MANIFESTO
of the Revolutionary Socialist Party,
CZECHOSLOVAKIA

4 New Pence.

An I.M.G Publication
According to the authoritative French newspaper, Le Monde, the trial of Czech revolutionists will start on February 8, 1971. According to latest reports the trial will be held in camera and no observers will be permitted. The 26 comrades who are being tried are all members of the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Czechoslovakia and have been attacked by the Czech party organ, Rude Pravo, as “trotskyists,” who seek to overthrow socialism. Thus all the vile slanders of the 30s and the 40s are once again being regurgitated and used against our Czech comrades. However the international balance of forces is, today, somewhat different and all the propaganda from the Stalinist arsenal cannot deceive the new revolutionary layers and currents that exist today in most parts of the world and which demonstrated, at the time of the Soviet invasion, their solidarity with the anti-bureaucratic struggle of the Czech masses.

The comrades of the Revolutionary Socialist Party are being accused of plotting to overthrow socialism. What a bizarre allegation. What a disgusting farce. It only serves to demonstrate the contempt which the Stalinist bureaucracy has, not only for the masses under its direct subjugation, but even for the hundreds of thousands of socialists elsewhere in the world. To imagine that anyone will take the charges against our comrades seriously is to live in a completely isolated bureaucratic dream world. What our comrades want is to destroy socialism but to create it. What they want is to destroy the power of the bureaucracy and replace it with proletarian democracy based on workers’ councils. And the fact that it is revolutionary Marxists who are on trial and NOT members of right-wing groups which surfaced during the Prague Spring, indicates clearly who the bureaucracy is really frightened of and whose ideas really worry them. The growing revolt against the bureaucratic structures in Eastern Europe, the most recent manifestation of which was the workers uprisings in Poland this year, is a clear sign that political revolutions are on the agenda in the near future.

In September 1969 we published in The Black Dwarf, which was then edited by our comrades, the manifesto of the Czech revolutionists with an introduction by Comrade Ian Fraser, who translated the documents from the original. In addition we published the text of a leaflet distributed by our comrades on the anniversary of the invasion. We reproduce these in this pamphlet to make it absolutely clear that far from seeking to overthrow socialism, our comrades our striving to establish it in Czechoslovakia. The bureaucracy can have a hundred secret trials, but it will not be able to suppress the spirit of anti-bureaucratic revolt which our comrades represent.

We therefore appeal to all revolutionaries to support the comrades on trial by carrying out solidarity actions with them. In particular we appeal to the militants inside the C.P. and the Y.C.L. to protest to their ‘fraternal’ party against the repression it is carrying out. We say to the cold war anti-Communists: our comrades do not need your support or that of your friends, because they are even more opposed to the capitalist system and its different manifestations. They are in solidarity with the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people against American imperialism. So don’t try to use their trial for your professional anti-communist activities.

SOLIDARITY WITH PETR UHL AND THE OTHER IMPRISONED COMRADES!

FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKERS DEMOCRACY!

FOR THE OVERTHROW OF THE BUREAUCRACY!

FOR THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION!

Political Committee,
International Marxist Group,
British Section of the Fourth International.

