Similarly, Czechoslovak radio staff who had signed a petition supporting 'more objective news

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[22] '39. Telegram from the Embassy in Czechoslovakia to the Department of State. Prague, 21 November 1989, 08144', in Prečan, ed, *Prague-Washington-Prague* (Prague, 2004), p. 108.

[23] 'Ohlasy pátečního večera', *Svobodné slovo.* 20 November, 1989, pp. 1 and 3.

[24] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (PÚV KSČ, 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 87' (22 Nov. 1989), f. 6 [currently unarchived].

[25] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 87', f. 1.

broadcasting' in Prague were locked out their buildings.[26] The struggle was the most extreme example of the pressures television, radio and newspaper staff were placed under throughout Czechoslovakia. Already at the beginning of the week regional centres of Czechoslovak Television had, according to Communist functionaries, been 'refusing to film positive things', or in other words, not filming people critical of the demonstrations. Local functionaries in Plzeň, for example, seemed particularly keen to put the regional television management under pressure not to film anything critical of the Party.[27] For the rest of November and into December, complaints from both sides about the media's coverage continued in a similar vein. But, as the United States Embassy put it, already by 21 November the Czechoslovak media could be described as having 'generally positive, or at least objective' coverage towards the demonstrations, with students and other participants being given the chance to air their views.[28] The struggle over control over the television news and state, regional and local newspapers was only a part of the wider power struggle now taking place not only in Prague, but right across Czechoslovakia.

When it became clear, on Monday 20 November, that the political unrest had not been contained to Prague, the Presidium set about guaranteeing that at all levels of the Party received 'consistent information and analyses of the political situation'.[29] This was easier said than done. For those Communist Party members in Prague, as one

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[26] 48. Telegram from the Embassy in Czechoslovakia to the Department of State. Prague, 23 November 1989, 08204', in Prečan, ed, *Prague-Washington-Prague*, p. 137. For a more detailed account of the Prague struggle, see J. Cysařová, *Československá televize v období zániku komunistického režimu a vítězství demokratické revoluce: 1985-1990* (Prague, 1999).

[27] The Party report does not state who is exerting this pressure or what its nature was. Státní oblastní archiv (hereafter, SObA) Plzeň, 'KV KSČ Plzeň', box 297, 'Zápis ze 6. mimořádného zasedání předsednictva Zpč. KV KSČ' (20 Nov. 1989), ff. 1-2.

[28] '39. Telegram from the Embassy in Czechoslovakia to the Department of State. Prague, 21 November 1989, 08144', in Prečan, ed, *Prague-Washington-Prague*, p. 109.

[29] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 86', f. 1.

functionary recalled, the first week of the crisis was like 'a toboggan'.[30] The information which the Presidium in Prague was receiving back from the Party membership provinces was heavily edited, repeatedly, at a district, regional and state level by Party officials. The final draft of these daily inner Party reports which reached the Presidium were often vague, and offered no broad analysis of the general state of the Party, or even what should be done.

The result was that the Presidium was unable to make any informed decision based on what it was hearing from around the country. On 20 November, for example, the Presidium received reports indicated that Party committees around the country demanded 'calm and a return to work'. At the same time, in the same report, there were instances of 'wider negative phenomena' including the distribution of leaflets, announcements, posters and petitions calling for 'action against the *KSČ* and government'.[31] The very fact, however, that 'different positions' were being adopted within the Party and that not all were unilaterally standing behind the Presidium caused the greatest alarm.[32] Unable to gauge the mood of Party members quickly enough, the Presidium sent a directive to all regional and district *KSČ* and *KSS* Party committees to 'come off the defensive', and 'independently organise plena to head off opposition pressure'.[33] The Presidium reminded local functionaries that secondary schools and universities were under the jurisdiction of local National Committees (the state's administrative bodies), and that it was their responsibility to 'recommence teaching' as quickly as possible, 'remain in contact with parents', and 'regulate the activity of

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[30] J. Čejka, in M. Vaněk, P. Urbášek, *Vítězové? Poražení? II. díl, politické élity v období tzv. normalizace* (Prague, 2005), p. 55.

[31] NA ČR, 'Dálnopisná sdělení a dopisy ÚV KSČ', 'Informace o situace v souvislosti s akcemi nepřátelských sil v Praze 17.-19.11.1989', 'Informace o politické situace' (20 Nov. 1989), f. 1 [currently unarchived]

[32] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 86', (21 Nov. 1989), f. 1.

[33] NA ČR, 'Informace o politické situaci' (23 Nov. 1989), f. 8.

teachers'.[34] The Presidium also directed National Committees to 'enter into dialogue' with striking students; in places where students refused to speak to the authorities, committees were to produce 'a definitive programme' that would address students' concerns and provide 'a constructive outcome'.[35] But as experience with *přestavba*-inspired 'dialogue' meetings prior to the 17 November with students had shown, university management could not be relied upon to conduct such meetings effectively. Additionally, the Presidium's directives suggested university management find local solutions to the student strikes. This meant that instead of listening to student concerns of 'democracy' and other more general concerns about the country's political leadership, the management were ordered only to address concerns such as a faculty's structure or the standard of student accommodation. 'Dialogue' would only go a little way to placate the student strike. Due to the Party's democratic centralist tendencies, only the Presidium and Central Committee had the authority to finding a statewide solution to the crisis.

Democratic centralism in the Party also meant that Communists in factories and agricultural cooperatives expected to be told what to do, rather than using their initiative. Compared to Communists in universities and schools, the membership's task among the wider workforce was different. A Presidium memo suggested to them that there were 'differing opinions' and was 'no unity' among much of the workforce. Orders were therefore sent out to Party members in factories, agricultural collectives and workplaces, to 'exploit this [situation] to its fullest extent' and achieve the Party's main goal: to prevent the general strike from going ahead.[36] Party functionaries across

[34] NA ČR, 'Informace o politické situaci' (23 Nov. 1989), f. 4.

[35] NA ČR, 'Informace o politické situaci' (23 Nov. 1989), f. 4.

[36] NA ČR, 'Informace o politické situaci' (23 Nov. 1989), f. 9.

the country set about organising workplace meetings—not to begin any meaningful discussion concerning the political situation or begin 'dialogue' as with students—but to gather signatures in support of the Party leadership, and often to condemn the students' and theatre workers' strikes. This tried and tested technique, which had been used famously over a decade ago against Charter 77, from the Party's perspective made sense. Its aim was two-fold. It helped the Party 'create unity' within its membership. The Presidium's position could be communicated with the new Party line keeping the membership agreed around a single position. But more importantly, such petitions in support of the Party leadership could be used, as one local functionary from Liberec put it, to 'differentiate' between those who signed, and those who did not 'want to come on board'. That Party functionaries were asked to 'remember' those who did not sign made it clear what the real purpose of such petitions were.[37] Workplace petitions, proclamations of support and lists of demands cropped up in every part of the country in thousands of workplaces, institutions, towns and villages, making it difficult to sit on the fence.[38] Many of these petitions were simply worded: more often than not, they just condemned the violence in Prague on 17 November, sometimes adding in the demands made by Civic Forum and students, but very rarely separate demands specific to the petitioners. Nonetheless, significant members of the Party at the grassroots level were already signing such statements.[39] From the masses of reports that were coming in on this matter, no records exist of the Presidium having received any collated information about such petitions. Only one report, from the *StB* in Central Slovakia, went so far as to

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[37] Státní okresní archiv (hereafter, SOkA) Liberec, 'OV KSČ Liberec II', box 215, 'Zápis z 42. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci' (22 Nov. 1989), [f. 8].

[38] Thousands of these petitions are now held in the Contemporary History Archive in Prague, but are currently unarchived. See Archiv Koordinační centrum Občanského fóra, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, Akademie věd České republiky, v. v. i.

[39] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 86', f. 1.

even suggest that support for the students' and theatre strike was noticeably low.[40] From nearly every other region and locality in the country, reports back to Prague continually criticised the Presidium for a lack of decisiveness, a lack of clear directions for Party members, and not using the media to put across a clear vision of *přestavba* and Socialism.[41]

Meanwhile, on the opposition side, signatures were also sought to condemn the police violence. These were normally obtained in workplaces, but also stuck to buildings, bus stops, shop windows and other such public places. In Plzeň, the famous Czech city and namesake of the famous lager which is produced there, activist Martin Svobodá explained that they got signatures 'most often by going through pubs, preferably once people had had a few beers and had stopped being scared'.[42] Between the 20 and 24 November, beyond Prague, demonstrations regularly failed to gain momentum. Back in Plzeň, town centre demonstrations each afternoon during the first days numbered no more than a few thousand. More worrisome for the Plzeň organisers was the moment when a Charter 77 signatory stood up to condemn the *KSČ*, at which point the crowds 'visibly began to withdraw' with shouts of 'the Charter, ugh!'.[43] In other parts of the country, decisions were taken to actively *avoid* any mention of Charter 77, for fear that people 'were not ready for it'.[44] In Litoměřice, the civic movement established there could not find its feet as the population were so distrustful of its spokesperson, a Charter 77 signatory.[45] In Kladno, a short bus journey from Prague,

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[40] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv. j. 1427, 'Denná situačná informácia S-StB Banská Bystrica' (23 Nov. 1989), f. 259.

[41] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 86', f. 2.

[42] Interview with Martin Svobodá, in L. Valeš, *Rok 1989 v Plzni a západních Čechách* (Dobrá Voda, 2003), p. 54.

[43] M. Anton, *Listopad,* . p. 43

[44] Vít Novotný, in *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové*, p. 143

[45] Statní oblastní archiv Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Informáční servis č. 15', f. 16 [recto]

where most were employed in the large steelworks and which, coincidentally was the parliamentary constituency of Miloš Jakeš, the local section of Civic Forum—even after the success of the general strike on 27 November—could only ever fill about half the local theatre with participants willing to take part in political discussions. Instead, the Forum turned their attention to organising demonstrations and to the 'anonymous crowds' who would gather on the town square.[46]

Many activists and demonstrators in from parts of Czechoslovakia, in light of the reluctance of local populations to immediately take to the streets, meant accusations from Prague and Bratislava that the regions 'still did not understand the concept of democracy'.[47] In the Victorious February Theatre in Hradec Králové (today's *Klicperovo divadlo*), the staff had close links with dissident circles, was allegedly the first theatre outside Prague to go on strike on Sunday 19 November.[48] As the director of the play recalled, it took pressure from a delegation from Prague, who 'gave us a right talking to', before the theatre set up Civic Forum in Hradec Králové.[49] Whilst resentment and mild tension existed, even activists outside Prague could be caught ridiculing their more 'backward' country neighbours. One of the theatre directors from Kladno who went to the nearby village of Tuchlovice to speak to the people there found 'indisputable support' for the local National Front and Communist Party position, with people emphasising the investment and development in the village. The population, he found, considered Civic Forum's arguments 'a counter-revolutionary provocation' and an 'anti-Party crusade', and likened the whole experience to a 'return to the

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[46] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Občanské fórum informační servis č. 14', f. 11 [verso].

[47] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'OF Litoměřice 1989-1990' [currently unarchived], 'Občanské fórum Litoměřice', č. 7 (9 Dec. 1989), p. 1.

[48] O. Kužílek, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové*, p. 110

[49] O. Kužílek, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové*, p. 110

prehistoric'.[50] Such resentment hinted at a more fundamental difference between Civic Forum in Prague and elsewhere. In Prague, Civic Forum established itself as representatives of the people in negotiations with the government. In the provinces, where fora popped up in places ranging from workplaces, schools and farms, the aim was much more modest. As Jiří Ceral from Hradec Králové described it, Civic Forum was merely 'a way of establishing contact with what was going on in Prague and in other cities' and to organise trips to factories to spread news.[51]

In addition to sending statements of support to the Central Committee to show their loyalty, local Party functionaries were also ordered to prevent 'dialogue' between students and workers.[52] First of all, this meant that management and local functionaries had to prevent groups of students, theatre workers and artists gaining access to workplaces to speak to employees. It also meant that the leadership had to rely on 'experienced Communists' to put forward the Party's case instead.[53] But if *přestavba* had highlighted anything, it was that the wider membership's ability to campaign and put across the Party's programme effectively, often referred to as the Party's 'ability to organise' (*akceschopnost/akcieschopnosť*), was lacking. To pick just one example: in Topoľčianky, in central Slovakia, four students from the nearby town of Nitra visited the local forestry company to put across their demands, and also complain that recent workplace elections there had been 'undemocratic'. In response, factory workers heckled the students so much they were unable to finish their speech.[54] Although many

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[50] Státní oblastní archiv Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 14,'Občanské fórum informáční servis č. 14', f. 11 [verso].

[51] J. Ceral, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové* p. 11.

[52] NA ČR, 'Informace o politické situaci' (23 Nov. 1989), f. 9.

[53] SObA Plzeň, 'KV KSČ Plzeň', box 297, 'Zápis ze 6. mimořádného zasedání předsednictva Zpč. KV KSČ' (20 Nov. 1989), f. 2.

[54] ABS MV ČR, 'Denná situačná informácia S-StB Bratislava' (21 Dec. 1989), f. 445.

workers, management and Party workers had legitimate concerns about what the students' demands were, the failure to engage in reasonable debate with opposing views only confirmed longstanding experiences of many people with the Party.

Elsewhere, incompetence was to blame for the lack of dialogue, rather than intolerance. In Tábor, the *KSČ*'s district functionaries seemed to have been particularly disorganised in their attempts to explain the Party's position. One Party member, Petr Brůza, recalled that one of the town's factory committee met on Monday 20 November, where the Communist director simply described the situation to the employees according to how the Party had informed him. As the director explained, given that Communists only followed the Party media and did not 'read other newspapers or follow other programmes' such as Radio Free Europe—which he either said ironically, or was blatantly lying—there was, he continued, 'no possibility' to do anything else. The next day, the factory's employees again met and expressed a wish for the local *KSČ* committee to present them with a resolution about what they planned to do. But again, nothing happened. By Wednesday, and growing increasingly exasperated, the employees asked Party representatives if they planned 'any form of dialogue' with them, which was again met with no response from the factory director. By Thursday—with the factory director having decided to go away on business—all sides (employees, trade union representatives and Party members) met up and signed a joint declaration that criticised the slow reaction of the *KSČ* leadership, and demanded the creation of a new government which would 'match the demands of workers'.[55] More broadly around the country, the Presidium began receiving reports as early as Tuesday 21 November that divisions had opened up between local and regional Party committee members on

[55] SOkA Tábor, 'OV KSČ', Poř. č. 1, box 26, 'Zápisy' (25 Nov. 1989), f. 16.

one side, and grassroots (*základní*) Party members on the other.[56] To a large extent, the situation was not helped by local officials, who clearly were not experienced in communicating the demands of the Party. But other than condemning the student strikes and rejecting calls for any investigation into the 17 November, it was not clear what else the Presidium wanted the membership to do.

As well as tensions between the Party grassroots and local functionaries, at every level of the Party a power struggle was taking place. This was not only based on a conventional divide between 'conservatives' and 'reformists',[57] but also on a more complex relationship between individual Party officials and their own power bases, too.[58] There were reports that 'working groups' of the Presidium were travelling to 'important factories' to ensure the unity of the Party line, but if they did, there was certainly no publicity in the press about it.[59] But just at the time when the Party leadership needed most to be going around the country shoring up support in farms and factories of national importance, these public appearances became part of an inner Party struggle for control and influence. In one instance, Ivan Knotek, who had only been a Presidium member for a month, appeared to asked the *KSČ*'s regional committee in western Bohemia for permission personally to address workers in the Škoda car factory in Plzeň. One of the local Party secretaries, however, declined the request, saying that to do so would 'require a unequivocal statement from the centre'.[60] There is some evidence to suggest that Sobotka, the local Party member who made the decision, feared

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[56] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (PÚV KSČ, 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 86', f. 1.

[57] '44. Telegram from the Embassy in Czechoslovakia to the Department of State. Prague, 22 November 1989, 08153', in Vilém Prečan (ed.), *Prague-Washington-Prague*, (Prague, 2004), pp. 123-124.

[58] J. Čejka, in M. Vaněk, P. Urbášek, eds, *Vítězové? Poražení? II. díl, politické élity v období tzv. normalizace* (Praha, 2005), p. 55.

[59] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 86', f. 1.

[60] SObA Plzeň, 'Zápis ze 6. mimořádného zasedání předsednictva Zpč. KV KSČ', f. 4.

that Knotek might have used such an opportunity to bolster his own popularity and play against local Party officials (or others in the Presidium).[61] Others at the same meeting argued that if a Communist addressed a mass meeting of workers as Knotek had planned, without not knowing what he would say, allowing him to do so would prove to be a 'litmus test' of the Party's support. No one dared to predict what would happen in such a circumstance.[62] This debate took place before Miroslav Štěpán, the Party's First Secretary in Prague, addressed workers at the *ČKD* engineering plant (*Českomoravská Kolben Daněk*) in Prague on 23 November, where he declared before thousands of the plant's workers that in 'no country, either Socialist or Capitalist, does a situation exist whereby fifteen year-old children can determine when the President should resign, or who he should be'. The workforce's spontaneous response: 'We are not children!'. The whole affair only further discredited the Presidium among the wider population.[63] The cumulative result was that when Presidium members did decide to make visits among workers, such as Karel Urbánek's visit on 4 December to the Nosek mine near Kladno, they were coordinated in a manner so that the majority were unaware of the visit.[64]

Having failed utterly to contain the crisis to Prague, the *KSČ* leadership looked to regional and district Party committees to help bring an end to the demonstrations. The first move was to 'invite' regional divisions of the People's Militia (*Lidové milice/*

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[61] Reports from the United States Embassy in Prague suggest that Knotek, a Slovak, had aligned himself to Adamec's reformist wing of the Presidium and thus gives support to the argument that Plzeň officials were reluctant to allow him to speak at the Škoda plant out of fear of him using it to bolster his 'reformist' position. See '44. Telegram from the Embassy in Czechoslovakia to the Department of State. Prague, 22 November 1989, 08153', in Prečan, ed, *Prague-Washington-Prague*, p. 123.

[62] SObA Plzeň, 'Zápis ze 6. mimořádného zasedání předsednictva Zpč. KV KSČ', f. 4.

[63] Štěpán's speech has since become another 'defining moment' of the revolution and clips of him speaking at the ČKD plant are widely available on the internet. The speech was not reported across any newspapers during November and December 1989, and it is unclear exactly what the speech's effect was at the time.

[64] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 14,'Informáční servis č. 19', f. 50 [verso].

Ľudové milície) to Prague.[65] Although the move did bring the possibility of conflict, the Militia was to remain directly controlled by the Party leadership, unlike the Czechoslovak People's Army. In a letter to the regional newspaper, *Pravda*, the Party's western Bohemian militia division declared support for the Presidium in what it now considered to be a 'counter-revolution' and that the state did not need artists and students who could easily be 'taken advantage of by anti-Socialist forces'.[66] Western Bohemia proved to have one of the most hardline Party secretaries, with one functionary telling his comrades that the public expected 'decisive measures' which would 'consolidate the unity of the Party'.[67] Miloš Jakeš recalled in a similar manner that the political crisis in the first few days concerned 'the very existence of Socialism', that democracy 'had to stand aside', and therefore an uncompromising position with the demonstrators was justified.[68]

On the morning of Monday 20 November, the Presidium met and decided to ask regional functionaries to send People's Militia divisions to Prague.[69] Details of the Presidium's decision reached regional secretaries later that afternoon, along with the impression that the Presidium 'was united' in wanting to 'go in tough against any anti-Socialist action'.[70] There remains some ambiguity about what the Milita would actually be expecetd to do once they arrievd in Prague. Jakeš recalled that around five thousand men were mobilised to send to Prague, with some militia divisions already having been put into a state of emergency guarding key factories and workplaces across the country

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[65] M. Jakeš, Vaněk, Urbášek, eds, *Vítězové? Poražení? II. díl*, p. 212.

[66] Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Pardubicích*, p. 34.

[67] SObA Plzeň, 'Zápis ze 6. mimořádného zasedání předsednictva Zpč. KV KSČ', f. 3.

[68] Jakeš, in Vaněk, Urbášek, eds, *Vítězové? Poražení? II. díl*, p. 212.

[69] J. Čejka, in Vaněk, Urbášek, eds, *Vítězové? Poražení? II. díl*, p. 55.

[70] SObA Plzeň, 'Zápis ze 6. mimořádného zasedání předsednictva Zpč. KV KSČ', f. 2.

to make sure students and others could not get in to address the workforce.[71] For those going to Prague, the plan seemed to have been similar. In Tábor, which sent seventy-four troops in its contingent, functionaries justified the decision to Party members, claiming that the militia were sent only 'to defend those compounds' of economic and national importance, rather than used 'against the people and demonstrators'.[72] But if the People's Militia were merely expected to guard factories and other important buildings, it is highly doubtful if five thousand men would have been enough. Jakeš offered another explanation: that the Militia would put on a 'a show of strength', rather like that famously mobilised during 'Victorious February' 1948, which ensured the *KSČ*'s smooth accession to power, but this time 'to avoid any capitulation' of the Party.[73] Whatever the Militia ended up doing, either guarding factories or demonstrating in the streets, this seemed to be the overall aim of the Presidium.

Unfortunately, even by late Monday afternoon Presidium members were expressing doubts about calling People's Militia divisions into Prague. In a meeting with Jan Fojtík, the Party's ideological secretary, with other Party secretaries from the Culture Department, one Party official from the Czechoslovak News Agency phoned to say he would be late, as Wenceslas Square and the surrounding area was full with three hundred thousand people. Fojtík, on hearing the news responded that if the report was accurate, then the Presidium really had 'fucked it up with the Militia'.[74] What really changed the situation was pressure from functionaries in Prague who, upon hearing the

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[71] M. Jakeš, *Dva roky generalním tajemníkem* (Praha, 1996), p. 112.

[72] SOkA Tábor, 'Zápisy' (25 Nov. 89), f. 12.

[73] M. Jakeš, Vaněk, Urbášek, eds, *Vítězové? Poražení? II. díl*, p. 212.

[74] J. Čejka, in Vaněk, and Urbášek, *Vítězové? Poražení?*, p. 55.

decision, pressurised Jakeš to reverse the Presidium's decision.[75] Within twenty-four hours of the decision, regional People's Militia chiefs were being informed by telephone that the militia would no longer be needed in Prague as they would only 'complicate the situation'.[76] That said, People's Militia units were still deployed in many other parts of the country, guarding large factories and other buildings, to prevent students or other demonstrators getting access. For example, in Bratislava, for example, students of the Slovak student strike committee had discovered that the Slovnaft oil refinery 'was in the hands of the *Ľudové milície'*, and had no choice but to wait at the factory gates to try and speak to workers at the change of shifts instead.[77] The decision to recall the People's Militia from Prague, although not publicised and few were aware that the option of force had been effectively ruled out by a majority of the Presidium, did mean that the leadership now had to find a political solution to the crisis.

In what was a first attempt to find a 'political solution' and assert the Party's authority once more, Miloš Jakeš, as *KSČ* General Secretary, made his first state-wide television address on Tuesday 21 November. Jakeš's statement, however, only added one concession compared to Pitra's statement on behalf of the leadership only two days previously. Jakeš tentatively suggested that the police violence on National Avenue on 17 November would 'be investigated' but failed to specify the nature or the timing of any investigation. The demonstrators on the streets, who he claimed were abusing '*přestavba'* to damage the interests of the people and the Socialist way of life in Czechoslovakia 'for all their worth'. Although he tentatively welcomed 'dialogue with

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[75] Jakeš dithered somewhat in his response, telling those who had already left for Prague to continue on their journey, but for no others to come. The precise timings of the decisions are not clear, but from Jakeš's account it is possible to estimate the order in which decisions were made. See, M. Jakeš, Vaněk, Urbášek, eds, *Vítězové? Poražení? II. díl*, p. 212.

[76] M. Novák, in M. Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni*, p. 34.

[77] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv.j. 1426, 'Denní informace S StB Bratislava (+ sběrné archy)', (24 Nov. 1989). f. 421.

everyone' who was for Socialism—even if they held 'critical viewpoints' about *přestavba*—he nevertheless tried to invigorate the Party's core by declaring that 'the concerns of the working people' and that 'of Socialism itself' to be 'at stake'.[78] Pitra's statement failed to prevent the political crisis deepening and spreading beyond Prague. And now Jakeš's speech failed to give the population the either the concessions they wanted, or the Party membership the necessary arguments to actively and persuasively argue and defend the Party's 'leading role'.

The result was that Jakeš's statement was almost universally criticised among the Party, and particularly among the *aktiv*--the core membership who held elected positions. Local Party functionaries reported how the Party grassroots were now 'openly swearing at the *KSČ*".[79] Against long-standing conventions in the Party, top representatives were now being singled out for criticism. In Znojmo, Party functionaries considered Jakeš to have said 'nothing of substance', and the *aktiv* in Prostějov and Gottwaldov (known as Zlín from 1 January 1990), declared the statement to have offered 'few positives', to have had a 'debilitating' effect among the membership and, above all, to have left them 'unclear' about what the Party would do next.[80] Jakeš's and Pitra's television statements were jointly perceived as lacking 'convincing arguments' to counter what Western news sources like Radio Free Europe were reporting. Most serious of all were the complaints that the Central Committee was publicly divided in its treatment of the demonstrators. *SSM* chairman Vasil Mohorita, in particular, came in for criticism of his support of the student strikes.[81]

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[78] 'Projevme všichni vysokou občanskou odpovědnost, rozum a rozvahu', *Rudé právo* (22 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

[79] SOkA Liberec, 'Zápis z 42. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci', f. 8.

[80] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 87', f. 1.

[81] SOkA Jablonec nad Nisou, 'OV KSČ Jablonec nad Nisou', inv.č. 71, box 40, 'Plény OV KSČ', 'Společné usnesení' (23 Nov. 1989), [ff. 1-2]; See also, NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 86', f. 3.

Exasperation about the Party leadership's tactics continued to grow. In Jablonec nad Nisou, in northern Bohemia, functionaries discussed the possibility to allow 'each Communist's personal responsibility' for the situation, and to immediately 'ensure the restoration of the political situation'.[82] In other words, to allow the regional and district functionaries a free hand in dealing with protests in their own locales. But no such order came. The only action which local Communists could take, until the Central Committee and Presidium indicated otherwise, was to assess the priorities in their own locale, go on 'an offensive dialogue' and to focus on people's 'actual questions', as opposed to abstract discussion of democracy, freedom and human rights.[83] Other Party members, who had managed to print pro-*KSČ* posters and put them up in that region had only a 'limited' effect.[84] Even when People's Militia and Party members were able to tear down anti-regime posters at night,and replace them with pro-*KSČ* ones, coverage was at best 'sparse'.[85] Reports to the Presidium in Prague suggested that Party members in southern Moravia and western Bohemia were the most active in putting up posters, especially in and around Žďár nad Sázavou, Brno and Prostějov, and also in Plzeň.[86] Even in cases where functionaries had reminded the membership 'to resolve the situation in a peaceful way', more ominously, they were also told to 'get to know these people' who openly opposed the *KSČ* and 'remember them'.[87] Between 20 and 24 November, Party functionaries in districts around Czechoslovakia had, in places, tried to

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[82] SOkA Jablonec nad Nisou, 'Společné usnesení' (23 Nov. 1989), [f. 2].

[83] SOkA Jablonec nad Nisou, 'Společné usnesení' (23 Nov. 1989), [f. 1].

[84] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (PÚV KSČ, 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 91' (26 Nov. 1989), f. 4 [currently unarchived].

[85] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV-02/1 (PÚV KSČ, 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 91' (26 Nov. 1989), f. 4 [currently unarchived].

[86] This would seem accurate, given that the Moravian Land Archive in Brno probably holds the best collection of pro-KSČ posters, flyers and statements. See: Moravský zemský archiv v Brně, 'G565: Podzim 1989', inv.j. 32, sloha 12.

[87] SOkA Liberec, 'Zápis z 42. schůze předsednictva OV KSČ v Liberci', f. 8.

respond creatively and spontaneously to the demands made on them. But given the constraints placed on them with the Party's hierarchy and democratic centralist principles, and particularly the apparent dearth of orders or clear political programme from above, there was not much else they could do. The Party membership, like the rest of the country, had to wait for the outcome of the emergency Central Committee meeting, which was scheduled for Friday 24 November.

The Central Committee's marathon emergency meeting, which met in Prague at ten o'clock in the morning and lasted until half past one the following morning, gave the leadership the chance to consolidate and discuss what to do next, and to show that they were capable of finding a solution to the political crisis. The meeting resulted in three important outcomes for both the Party membership, and the course of the revolution. The first significant development was the leadership's final decision definitively to rule out the use of force against demonstrators. Although the Presidium had recalled the People's Militia earlier in the week, and that Vasil Mohorita, the *SSM* Chairman, had told the crowds on Wenceslas Square that no force would be used, the leadership had still not been united regarding the use of force.

At the Central Committee meeting, Milán Václavík, Czechoslovak Minister of Defence, warned that if those present did not 'give support' to the *StB* and security forces, the Central Committee could be assured that they would 'be afraid to walk the streets' and it would not 'be long before you are thrown out of your apartments'.[88] Although most did not openly advocate a military crackdown, Václavík (among others) supported a more strategic and targeted use of the military, including putting the army and People's Militia on 'standby' (*bojové pohotovosti*) so that if a situation arose which

[88] *Poslední hurá: Tajné stenografické záznamy z posledních zasedání ÚV KSČ v listopadu 1989* (Praha, 1992), p. 69.

required necessary resolution, units would be prepared 'to solve it'. Václavík, like many others at the meeting, were concerned with the way in which the media was no longer adhering to the Party line, and considered it such a serious threat to the Party's position that he warned that

> it is not possible, Comrades, to wait until they [the demonstrators] do something to us: it is necessary to have the forces in a state of preparedness, in case something does come about. I am not calling here for any carnage: I am suggesting a unilateral safeguarding of the media. In any case, either through good or ill, it must be taken from their hands.[89]

Václavík was so unshakable in his opinion that, even a week later, he refused to answer in Parliament whether or not he planned to mobilise the army against the people.[90] Vasil Biľak, a Presidium member since 1968, appeared not to rule out the use of force either, claiming that if the demonstrators were 'not for Socialism', then they had to be 'against it'. Therefore, the demonstrations around the country could not be considered 'revolutionary', but rather 'counterrevolutionary'. Biľak concluded that any 'dialogue' with either students or 'the street' was pointless, leaving it open to the rest of the meeting to decide what other solutions remained to deal with the 'counterrevolution'.[91] Most members, whether from fear or other motives, did not back up Václavík's contribution.

The unwillingness even to respond to his comments suggests that Central Committee members were now as reluctant as the Presidium to use force to stop the protests. Reminding Party members of Poland's crackdown on the Solidarity trade

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[89] *Poslední hurá*, p. 70.

[90] 'Poslanci schválili změny v ústavě', *Rudé právo* (30 Nov. 1989), p. 2.

[91] *Poslední hurá*, p. 86.

Union, committee member Jiři Klíma commented that 'today is 1989, not 1981' and that it was essential that the Party leadership immediately and publicly declare that it would not use force, except in the most 'exceptional circumstances'.[92] Others reflected that the Party had since January 1989 been 'losing its position in society' with 'every use of force', which had only turned more and more people against it; it was simply not true one committee member said, that had the 'unlucky events of 17 November' not have occurred, 'then everything would have been fine'. The use of force on 17 November, on a day 'so sensitive' in Czechoslovakia's history was 'a hundred-fold political mistake', for which the Party was paying, and which it would not be allowed to forget 'for a long time to come'.[93] Consensus at the meeting converged around seeking a 'political solution' to the crisis and ruling out any use of force in almost all conceivable circumstances.[94] By ruling out the option of using force, the rulers of the state lost their ability to rule, and were left in a position of having to rely on the 'popular will'—or its perceived popularity—to maintain the 'leading role' of the *KSČ* and political power over the country it ruled.

The second important outcome from the Central Committee's emergency meeting was the resignation of the entire *KSČ* Presidium. A majority of the Central Committee members laid blame for the Party's troubles since 17 November upon the Presidium. The Party's 'inactivity' was put down to the Presidium's lack of direction, which had 'left Communists and workers in factories to their own devices'.[95] On one side of the argument, Václavík claimed that the Presidium 'should be left as it is',

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[92] *Poslední hurá*, p. 78.

[93] V. Kunivjánek, in *Poslední hurá*, p. 81.

[94] L. Adamec, in *Poslední hurá*, p. 20. See also the statement publicised after the meeting ended, 'Politickoorganizační zabezpečení závěrů mimořádného zasedání ÚV KSČ', reproduced in *Poslední hurá*, p. 147-149.

[95] Antonín Mladý, in *Poslední hurá*, p. 24.

arguing that any change would only bring further instability.[96] '(Jakeš also claimed later that he deeply regretted resigning, and that doing so proved to be a big political mistake.[97]) Most contributions, however, leaned the other way. For the entire week, committee member Antonín Mladý declared, Presidium members 'had gone nowhere', had failed to go among workers and put forward the Party's case. 'Where the Party wasn't working', as he put it, 'our enemy was there'.[98] In a strongly-worded attack, Ladislav Adamec, the Czechoslovak Prime Minister, placed responsibility for the demonstrations squarely with the Presidium, of which he too had also been a member since March 1987. The demonstrations, he claimed, showed 'a healthy dissatisfaction' with the slow rate of change, together with the 'slow development' and 'inconsistent' results of *přestavba*.[99] In a sign of the individual struggles taking place within the Party, Adamec also announced his own resignation from the Central Committee. Adamec attempted to distance himself from others in the Presidium.[100]

The third result of the Central Committee meeting was to adopt a strategy which would mobilise the entire Party to defend both the new *KSČ* leadership and still prevent the general strike, due to take place on Monday 27 November. At the press conference at one o'clock in the afternoon were left waiting until three o'clock the following morning before the *KSČ*'s spokespeople emerged to announce that the lessons of 1968 would remain in place, but 'refused to answer' if the 1990 elections would be multi-

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[96] *Poslední hurá*, p. 70.

[97] Jakeš, in Vaněk, Urbášek, eds, *Vítězové? Poražení?* vol. 1, p. 214.

[98] *Poslední hurá*, p. 24.

[99] *Poslední hurá*, p. 20.

[100] At the time, there was some speculation about whether Adamec jumped or was pushed, but from transcripts of his own contribution at the emergerncy Central Committee meeting, it appears he tendered his resignation as both Presidium member and Prime Minister voluntarily, having tried to resign twice before (on 26 July and 27 October 1989). See *Poslední hurá*, p. 22, and V. Prečan, ed, *Prague-Washington-Prague*, p. 150.

party or not.[101] The 17 November was labelled a 'political mistake', and those responsible 'must pay for it'.[102] Although the Party never officially backed the general strike, all the indications suggest it had moved somewhat in its stance. The Central Committee called on Communists only to 'strive' to prevent general strike.[103] Committee members also suggested the Party support a 'symbolic five minute general strike'.[104] This was less an attempt to influence the situation, and more a recognition of an existing strategy which some Communists had taken to try and limit the strike's success. Through the Party's involvement, instead of the strike being against the *KSČ* leadership, the message could instead be 'for the renewal of socialism in a Leninist spirit' and for a version of Socialism which represented 'properly-realised democracy, justice and dialogue'.[105] Despite the Central Committee's efforts, the two meetings between 24 and 26 November were a combination of personal political struggles and half-hearted attempts to keep the Party united. The Central Committee had tried—and failed—to shift responsibility for the past week onto those at the very top. Equally, it had shown its own members to be equally unable to offer practical ways in which Party members could actually prevent the general strike from taking place.

The Presidium's resignation and confusion over whether or not to support a 'symbolic' General Strike only created more chaos. The Presidium's resignation also further swelled the size of the demonstrations on 25 and 26 November on Prague's Lentá plain, the very place where Communists had held many May Day rallies. In a triumphalist tone, just under one million people gathered on both days, with footage of

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[101] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Informační servis č. 7' (25 Nov. 1989), f. 1 [verso].

[102] L. Adamec, *Posledni hurá*, p. 20.

[103] *Poslední hurá*, p. 147.

[104] A. Kapek, in *Poslední huŕa*, p, 136.

[105] *Poslední hurá*, p. 136.

speeches and shots of the rallies broadcast throughout the entire country.[106] Elsewhere, the Presidium's resignation strengthened the hand of strike committees. At the Škoda works in Plzeň, the *KSČ* factory committee and the trade union committee resolved earlier in the week to have a symbolic strike at noon so as only to show agreement with the students' demands, and not those of Civic Forum. As the director of the Škoda plant recalled, 'the tension...was already great enough' and it was 'obvious' that if the workers decided to go out and strike, 'then nothing could be contained'. After the resignation of the entire Presidium, however, another meeting between workers and the management was called and resolved to allow workers a free choice about how to mark the strike.[107] Other Communist functionaries, in Velký Krtíš, a small town in Slovakia near the Hungarian border, not only held a question and answer session with strikers, but also proposed and organised a meeting to continue negotiations, a move for which took the demonstrators were 'wholly unprepared'.[108] In other parts of the country, Party functionaries still held 'conflicting views' about whether or not to actually join the strike.[109] To take just one region, in southern Moravia, Communists in Prostějov, Gottwoldov, Blansko and Brno widely participated in strike action, whereas in Jihlava, Třebíč and Znojmo, Communists avoided any involvement.[110] In workplaces and factories where Communist committees still retained significant influence, the approach was to take 'symbolic strike action' (*manifestáční stávka*), which could have meant

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[106] Contrary to popular belief, Wenceslas Square was actually the 'traditional' gathering for May Day parades. This was changed in 1977 as Prague's Metro was built under Wenceslas Square. Parades only returned there in time for May Day 1989. See 'Naše vlast důstojně oslavila 1. máj 1989', *Rudé právo* (2. May 1989), p. 1.

[107] Anton, *Listopad 1989 v Plzni*, p. 85.

[108] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV 1945-1989 (PÚV KSČ, 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 93' (28 Nov. 1989), [f. 9] [currently unarchived].

[109] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV 1945-1989 (PÚV KSČ, 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 92' (27 Nov. 1989), f. 5 [currently unarchived].

[110] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 92', f. 7.

anything from sounding the factory's klaxon, pausing work for a few minutes at noon, or assembling in the factory to hear some speeches. Though the management and Communist factory committees often pushed for something less than the full two-hour stoppage, in workplaces where there was 'strong pressure' from strike committees for all workers to participate, these attempts were 'unsuccessful'.[111] Only in rare cases did Communists succeed in 'discrediting local Civic Forums' during the general strike.[112] In Gottwoldov, the entire Communist management of the *Svit* shoe manufacturer joined in the strike so enthusiastically, that some of the workers decided to remain at work instead.[113] The Party did not widely record participation rates during the strike. Only some regions reported figures, most of which were inconceivably low.[114]

Although the outcome of the strike seemed clear, several incidents suggested some local functionaries were still prepared to prevent the strike going ahead by whatever means they could. In Hradec Králové, Regional Secretary Václav Šipka is said to have allegedly tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to convince the rest of his committee to arm the People's Militia so they might intervene in the general strike.[115] In other places where no strikes were reported to have taken place, Civic Forum sources explained that people in those towns had been too 'frightened' and thus 'unable' to participate.[116] In the central Bohemian towns of Beroun, Králův Dvůr and Litoměřice, Civic Forum's news bulletin suggested that people had not joined local fora 'thanks to provocateurs' and

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[111] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 93' (28 Nov. 1989), [f. 8].

[112] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 93' (28 Nov. 1989), [f. 14].

[113] *Svit* returned to its more famous pre-Communist *Baťa* brand name after the revolution.

[114] For example, the Party recorded Košice, a city of about 500,000 as having only 20,000-30,000 on strike. See NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV 1945-1989 (PÚV KSC, 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 93' (28 Nov. 1989) [currently unarchived].

[115] V. Holanec, in *Sametová revoluce v Ústí nad Labem*, p. 38.

[116] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Informáční servis č. 15', f. 16 [recto].

Communist threats to use armed force should they join.[117] Whilst in some cases the threats were probably real enough, in others, the reasons were more prosaic. In at least one of these case, Králův Dvůr, alleged 'provocation' from workers appears to have been made up to politically discredit the management, rather than based on any actual threat.[118] And in many other smaller towns and villages such as in Brandys nad Labem, Stará Bolselav, Vysoké Mýto, and Blansko, the lack of organisation meant that nothing other than small gatherings of a 'private nature' took place among handfuls of people.[119] In Karlovy Vary, lying near the German border in western Bohemia, the closest that Communist officials came to influencing the general strike was having been the 'inspiration' for 'the tried-and-tested model' of organising parades.[120] Across Czechoslovakia, the Party membership's role in the general strike probably did not significantly influence its success or failure.

The sources provide no little indication about how the Party leadership responded to news of the general strike's success. Civic Forum in Prague declared to be a statewide 'informal referendum' on the Party's leading role.[121] Even beforehand, the Central Committee had already assumed the Party had lost this 'referendum', as it *de facto* acknowledged Civic Forum, Public Against Violence and *Obroda*, the independent reform Socialist group, as partners in the 'continuing dialogue' process.[122] After the strike, the Party immediately offered an initial raft of concessions, endorsed at a joint sitting of the Federal Assembly on 29 November. The parliamentary investigative

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[117] SObA Třeboň, 'Informáční servis č. 15', f. 16 [recto].

[118] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4,'Informáční servis č. 19', f. 50 [verso].

[119] SObA Třeboň, 'Informáční servis č. 15', f. 16 [recto].

[120] J. Nedvěd, *1989: Cesta ke svobodě. Revoluční listopad v Karlových Varech* (Karlovy Vary, 2009), p. 51.

[121] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Informační servis č. 7', (25 Nov. 1989), f. 1.

[122] 'Přípravy na mimořádný sjezd', *Rudé právo* (28 Nov. 1989), p. 1.

commission into the events of 17 November, first announced by Jakeš a week previously, was established. Parliament also abolished clause four, which legally provided the Party its 'leading role' in society; and clause six, which placed the National Front under the leadership of the *KSČ*, was also removed. Education and research was no longer undertaken 'in the spirit of the scientific-worldview of Marxism-Leninism' but 'of scientific learning and in harmony with the principles of humanity and democracy'.[123] Similarly, on the day of the strike itself, much more evidence exists which suggests regional and district Party functionaries also acknowledged the new legitimacy of their partners-in-dialogue. In Košice, for example, regional functionaries were already 'prepared' on 27 November to participate in a meeting of 'dialogue' with Civic Forum representatives.[124] Many local officials even stood up to address the crowds and make a short statement, though judging from Party reports, the in overwhelming majority of cases they were booed before being able to finish speaking.[125]

Although some local Party functionaries understood the necessity of 'dialogue', the struggle for political power, both between state representatives (i.e. National Committees) and the opposition and within the Party had only just begun. At roughly the same time, local members of Civic Forum and Public Against Violence expressed the fear that Communists had begun to join their movements.[126] These fears were not unfounded. An article published in *Rudé právo* on 29 November asked the question if

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[123] 'Poslanci schválili změny v ústavě', *Rudé právo* (30 Nov. 1989), pp. 1-2.

[124] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 93', p. 7. As James Krapfl has shown, Košice was one of the places where Civic Forum, and not Public Against Violence was founded. See J. Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, p. 121.

[125] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 93', [pp. 8-16].

[126] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Civic Forum informáční servis č. 11', f. 5 [recto].

'Communists could join Civic Forum?' and that, according to the author's opinion, there was no reason why it would not be possible.[127]

Another document, allegedly from the *KSČ* Central Committee, also attempted to rally Communist activities in the country against Civic Forum and Public Against Violence. Variations of the document, usually titled as the 'Real Practical Struggle', began to surface around 26 November, shortly after Karel Urbánek's appointment as General Secretary. It was even treated as genuine by Civic Forum, with information on it being transmitted around the country via its telex Information Service (*Informáční servis*).[128] A more authoritative version, which cropped up in Brno, was passed to the Civic Forum Coordination Centre in Prague around 30 November, and similarly circulated.[129] It is far from clear if any of these documents were ever written by the *KSČ* Central Committee, or even by a disgruntled section of it. It may even have been an attempt to articulate opposition fears about Communist involvement in the revolution. So far, however, the only reports of it in Communist archives were to deny having received any such document.[130] A more likely explanation is that the 'Real Practical Struggle' for the *KSČ* membership represented a summarised version of several telegrams, telex reports and orders to regional and local parties about how to win the power struggle after the general strike. It is also possible that even if the coordination centre in Prague had doubts about its veracity, they were worried enough by it to distribute copies of it in information bulletins.[131] The document itself called for

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[127] I. Wiszczor, 'Komunisté a Občanské fórum', *Rudé právo* (29 Nov. 1989), p. 3.

[128] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 2, 'Demokracie volá SOS', f.121; A similar document, allegedly from the *KSČ*'s Information and Propaganda Department shortly after Havel's election as President was also doing the rounds among the opposition. See SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 5, 'Dopis Praha--Informační a propagační'odd. ÚV KSČ', f. 2.

[129] Moravský zemský archiv, 'G565', inv.j. 32, sloha 12, 'OF Brno', 'Informace zachycená Občanským fórem v Praze, dokládající oprávněnost našich obav'.

[130] SOkA Liberec, 'OF Liberec', inv. č. 1-12, box 1, 'Jednání OF' (4 Dec. 1989), [f. 3].

[131] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Informáční servis č. 15', f. 15 [verso].

'dialogue with *Obroda*', and to assume that the Party's leading role would 'no longer apply'. The aim was not just to 'divide students and Civic Forum' (as the Party had been trying to do anyway), but to try and get members into Civic Forum to prevent it from stepping up its demands.[132] Regardless of the veracity of the document, this is exactly what began to happen.

Party members in the regions began to use a variety of tactics to prevent Civic Forum and Public Against Violence from deepening their influence in workplaces and communities across Czechoslovakia. As James Krapfl found, Civic Forum was just as likely to have been established in Slovakia in mid- to late November as Public Against Violence. For the most part, as Krapfl argues, the renaming of Slovak 'Civic Forum' chapters into 'Public Against Violence' became a 'struggle' between the Bratislava 'centre' to speak for the whole of Slovakia, against the regions' demands for autonomy.[133] Fresh evidence shows how this confusion was exploited by local Communists to their own advantage. In Poprad, in northeastern Slovakia, the confusion over whether 'Civic Forum' or 'Public Against Violence' was the legitimate voice of the people provided Communists the perfect opportunity to integrate themselves into these new organisations. Civic Forum was the first group to be set up in Poprad on 21 November 1989, when a group of independent activists met to form a district committee of Civic Forum (*okresné kordinačné centrum Občianského fóra*).[134] According to Civic Forum's leading spokesperson in Poprad, on 30 November, activists 'became aware' of Public Against Violence having established itself in Poprad, too. Civic Forum leaders apparently tried to 'establish immediate association' with Public Against Violence in

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[132] SObA Třeboň, 'Informáční servis č. 15', f. 15 [verso].

[133] Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, pp. 112-121.

[134] Slovenský národný archiv, 'VPN', sign. 4.2, inv. č. 13, škatule 29, 'Situačná správa o občianskych initiatívach v okrese Poprad ku dňu 14.12.1989'.

order ‘not to wreak the unity’ of the groups in the town, but this proved ‘difficult’ as no names of the group had been published as Civic Forum had done.[135] In a ‘situation report’ sent to Public Against Violence coordinating committee in Bratislava, by Civic Forum’s spokesperson**,** local people who he claimed were ‘evidently members of the district *KSS* committee’ had apparently ‘infiltrated’ Poprad’s Public Against Violence movement. Its meetings were described as ‘full of intolerance’ and ‘anarchistic chaos’.[136] A joint meeting eventually took place between Public Against Violence and Civic Forum on 5 December, which resulted in an agreement of the participants ‘to accept the requests of the Slovak centre’ and continue under the name ‘Public Against Violence’.[137] But this move preempted the final usurping of Civic Forum. A press release on 7 December to the local newspaper, *Podtatranské noviny*, showed no indication that Civic Forum planned to disband. Quite the opposite: Forum activists suggested citizens formed ‘an Emergency Committee of Civil Disobedience’ in order to ‘govern the activities’ of Poprad in the event of a ‘threat to democracy’.[138]

Despite Civic Forum’s attempt to regain some initiative with this move, a series of ‘futile’ meetings took place between Civic Forum and Public Against Violence, which culminated on 12 December. The end result was the merger of the two organisations and members of Public Against Violence retaining leading positions. From that point on, state officials in the district National Committee only held meetings with representatives of Public Against Violence, and the editors of the local newspaper, *Podtatranské noviny*, refused in subsequent issues to recognise any of the contributions

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[135] Slovenský národný archiv, ‘VPN’, sign. 4.2, inv. č. 13, č. škatule 29, ‘Situačná správa o občianskych inicitatívach v okrese Poprad ku dňu 14.12.1989’.

[136] Slovenský národný archiv, ‘Situačná správa o občianskych inicitatívach v okrese Poprad ku dňu 14.12.1989’.

[137] ‘Pod symbolom VPN’, *Podtatranské noviny* (14 Dec. 1989), p. 4.

[138] ‘Prípravný koordinačný OV Občianskeho fóra Programové vyhlásenie’, *Podtatranské noviny* (7. Dec. 1989), p. 1.

submitted by members of the non-existent Civic Forum.[139] No evidence, as yet, suggests that this was part of a wider, deliberate campaign by Party members to become involved in Public Against Violence. But the confusion concerning which movement could legitimately 'speak' for citizens was exploited by those seeking to gain power.

Reports of Communists joining Civic Forum and Public Against Violence, and other attempts to prevent the movements spreading throughout Czechoslovakia only increased throughout December 1989. The Public Against Violence Coordination Committee (*Koordinačný výbor Verejnosť proti násiliu*) in Bratislava, aware of the 'participation of Communists' who 'intended to control' local Public Against Violence and Civic Forum groups, issued a statement to clarify what activists should do in such cases. Public Against Violence, the memo claimed, was 'for democracy', and therefore could not 'prevent fellow citizens without regard of their party membership' from taking part in new civic movements and initiatives. Regional and district groups, even when they found themselves in a minority to 'opponents of democracy' would have to 'find a majority from somewhere in the end'. In extreme cases, activists were ordered to leave the existing group, establish a new group, and release a public statement about this position. It was 'inadmissible', the memo added, for any group within Public Against Violence or Civic Forum to assert 'so-called party discipline'.[140]

The consequence of such advice, however, was to allow *KSČ* members—where they were organised and motivated enough—to continue integrate themselves into the new movements. In Žebrák and Příbram, both in central Bohemia, *KSČ* members had been quick to turn up at Civic Forum meetings to get their own spokespersons and

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[139] Slovenský národný archiv, 'VPN', sign. 4.2, inv. č. 13, č. škatule 29, 'Situačná správa o občianskych inicitatívach v okrese Poprad ku dňu 14.12.1989'.

[140] Štátný archív Banská Bystrica, 'K účasti komunistov v akčních skupinách VPN a občianských fórech', (30 Nov. 1989), [currently unarchived].

representatives elected.[141] The Civic Forum Coordinating Centre in Prague said that such attempts to restrict the spread of Civic Forum most often occurred in places where activists had 'failed to obtain significant support among fellow citizens or employees'.[142] This certainly appeared to be the case in Rychov nad Kněžnou, where the local National Committee had to tried to 'put the brakes on' Civic Forum by not allowing their spokespeople access to the local radio.[143] In Rumburk, in northern Bohemia, where the General Strike had been characterised as 'weak', reports claimed townspeople had assumed Civic Forum to have been 'against workers' as the town lacked prominent individuals who could counteract Communist propaganda.[144]

In other cases, such as in the Duslo chemical plant in Šaľa, western Slovakia, the *KSS* committee put continued pressure upon the local factory strike committee that Public Against Violence's demands were having a negative influence upon the factory's output. After meetings of both the management, *KSS* workplace committee and strike committee, all decided that 'it was not advantageous' to strike, and so the strike committee disbanded.[145] Even at the lower levels of the Czechoslovak administration, it seemed, a power struggle was taking place and that the 'leading role' of the *KSČ* was being challenged throughout society. Communist Party members were not prepared to sit and allow others to come to power: they actively carried out directives of the Central Committee to join Civic Forum and Public Against Violence in order to prevent more radical change from taking place. In both Slovakia and the Bohemian crown lands, the Communist Party's ability to mobilise and enforce Party discipline meant in smaller

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[141] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Informáční servis č. 12', f. 7 [recto].

[142] SObA Třeboň, 'Informáční servis č. 11', f. 5 [recto].

[143] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Civic Forum informáční servis č. 12', f. 7 [recto].

[144] SObA Třeboň, 'Civic Forum informáční servis č. 12', f. 7 [recto].

[145] ABS MV ČR, 'A 34/1', inv. j. 1426, 'Denná situačná informacia' (21 Dec. 1989), f. 445.

towns and districts they were able to establish their authority in the new civic movements.

Positive public demonstrations of support for the Communist Party were rarer, but nonetheless did take place. Communist rallies and demonstrations were mainly organised in the week after the general strike. Pro-Communist demonstrations were far fewer in size and frequency than those of the Civic Forum or Public Against Violence-led ones, and in the absence of any coordinated efforts, were probably organised by local Party committees themselves. In Litoměřice, in northern Bohemia, for example, an estimated one thousand eight hundred Communists gathered the day before the general strike, chanting 'Long live the *KSČ!*' and 'Who is Havel'.[146] At best though, the rallies, which were also held in Vyškov in Southern Bohemia, Lovosice and in Northern Bohemia, and in Ostrava, showed the areas where the Party was most deeply entrenched.[147]

Civic Forum's and Public Against Violence's 'Programme of Principles' published on 26 November, and the *KSČ*'s 'Action Programme' on 1 December were both so vague about the future direction of Czechoslovakia that the reader would have had difficulty telling the difference between the two.[148] The *KSČ* leadership proposed a form of 'democratic Socialism', with 'a progressive, democratic and humanistic perspective', and would 'defend freedom of opinion, conviction and religious beliefs'.[149] The document was based on the view that it was not *přestavba* that was

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[146] 'Komunisté v ulicích', *Rudé právo* (27. Nov. 1989), p. 6.

[147] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV 1945-1989, (PÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 97' (2 Dec. 1989), [f. 3] [currently unarchived]; See also, SOkA Litoměřice, (pobočka Lovosice), 'Kronika města Lovosice 1989', p. 18.

[148] See 'Programové zásady Občanského fóra', *Rudé právo* (29 Nov. 1989), p. 3; 'Za demokratickou socialistickou společnost v ČSSR', *Rudé právo* (2 Dec. 1989), pp. 1-2.

[149] 'Návrh Akčního programu KSČ: Za demokratickou socialistickou společnost v ČSSR'. *Život strany* č. 25, pp. 5-7.

flawed, but that its 'realisation had been inadequate' and had only consisted of 'verbal pronouncements about democratisation and dialogue'.[150] The Party declared itself in favour of 'political pluralism' (which had already began to emerge before November 1989 anyway), based on a new, if yet undefined, conception of the National Front.[151]

The main difference between the 'Action Programme' and 'What We Want' was the purpose of each document. The *KSČ* leadership were under pressure not just to lay out a positive vision of the future, but defend the Party from attacks, something which neither Civic Forum or Public Against Violence had to do. The 'Action Programme' remained a defensive document which tried to distance the Party from 'the old concept of the leading role' in favour of 'humanitarian and democratic Socialism'.[152] On all these fronts the Action Programme failed. Party reports showed that the membership were particularly concerned with the lack of guarantees that Party reform would continue, nor in which direction.[153] Complaints also emerged that the questions about 'cadre work' (define) and work to 'build the Party' were non-existent.[154] It tried to distance the Party from 'past mistakes' and show that it could distance itself from the previous leadership. Finally, and most importantly, it tried to set the Party 'on a new course' and give Party members the arguments to campaign effectively.[155] Though the ability of one document to do so much was always in doubt, the Action Programme became the central discussion point surrounding the future direction of the Party.

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[150] *Život strany* č. 25, p. 3.

[151] *Život strany* č. 25, p. 4.

[152] *Život strany* č. 25, p. 3.

[153] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 97', f. 6.

[154] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 97', f. 6.

[155] *Život strany* č. 25, p. 3.

The Action Programme, however, looked remarkably similar to that before the 17 November, and even more similar to the Party's more famous action programme of 1968, which the Action Programme essentially copied, and considered the suppression of the Spring as 'without foundation' and 'the decision to do so mistaken'.[156] Many in the Party membership had been demanding the Party issue some form of programme because they deemed Civic Forum in particular to have 'stolen' the Party's programme.[157] The Democratic Forum claimed the *KSČ* leadership were trying to 'steal their clothes'.[158] The document seemed to closely resemble proposals that the Presidium had already been presented with on 8 November and, perhaps because of this, the document showed to the wider membership that the Party leadership was both unable to move on from past mistakes and also to present a suitable 'Czechoslovak path to Socialism'.[159] legitimised the current presidium. The Action Programme suffered from two main problems. First, it put the blame on past mistakes entirely on the previous Presidium, the irony being that some had still retained their position after the reshuffle on 24 November.[160]

By the beginning of December, as the 'Action Programme' began to circulate among Party members, and as demonstrations continued around the country, tensions between the Party leadership in Prague and the wider membership around the country grew even greater. Complaints to the Prague leadership continued much along the same lines as before the revolution: there had to be 'a faster flow' of information from top to

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[156] *Život strany* č. 25, p. 4.

[157] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 92', f. 6.

[158] '74. Telegram from the Embassy in Czechoslovakia to the Department of State. Prague, 5 December 1989, 08507', in Prečan, ed, *Prague-Washington-Prague*, pp. 230-231.

[159] *Život strany* č. 25, p. 4.

[160] Amongst those retaining a position in the Presidium included Ignác Janák, *KSS* First Secretary; and Karel Urbánek, who was elected general secretary of the *KSČ*.

bottom; the membership needed 'argumentative' support from Prague in order to help local functionaries know which opposition demands to concede to, and where to stand firm; and exasperation why Party members had to 'pressurise the Party leadership into making further advances', rather than the leadership providing direction to the Party.[161] In northern Moravia, for example, frustration with the leadership had grown to such an extent that Party members began questioning why they should continue to pay functionaries 'who failed to react to the situation in society'.[162] Having showed its own membership that it was incapable of finding solutions to the Party crisis, the only option open was to hold an extraordinary Party congress, which would allow for new leadership elections around which the Party could unite.

The decision to hold a Party congress—the highest decision-making body in the Party—had been taken at the Central Committee meeting on 26 November, in the hope of producing cadre changes to win back some trust in the Party.[163] This was not announced to the membership until 29 November, and took four weeks to organise. The Party's ability to remove hardliners and 'renew' itself as the Party propaganda posters claimed, would prove an even harder task. One small sign of change did come when the Presidium asked all Central Committee members over the age of sixty to give up their positions.[164] However, due to the lack of time, the Presidium also arranged it so that delegate elections for the congress did not take place among the Party grassroots. The consequence of this was that the congress would not be truly representative of the Party's membership. It also cast doubt on the Party's ability to produce meaningful

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[161] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV 1945-1989, (PÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 105' (11 Dec. 1989), [f. 2] [currently unarchived].

[162] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV 1945-1989, (PÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 103' (8 Dec. 1989), [f. 2] [currently unarchived].

[163] *Poslední hurá*, p, 96.

[164] '82. Telegram from the Embassy in Czechoslovakia to the Department of State. Prague, 8 December 1989, 08599', in Prečan, ed, *Prague-Washington-Prague*, pp. 254-257.

changes. Instead, elections took place only at a district and regional level: district plenary meetings took place between 9 and 10 December, with those delegates in turn attending regional plenary meetings on 16 and 17 December to elect delegates to the congress.

The absence of the grassroots membership in the congress election procedure did not prevent fractious election meetings from taking place. The revolution had occurred because the Party leadership treated the students' demands as a 'student matter' and did not react quickly enough to their demands.[165] The district Party chairman in Liberec offered his own take on what had happened over the past few weeks. From the 'first information' from the Presidium on 20 November, which mentioned the 'serious political situation' in Prague and the coming general strike, secretaries and the apparatus of the district committee spread out to specific factories in an attempt to 'activate' grassroots and workplace (*celozávodní*) committees of the Party. Under the 'pressure' of events, the district committee also called a plenum of the Party *aktiv* to 'mobilise all Communists'. But in doing so, with events moving quickly, there was lively 'discussion', 'many opinions', and general 'ignorance of the situation'. As a result, the Party singularly failed 'to send out comrades to factories' where they were needed most. Instead of prominent local officials actually 'leading' their local memberships, the Presidium had encouraged them to hold members' meetings, which had only led to more acrimony and division. Whilst officials' analyses of the revolution accepted some criticism for the Party's crisis, the real criticism was left for the Party leadership. The Presidium, the Liberec chairman claimed, did not 'carry out its leading role' among the membership.[166]

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[165] SOkA Liberec, 'Mimořádná okresní konference', [f. 2].

[166] SOkA Liberec, 'Mimořádná okresní konference', [ff. 4-6].

As other district Party meetings took place over 9 and 10 December, the Presidium continued to receive multiple reports that, throughout the Party, there was 'rising distrust' with the Party's policies. Party officials blamed the former Party leadership for the failure of its 'ideological activity', and placed all the 'blame' for the 'failure to undergo *přestavba*' entirely with the 'former leadership'.[167] Regional party officials, whose committees were due to be abolished the following year, expressed the view that the leadership 'had betrayed them'. Elsewhere, meetings reflected the revolutionary political situation which existed. On Sunday 10 December, the entire *KSS* Central Committee resigned *en masse* at a Sunday meeting.[168] And in České Budějovice, possibly in an attempt to make the election meetings more representative and inclusive, the district Party leaderships held meetings with students, Civic Forum and other civic groups. During them, 'open dialogue' took place, with a platform for students and members of Civic Forum, too. Reports to Prague described the meetings as 'provocative' and 'intimidating', but in all likelihood those writing the reports were more concerned about the view of those reading the reports, rather than any possible provocation by students.[169] In Brno, the municipal Party there revolted against the Party hierarchy. Instead of choosing to elect a new leadership, the municipal Party committee chose instead to elect an 'action committee', which would remain in place until the scheduled conferences in February 1990.[170] The elections to the extraordinary congress had provided an outlet for the frustration not just with the former Presidium, but with *přestavba* itself.

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[167] SOkA Liberec, 'Mimořádná okresní konference', [f. 1].

[168] '54. Telegram from the Embassy in Czechoslovakia to the Department of State. Prague, 27 November 1989, 0824', in Prečan, ed, *Prague-Washington-Prague*, p. 157.

[169] NA ČR, 'Vnitrostranická informace 105', [f. 2].

[170] Moravský zemský archiv, 'G565', inv. j. 32, sloha 12, obálka 22, ff. 68-69.

The frustration and anger, however, did not immediately manifest itself in widespread mass resignations from the Communist Party. Although resignations from the Party was a feature of the revolution throughout the whole country, membership figures in some regions held up more strongly than in others. According to inner Party reports, Communists in Slovakia were less likely to hand in Party membership cards than in Bohemia, Moravia or Silesia.[171] Reports from the western Slovak regional committee mentioned that typically older workers were more likely to remain in the Party. This was despite workers at other key factories like the Mochovce nuclear power plant in western Slovakia handing in their membership card almost universally.[172] Figures for 5 December 1989, for example, show that the Party regional committee in western Slovakia recorded 29 requests to end membership; 215 requests in central Slovakia and a 127 in Bratislava. By comparison, in Prague alone there were 522 such requests, 430 in Northern Bohemia, 700 in Southern Bohemia, 249 in Northern Moravia and 1080 in Southern Moravia.[173] In the context of a political party of over 1.7 million, the figures are surprisingly low.

From Party documents at the time, the handing in of Party membership cards (*legitimace*), was a concern for Party secretaries, even as early as 20 November.[174] The formal process of standing down from the Party usually involved a formal statement being submitted to Party functionaries and then read aloud at the next local Party meeting. Party cards, which were official Party property, rather than belonging to the member, also had to be returned into local Party offices. One woman in Kutná Hora

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[171] NA ČR, 'KSČ-ÚV 1945-1989, (PÚV KSČ 1986-1989)', 'Vnitrostranická informace 100' (5 Dec. 1989), [f. 10] [currently unarchived].

[172] NA ČŘ, 'Vnitrostranická informace 100' (5 Dec. 1989), [f. 10].

[173] NA ČŘ, 'Vnitrostranická informace 100' 5 (Dec. 1989), [f. 10].

[174] The topic was raised in Plzen, 'KV KSČ Plzeň', box 297, 'Zápis ze 6. mimořádného zasedání předsednictva Zpč. KV KSČ' (20 Nov. 1989), f. 4.

remembered the seemingly effortless way in which Communists 'change their coats' by going down the 'alleyway of shame' to quickly hand in the Party cards and move on with their lives.[175] From one Party member's perspective, the whole process was a lot more confusing and muddled. Attending a Party meeting in December 1989, resignation from the Party had apparently not crossed her mind until another comrade got up, read a pre-prepared statement and addressed the meeting about why she was leaving. Shortly after she stood down, others were saying to themselves, 'Jesus Christ, we haven't written anything, what are we to do?'. But then the chair of the meeting asked if anyone else wanted to leave the Party, and

> we spoke up and we left. They didn't want any written reason from us and we didn't have anything written down. And they said fine, the others agree with it. And so they agreed. We could go. And so we left. And we went outside with that colleague who had also spoke up [...] and she said, 'so now it's behind us, that's the end.'[176]

For former Communists, their personal political transition into a new regime also resulted in creating new personal biographies, which distanced themselves from 'the Party' of which they had once been a member.[177]

For Czechs and Slovaks who were alive during the revolution and old enough to perceive the less savoury aspects of political transition, the Communist Party's collapse was invariably due to 'opportunists'.[178] From Communist Party figures, however, a slightly different picture emerges. Evidence from one region, western Bohemia, actually shows how Communist Party members *acted* rather than how they supposedly felt. In

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[175] Group interview in Kutná Hora with technical workers by David Green, (Kutná Hora, 21 July 2008).

[176] Interview with Prague teacher, by David Green (Prague, 11 July 2008).

[177] See D. Green, MRes dissertation.

[178] Kutná Horá interview 21 July 2008

Cheb, for instance, the Plzeň Regional *KSČ* Committee estimated that about ten per cent of the membership was handing in their Party cards because of disagreement with the way the Party was resolving political problems. A further fifteen per cent were leaving to join the Democratic Forum of Communists. The remainder, though critical about the 'indecisiveness of the Party hierarchy' was showing itself to be prepared to 'go on the offensive'.[179] Though this only included members who had personally informed the Party of their decision to stand down, there is no reason to suggest that local Party committees would have had anything to gain by falsifying these numbers. A month later —and a full tow months on from the revolution—the numbers leaving in western Bohemia had risen to about ten thousand—or just over ten per cent.[180] On the one hand, the low figures could be explained by the fact that the revolution occurred very close to to Christmas and that perhaps people had other things to do rather than inform their local Communist Party branch that they were leaving the Party. It is also possible that Party officials were not recording figures accurately. However, even considering for this, in western Bohemia at least, the decline in Party membership seemed relatively gradual for a Party whose end has been presented by some as having been 'inevitable'.

Opposition reports sought to take advantage of any weakness the Party showed, and divisions among the Party membership were frequently publicised.[181] On one side, there were indeed reports of a mass exodus of Party members, such as at the Škoda works in Plzeň, where apparently over five hundred workers had left the Party by mid-

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[179] SObA Plzeň, 'KV KSČ Plzeň', box 297, Zápis ze 37. předsednictva zpč. KV KSČ 14.12.1989, f. 7; Reports in early December put membership of the Democratic Forum at around 40,000. See ʾ74. Telegram from the Embassy in Czechoslovakia to the Department of State. Prague, 5 December 1989, 08507', in Vilém Prečan (ed.), *Prague-Washington-Prague*, (Prague, 2004). p.230-231.

[180] SObA Plzeň, KV KSČ Plzeň, box 297, Zápis ze závěrečného zasedání předsednictva zpč. KV KSČ 11.1.1990, f. 4

[181] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Informáční servis č. 14', f. 11 [recto].

December.[182] Yet throughout the revolution, both among the Party *aktiv* and the grassroots, there was not a complete collapse in membership. Furthermore, participation in meetings were extremely high. In western Bohemia alone, over ninety per cent of Party members participated in delegate meetings to the extraordinary congress.[183] At the beginning of November 1989, there were close to one hundred thousand *KSČ* members in western Bohemia. A systematic analysis of Party figures, if they exist, across more districts and regions will give a better indication about when thew membership began to leave the Party, where this happened, and whether this was a relatively quick phenomenon or spread out over many months. Also, a regional analysis of such data would certainly give a better indication as to where the revolution has a more radicalised character.

As the *KSČ*'s 'leading role' among society and its own membership weakened, so Civic Forum and the Public Against Violence grew to supplant it. As one Communist apparently said to the United States' embassy, one of the main frustrations among Party members was that Civic Forum and Public Against Violence were using 'the same tactics the Party itself had used in 1948' when it came to power.[184] Also, in initial negotiations between Ladislav Adamec, the federal Prime Minister, and Civic Forum and Public Against Violence representatives, the opposition had initially refused to propose names of their preferred candidates to the new government. As a result Adamec and the existing National Front government were left to their own devices. On 3 December, Adamec announced a newly reconstituted government, often referred to as the '15:5' government, because of the fifteen Communists and five independents who

[182] SObA Plzeň, KV KSČ Plzeň, box 297, Zápis ze 37. předsednictva zpč. KV KSČ 14.12.1989, f. 6

[183] SObA Plzeň, KV KSČ Plzeň, box 297, Zápis ze 37. předsednictva zpč. KV KSČ 14.12.1989, f. 15.

[184] '55. Telegram from the Embassy in Czechoslovakia to the Department of State. Prague, 27 December 1989, 08247', in Prečan, ed, *Prague-Washington-Prague*, p. 165.

were included in it. Public dissatisfaction with this arrangement brought a fresh round of demonstrations and calls for a second general strike on Monday 11 December. However, only two days later, on 5 December, the opposition accepted a new Czech republican government, which maintained an outright Communist majority of one. This had been accepted by Civic Forum, it seems, because they had taken a more active role in suggesting specific candidates.[185]

Whereas in Prague, the Civic Forum leadership were gradually morphing the movement into an outright political party, its relationship with regional, local, and grassroots fora was under pressure. Just as Communist Party members had been seeking order and directives from above about how to counteract the threat Civic Forum and Public Against Violence posed, so too were opposition activists seeking advice about how to deal with the Communist Party. The day after the general strike, the Prague coordination committee issued a statement to clarify the relationship between the 'centre' and the 'regions'. As requests came in from different parts of the country for the centre to offer 'support' to the regions, the Coordinating Centre in Prague declared itself to be a 'horizontal network' with local fora joined to a central coordination centre.[186] Activists within Civic Forum in Prague declared that there was no way it could act as a 'centre for solving questions and deciding how individual cases ares resolved', nor could it provide a 'prescription' to any one region's problems. It encouraged people to organise fora and strike committees in towns, villages and workplaces, or even at an 'official gathering or arranged meeting'—in other words, at a Party or National Front meeting—and declare the establishment of a local Civic Forum. Activists should demand not only access to print media and radio, but material support including

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[185] '79. Telegram from the Embassy in Czechoslovakia to the Department of State. Prague, 7 December 1989, 08556', in Prečan, *Prague-Washington-Prague*, p. 247.

[186] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Informáční servis č. 5', f. 5 [verso].

telephones and space for organising from the state and Party. From there, a forum should elect a spokesperson and representatives, with the eventual aim of a 'society-wide structure of the civic movement'.[187] Strike Committees which had been established in many workplaces were considered as continuing to function on the same way as local fora and so were not immediately renamed as such.[188]

Even Civic Forum could recognise that in many villages and towns a 'Stalinist leadership' remained and that for many, there was 'disgust' that the television 'was not worth watching' and that many were waiting for the situation to go back to normal. Not only did Civic Forum warn that this would not happen, but that this 'reform movement', fought for by 'brave people' not scared to publicly speak up against the 'Stalinist bureaucracy' were 'the future'.[189] Just as the *KSČ* had, for forty-one years presented itself as the sole defender of working class interests and the guardian of Marxist-Leninist ideology, Civic Forum and Public Against Violence presented themselves in similar ways. Upon the resignation of Gustáv Husák on 10 December, Civic Forum in particular portrayed Havel as the 'guarantor of democracy'.[190] Later, in 1990, as the privatisation of state assets began, Civic Forum claimed to be a 'guarantor' for the process so that 'no asset could be sold off' without a public audit and the 'opportune and sufficient notification of citizens'.[191]

Having recalled members of parliament at the state and republican level and replaced them with their own unelected officials, local chapters of Civic Forum and

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[187] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Informáční servis č. 5', f. 3 [recto].

[188] Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face*, p. 162-164.

[189] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 4, 'Informáční servis č. 11', f. 5 [verso].

[190] Moravský zemský archiv, 'G565', inv. j. 32, sloha 12, 'OF Brno', *Občanské fórum* posters, [without folio].

[191] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), 'OF Litoměřice dokumentace' [currently unarchived], 'Informace OF—Privatizace v Obci', [f. 1].

Public Against Violence began to do the same at the district level. New officials not only began carrying out administrative duties, but without waiting on orders from above, began to purge their departments of anyone deemed unreliable. In Hradec Králové, seventy per cent of the district administrative workforce were forced out and replaced with new staff. Local commissions were set up to purge the local heads of the Security Services (the *SNB*), the *StB* and Public Security forces.[192] At best, the purges had echoes of 1970 and at worst, emulated them. Officers were asked a series of questions such as 'Were you a member of the *KSČ*?', 'Why were you a member?', 'Where are your party membership documents now?', and most ominously, 'What is your opinion concerning the current developments?'.[193] Also, according to reports from district Prague committees and western Bohemia, students had begun drawing up lists of those who 'should be removed or expelled' from universities, and which was 'predominantly made up of Communists and children of functionaries'.[194] Few on the opposition side, however, considered it to be a thorough purge, and rather to 'show that the revolution had actually happened' and prevent any coup.[195]

As James Krapfl has correctly pointed out, Public Against Violence's founding statement suggested it to be a rather narrower, more elite-based organisation, both in membership and aims, compared to Civic Forum in Prague.[196] Public Against Violence was founded by 'representatives of the cultural and scientific community'—specifically members of the so-called 'grey zone', as well as ecological and religious activists—and which issued their call 'to the societal and political organisations of which we are

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[192] M. Dvořák, in Vedlich, ed, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové*, pp. 36-40.

[193] M. Dvořák, in Vedlich, ed, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové*, p. 37.

[194] NA CR, 'KSČ-ÚV 1945-1989', 'Vnitrostranická informace 97' (2 Dec. 1989), f. 5.

[195] M. Dvořák, in Vedlich, ed, *Sametová revoluce v Hradci Králové*, p. 37.

[196] J. Krapfl, "Civic Forum, Public against Violence, and the Struggle for Slovakia," working paper, Berkeley Program in Eurasian and East European Studies (Spring 2009). pp. 8-11.

members'.[197] Civic Forum's founding statement, on the other hand, presented itself 'as the spokespeople of the part of Czechoslovak society who have been continuously critical of the current Czechoslovak leadership's politics' and claimed membership of Civic Forum open to anyone who agreed with its aims.[198] Civic Forum, founded by members of Charter 77, the Independent Students, religious figures, the Czechoslovak People's Party, the Czechoslovak Socialist Party, and even former and current members of the KSČ, was 'open to all sections and forces of Czechoslovak society' who wished to 'find a path towards a democratic structuring of the state through peaceful means'.[199] For participants in Civic Forum, it was a 'platform', and participation for the majority of people was in their workplace, where forum chapters began to be established.[200] Membership was generally not recorded (except a published list of contact names and addresses). The forum began to function largely as an information centre. It was an 'open organisation' where those who wanted to get involved could, to get information and share news with workplace representatives regularly heading to the local forum centre to pass on reports about the goings-on among workers.[201] Fora also used Prague as a go-between to publicise proclamations and demands more widely, in the hope that other regions would draw inspiration and draw on different tactics.[202]

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[197] 'Prvé vyhlásenie občianskeho hnutia 'Verejnosť proti násiliu', in J. Žatkuliak, *November 1989 a Slovensko: Chronológia a dokumenty (1985--1990)*. Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku a Historický ústav SAV, 1999. p. 325.

[198] M. Otáhal, Zdeněk Sládek, *Deset pražských dnů, 17.-27. listopad 1989, dokumentace.* Praha: Academia, 1990. pp. 47-48.

[199] Otáhal, Sládek, *Deset pražských dnů,* pp. 47-48.

[200] The conception of Civic Forum as a 'platform' for different views emerged in many different parts of the Bohemian crown lands. See, for example, Kutná Hora interview, 21 July 2008, and 'Diskusní klub v jihočeském ředitelství spojů', *Nový život* (8 Dec. 1989), p. 1.

[201] Group interview in Kutná Hora with technical workers by David Green, (Kutná Hora, 21 July 2008).

[202] 'Požadujeme odstoupění těch, kteří ztratili důvěru', *Nový život* (6 Dec. 1989), p. 2.

The ‘personnel changes’, as the government suggested, the management (or individual managers or directors) could be changed. Under these conditions, ‘incompetent’ managers included ‘corrupt’ individuals, those who were promoted due to their *KSČ* membership and therefore part of the ‘cadres’, or were ‘Normalisators’ (*normalizátory*) from 1969. With the gradual disbanding of workplace Communist committees, and the transformation of the Party-controlled trade union into the Independent Trade Union, the ‘reconstruction’ of factories and workplaces eventually turned to boards of management and directors. Cadre changes had already taken place since 1 December in some factories, most commonly through a simple employees’ meetings where secret votes were taking expressing confidence (or lack of confidence) in individual members of the leadership.[203] No time limit was placed on the right of the workforce to voice their ‘distrust’ in the factory management. The governments ‘recommended’ that the question of ‘trust’ in the existing management should take place at a meeting of all representatives from the workers’ collective, government, trade union and civic initiatives (Civic Forum, Public Against Violence, etc.), but without the participation of the leadership concerned. If a majority at the meeting expressed their removal, the leadership were ‘requested’ to resign. If one party expressed distrust, then the question was put to a vote at a meeting of employees.[204] On 30 November the Association of Strike Committees was founded, again in Prague in the Prognostics Institute. The Strike Committees had often cropped up where existing union institutions had failed to take a lead in the strike, or where the strike committees had not

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[203] Many local and regional archives contain documents related to cadre changes within factories, schools, offices, agricultural co-ops, etc., within their holdings on *Občanské fórum* and *Verejnost proti násiliu.* The most detailed reports are usually those in which individuals refused to stand down, where disputes were not settled or where one party appeals to a higher authority to intervene. See, as an example, Městský archiv Ostrava, ‘Občanské fórum Ostrava’, box 8.

[204] SOkA Litoměřice (pobočka Lovosice), ‘OF Litoměřice: dokumentace’ [currently uncatalogued], ‘Zpravodaj Občanské fórum Litoměřice’ (21 Apr. 1990), [f. 5].

transformed themselves into an autonomous union organisation or Civic Forum. Their aim was to 'monitor the strike demands, and guarantee help and ensure safety against any repression'. The claim was that the trade union had not the 'current trust of the workers' and that the strike committees should aim to 'call upon workers to declare their mistrust with it and demand its abolition' in favour of 'professional unions' (i.e. professionalisation and no singular, state-wide union'.[205]

The extraordinary Party congress, held between 20 and 21 December, finally produced changes among the top ranks of the Party in the spirit of *přestavba*. The position of General Secretary, created in 1971 for Gutsáv Husák, was split into two positions. Ladislav Adamec took on the more senior position of Party Chairman, who was responsible for the Party's dealings with other Parties; and Vasil Mohorita, who was elected First Secretary, was in charge of internal Party affairs. The elections of both were reportedly conducted on the basis of multiple candidates and by secret ballot. The Action Programme, based largely on documents circulated shortly before 17 November, was accepted, along with the rehabilitation of members expelled in relation to the Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact intervention.

The tensions among the Party leadership, its local functionaries and the Party grassroots that had come to the fore during *přestavba* accelerated throughout November and December 1989. The Extraordinary congress held by the *KSČ* at the end of 1989 signalled the Party's comprehensive rejection of both *přestavba* and the former Presidium which had tried to implement it. But although the Party at this moment of crisis chose to distance itself from *přestavba*, this should not be taken at face value. The official discrediting of *přestavba* by the congress helps to explain why *přestavba* has since been so widely dismissed as having been as empty, token reform programme.

[205] SObA Třeboň, 'OF 1989', box 244, folder 14,'Občanské fórum informáční servis č. 14', f. 12 [recto]

Until now, this consensus has not been challenged—even by the Communist party and its successors. In fact, the origins of the 1989 revolution lay in *přestavba.*

Conclusion

This thesis is a reinterpretation of Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution. It places the Czechoslovak Communist Party (*KSČ*) at the centre of its analysis to better understand how forty-one years of Communist rule came to an end. It offers a very different approach form conventional accounts of 1989. It has taken the revolution, hitherto understood as a Prague phenomenon, and brought the many towns, cities, and villages throughout all regions of Czechoslovakia into its analysis. Uncovering and analysing these local archival materials revealed how Communists responded to the revolution at all levels of its hierarchy: from the leadership based in Prague to local functionaries and the rank-and-file membership of the Party. Although the *KSČ* did not advocate change through popular protest, its policies of *přestavba* (restructuring) and *demokratizace* (democratisation) inspired and encouraged others, especially the Socialist Youth Union (*SSM*), to do so. During the revolution, the tensions which *přestavba* stoked among the Communist Party leadership, its functionaries and membership ultimately led to the Party's loss of its 'leading role' in society.

Central to understanding the revolution and the *KSČ*'s responses during it are the policies of *přestavba* and *demokratizace.* Although invariably dismissed as having been merely cynical or 'token' gestures of reform, regional source materials reveal instead that, at all levels of the *KSČ*, members genuinely struggled to implement reform during the last 1980s. The way that the Party leadership attempted to implement these reforms proved crucial. Factory directors, local functionaries, and Party members all came under increasing pressure from the Party leadership both to raise their own political activity within the Party, and also to accept more 'responsibility' for their work. In its attempts

to devolve more responsibility and (at least limit) some power from the centre, the Central Committee Presidium still intended to maintain the Party's overarching influence, particularly in the creation and direction of policy. The decision not to start reform at the top of the Party but rather at its lowest levels, particularly among grassroots and workplace committees, ironically caused the very instability the Party had been trying to avoid.

Previous historical accounts of the revolution have tended to emphasise the cadre changes that took place within the Central Committee and its Presidium. Most notably this included the replacement of Gustáv Husák with Miloš Jakeš as General Secretary in 1987, and the resignation of Lubomír Štrougal as Prime Minister in 1988, and his successor Ladislav Adamec. As one of the longest-serving members of the Presidium and heavily-implicated in the post-1968 purges in the Party, Jakeš's appointment, in particular, is frequently held up as evidence of the Party's inability to shake off the legacy of the Prague Spring and its unwillingness to reform. The present thesis argues that such an approach to the *KSČ*—focussed on its leading care and personalities—is inadequate to explain the complex nature of Communist rule, and of *přestavba* in particular. Furthermore, the absence, until now, of any study which has sought to engage with Communist Party materials beyond those held in the Party's central archives only adds to the simplifications and generalisations which historians have made. While attempts to study the Party's rhetoric, or 'discourse', have provided one way of understanding its policies and the nature of *KSČ* rule, they have been unable to offer deeper analyses of policy implantation or to do justice to how complicit district and regional Party committees were in the wider governance of the state.

In studying the actions not just of the leadership, but also those of local functionaries and the wider Communist Party membership, *přestavba* had definite

effects on both the Party and society. As this thesis has argued, one of the underlying aims of *přestavba* was to change the Party's relationship with society, and also how the leadership and the lower Party structures worked in relation to each other. This did not mean an end to the Party's 'leading role', nor did it mean removing Marxism-Leninism as the state's official ideology. What it did mean was a series of reforms, aimed at creating distance between the Party (which would become an 'overseer' of policy and the state's functioning), and increasingly move responsibility for the day-to-day running of the state to the National Front federal and republican governments, and other state administrative bodies. To do all this—and at the same time resist reform of the Party leadership—the Party had to increase the responsibility of mangers, firms and the National Front. Between 1986 and 1989, this appears to have been done by 'encouraging' officials to be more 'creative' or 'responsible' in their work.

Přestavba and *demokratizace* came to be applied to four areas of life between 1986 and 1989: economic restructuring, social restructuring, Party restructuring, and the democratisation of political life. Many of the fundamentals of the policy were copied and applied throughout society, and led to much greater use of secret, multi-candidate elections (across the National Front parties and organisations, as well as in state enterprises), attempts to 'consult' the wider population on Party policy, greater discussion of formerly taboo subjects in the media and other creative industries, and increased criticism beyond the boundaries of what had previously been considered 'acceptable'. The common goal uniting these policies, speeches and Party directives was the desire to devolve 'responsibility' from the *KSČ* to other sections of society (chiefly the National Front), and also from the Party leadership to its members. One of the chief failings of *přestavba* lay in the rejection of many sections of society to accept greater responsibility in their work, at the same time as the Party leadership appeared to

be absolving itself of any responsibility for past mistakes. Long-standing grievances, alongside these new demands, increased tensions throughout the Party during the implementation of *přestavba.*

This thesis, which acknowledges its debt to Michal Pullmann's pioneering work in first addressing the question of how the Communist Party variously interpreted *přestavba*, offers the first comprehensive analysis of how these pronouncements and actual policies worked in practice across the Czechoslovak state. *Přestavba* redefined the role of the National Front, and all the political parties and social organisations within it. From at least as early as May 1989, its constituent parts began to demand greater freedom and to exert real pressure upon the *KSČ* for more reform. This thesis argues that the Socialist Youth Union offers a clear and highly significant example of this sort of pressure in action. *Přestavba* increased tensions within the *SSM* over several years as it struggled to remain both a single, united organisation under the *KSČ* and National Front, and also represent the views of its (increasingly radical) membership. This alternative interpretation of the *SSM* explains why it was hardly a surprise that *SSM* functionaries in Prague decided to support independent students' demands for a student march on 17 November 1989. The decision by the *SSM* in Prague, and its leadership to support the resultant student strikes, seen in this context, was the climax of its attempts to keep the *SSM* united at the expense of its relationship with the *KSČ*. The unforeseen consequence of this was that the *SSM* directly contributed to spreading the news of the revolution around the country, encouraging its members to take part in strike action, lead negotiations with authorities, and play a leading role in the early development of Czechoslovakia's revolution.

This revisionist account of how strikes and protests spread throughout Czechoslovakia fundamentally changes how historians understand what happened

during the revolution, its course and its meanings. It challenges the long-held assumption that workers were encouraged to join the general strike by groups of Prague students travelling 'to the countryside' to spread the word. In fact, as this thesis has argued, it was the *SSM*, through its statements, newspapers and members, were much more significant in spreading news of the revolution. The *SSM* union structure provided a cloak of legitimacy for students who might have been afraid or reluctant to strike had the *SSM* leadership not authorised support them. The *SSM* in many parts of the country provided striking students with financial and technical assistance at a time when access to even basic things such as paper was restricted. It acted as a bridge in negotiations between university management and striking students, encouraging public discussions and allowing some student protests to tai enlace legally. And on top of this, the *SSM*'s committee structure in workplaces enabled workers to subvert Communist officials and even Militia guards posted outside factories to publicly discuss the police violence of 17 November, and even begin 'dialogue' with their directors.

The tensions that *přestavba* brought to the surface between the *KSČ* leadership and wider Party membership raised two important questions. First, what *přestavba* meant (and by implication, what the Party's conception of 'Socialism' was); and secondly, whether or not the Party still had a 'leading role' in society. These two questions not only became central demands of the opposition, but also part of debates held within the Party itself. By November 1989, much of the Party had lost confidence that the Presidium was willing to reform, not because of an absence of reform policies, but because the Presidium itself had been avoiding change at the top. This apparent failure resulted in the Presidium quickly losing authority during the revolution. It ultimately led to the wholesale rejection, by a majority in the Czechoslovak Communist

Party , of the former Presidium, *přestavba*, and much of what the Party had stood for in the late 1980s.

The Party membership's rejection of *přestavba* during the extraordinary Party congress in late December 1989 had important consequences. In the short term, much of the membership refused to support the Party leadership or, at least, manifest support publicly, largely because it was not convinced that the leadership could lead society in the direction it promised. This enabled the revolution to proceed smoothly and seemingly unopposed, leading to notions of a 'Velvet' revolution. In the longer term, it led to the widespread assumption that *přestavba* was neither a genuine reform movement nor of any real relevance to the 1989 revolution in Czechoslovakia. The extraordinary Party congress, in particular, showed the Party membership at its most critical, roundly rejecting the previous leadership's attempts at reform. With even Communist members critical of *přestavba* and of the Presidium for not being 'serious' about reform, it is little wonder that it has taken until now for historians to look more evenly at the *KSČ* during the late 1980s, rather than just dismissing the period out of hand. Timothy Garton Ash has suggested that although many theories have been put forward about the causes of the revolution, as soon as one cause is identified as *the* cause, we instinctively know it is wrong.[1] Whilst *přestavba* might not have been the singular cause of Czechoslovakia's revolution, it certainly was one of them.

Historians have discouraged much debate on *přestavba*, and the role of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in the revolution in a variety of creative ways. They have asserted that the reforms remained 'on paper' only, leaning towards the opinion that the leadership never truly 'believed' in the reform, *přestavba*, or much of what they uttered in public. They even have played 'what if' history, not just for fun but to

[1] T. G. Ash, '1989!', *New York Review of Books* (5 Nov. 2009).

apparently show how Czechoslovakia could have had a Hungarian- or Polish-style transition in 1989. But in essence they all agree that *even if* the revolution had not began on 17 November, and *even if* the Party had held out until the eighteenth Party congress in 1990, there were no suitable reformist candidates to replace Jakeš and Husák.[2] In short, the Party would have inevitably have lost power. If this thesis suggests anything, it is that human agency—and in this case, that of thousands of Party functionaries and officials throughout the country—cannot simply be ignored.

This thesis goes against much of this existing literature which suggests that the 1989 revolution either represented the 'collapse' of the old regime, or the 'creation' of a new one. Instead, it argues the continuities existed between the pre-revolutionary period of the late 1980s and the revolutionary period of 1989-1990. James Krapfl has suggested that the search for the exact causes of the revolution is largely 'an academic question' and that instead the lessons of 1989 lie in what its implications are for the creation of a new kind of society.[3] This thesis instead suggests a different way of looking at Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution. Ignoring the Communist Party in studies of the revolution allows for the continued perception that the revolution was a struggle between two diametrically opposed forces. In understanding evens from the regime's perspective, this division seems less clear. Whilst many studies will remain defined by whether or not they perceive 1989 to have either been a 'collapse' or an 'overthrow', a third argument can be proposed: that it was neither, but rather something in between.

Historians of Czechoslovakia's 1989 revolution would do well to draw upon studies of other revolutions to shape and guide future debate. The treatment of the *KSČ* in this debate is crucial. Commonly, historians have referred to it (and to the other fallen

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[2] J. Suk, 'Zlom mezi „totalitou" a „demokracií": Československý rok 1989 v alternativách', *Soudobé dějiny* 16 (2009), pp. 557-604.

[3] J. Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face* (Ithaca and London, 2013), p. 7.

Communist parties of East-Central Europe) as the *ancién régime* (the old order). But as Simon Schama aptly has pointed out in his analysis of pre-revolutionary France, far from being a neutral description of 'what once was', the phrase is politically charged. Loaded with meaning, it suggests a system which is 'culturally atrophied', 'freighted with associations of both traditionalism' and 'lacking self-modernization'. More revealingly, it also suggests that its replacement, the 'New Order', is positive.[4] The parallels with how Communist Czechoslovakia has been perceived since the revolution are obvious. The late 1980s remains largely neglected in the scholarship because, as many historians and others have suggested, it was a time of stagnation when anything of little importance happened. As this thesis has shown, even Communists proved as willing as non-Communists to turn their backs on *přestavba*, directly contributing to the general consensus that the late 1980s could be dismissed as an irrelevance and therefore ignored.

Czechoslovakia was not static in the 1980s. As Schama neatly put it in realtion to pre-revolutionary France, the country was changing, reforming and modernising.[5] This thesis has shown how *přestavba*, in less than two years, had begun to change the economic and cultural life of the country. Furthermore, democratisation also began to change the nature of Communist rule, and how the Party related to both its membership and wider society. The archives are brimming with evidence showing the extent to which the *KSČ* had started a process of reform. Practical economic reforms were being introduced, and the *KSČ* leadership kept track and closely followed their developments. It is largely irrelevant whether or not individual members of the *KSČ* truly believed in *přestavba*. Just as the ideas of collective responsibility hold over modern parliamentary

[4] S. Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London, 1989), pp. 184-185.

[5] Schama, *Citizens,* especially pp. 185-186.

government with the private views of individual ministers rarely considered, so too it seems absurd to expect each Party member to have agreed with the policies which they were being asked to implement. Historians should spend less time trying to decipher the individual motives of Party members, and instead ask whether or not policies were actually being implemented, to what extent, and how effectively.

This thesis is a reaction against a history of the revolution as told solely form the perspective of those who overthrew the *KSČ*. It came about as a response to the evidence found across the country's many district, regional and state archives. The arguments presented here did not come out of a desire to give a view of the revolution from the Communist side of the barricades, nor even of individual 'hidden' local histories of the revolution. What it does seek to do is to begin the search for a more balanced understanding of the revolution, both in terms of what happened and what it can tell us about the pre- and post-revolutionary regime in Czechoslovakia. As Radek Kotlaba, a student in the revolution, wrote on the twentieth anniversary of 1989, many students who had participated in the revolution returned to their families when it was all over, 'never to be able to find common ground' with their parents again.[6] The same can be said for many Czechs' and Slovaks' relationship with their recent Communist past, a relationship that today still remains contentious and divisive. This thesis hopes to offer contribution to the finding of that common ground.

[6] Radek Kotlaba, *Sametová revoluce v Ústí and Labem* (Ústí nad Labem, 2009), p. 57.

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