7th February, 1970.
Introduction

The Revolutionary Socialist Party (Czechoslovakia) is the first definite organisation to have crystallised out of the numerous discussion circles and groups which formed inside and outside the party in Czechoslovakia in the 'Prague Spring' and thereafter. Before January 1968 opposition was confined to individuals or at most small groups, who might make criticisms which a few people heard sympathetically but who had no perspective for action and no thought of building an organisation outside dreams. From January to August and beyond, the figure of Dubcek, the slogan 'socialism with a human face' and the April Action Programme of the CPCz made the public at large see the CP as again a genuine popular organisation capable of leading the country through revolutionary change. Many present members of the RSP joined the CP in the Dubcek enrolment. The invasion, and especially the clandestine August plenum of the central committee in the first few days of the occupation, only increased the solidarity of the people behind the party leadership. It was only with the gradual concessions to Moscow, the reintroduction of censorship and the replacement of Dubcek by Husak in April that enough people started to listen to those who had been insisting all along that real change could not come from above. The RSP then formed is made up of the workers and students most active and conscious in the popular movement of 1968. They propose to continue the struggle of that period for workers’ control of economic decisions, for freedom of the press, television and radio and for a truly socialist education. At the same time they seek to play a leading part in the development of new forms of struggle for national liberation and the eventual attainment of true workers’ power after the overthrow of the Czech and international bureaucracy controlled from Moscow. They do not have a single party line (readers of the Proclamation and the appeal to the youth will note several differences, notably in the relative weight assigned to legal and illegal forms of struggle). Some of them reject the principle of democratic centralism, feeling that each base unit or individual should be free to hold its own opinions and act on its own initiative, and that orders should be replaced by co-ordination and mutual agreement, but the group is too new and still too small to have clearly worked out the practical organisational consequences of this. They are, however, producing a basic course in revolutionary socialism under the general title of BUREAUCRACY NO – REVOLUTION YES, of which the first volume THE BASIS OF THE SYSTEM has already been duplicated in about 1,000 copies. It contains summaries of Bukharin's 1918 programme for the Bolsheviks; Kollontai on THE FAMILY IN THE COMMUNIST STATE; Trotsky, THE REVOLUTION BETRAYED (extracts); Milovan Djilas, The New Class; Socialisme ou Barbarie, programme statement; demands of the Workers' Councils in Hungary and Poland, 1956; Kuron and Modzelewski, Open Letter to the Party; Theses to the 9th Congress of the Fourth International, 1968, one chapter; H. Weber, The Nature of the Soviet Bureaucracy; E. Mandel, Bureaucracy, Part III of the book; E. Mandel (Germain), The Cultural Revolution and Bureaucratic Degeneration; M. Barmann, Stalinism and Reformism; Serge Mallet, Bureaucracy and Technocracy in the socialist countries, extracts; Mihail Markovic, The possibilities of conquering bureaucracy in post capitalist society, extracts; Vladimir Skalsky, Czechoslovakia and Socialism; Dragoslav Sleksa, Views on the basis of the system in our Republic, extract from article; Josef Sykora, The State and Bureaucracy, a manuscript on the theme State and Revolution. The eclecticism is not haphazard, accidental or due to confusion; the RSP wishes to educate its members as conscious, confident, critically thinking revolutionaries. Their success in this hitherto is reflected in the fact that the members are among the few in Czechoslovakia who are free from illusions about Western democracy and from the extremes of nationalist anti-Russian sentiment.

The RSP has two main centres of activity, in the unofficial trade union committees and in the student movement. About half a dozen of the thirty or so members of the Student Parliament of Charles University, Prague, are members, with some dozen sympathisers, and although the rest take a more moderate line they co-operate readily in activities. Members are prominent in the unofficial TU co-ordinating committees in Prague and in factory committees, notably in the Metalworkers and university employees unions. The RSP has connections with the Printers' Union which enabled it to bring out 100,000 copies of the leaflet (described in the August 24 Observer articles, signed Workers, Students, Intellectuals). This organic connection with the broad popular movement, their sense of being merely a part of that movement and not possessors of an absolute truth endowed with a historical mission, their realism about their capabilities, their willingness to learn from the masses, their humility in the best sense, their freedom from dogmatism and sectarianism and the extent to which their ideas have been formed in struggle rather than being theoretical abstractions are their strengths, and distinguish them from many Western revolutionary groups. Their weaknesses are their isolation — they have few contacts in their own country outside Prague, none at all in other East European countries, and only very tenuous ones with the revolutionary movement in the West — and their organisational weakness, which is especially serious in face of the police terror which seems to be rapidly growing in Czechoslovakia. They are well aware of the first weakness, but have hitherto devoted all too little attention to the second, and have not yet acquired the habits of clandestinity which will be necessary to preserve them through a period of severe repression. But for the moment they can rely on the same protection against the police from the TU movement as other activists, though the fact that they are members of an organisation makes them more vulnerable, and if they can use this period to regroup and retrench they could play a very significant role in the movement which might make 1968 into the 1905 of a worldwide October.

Many groups duplicated versions of this text and distributed them, and the whole country was aware of it by the 21st and in the main observed the points. There was, however,
no organisation of the resistance to the police on the 20th and following days by the RSP or any other group; it was a spontaneous response to police provocation.

IAN FRASER

What is to be done?

It seems that the victories of January 1968 are still alive in the thoughts of the people: the breaking free from fear, the will of the workers to decide their own affairs, the free discussion without any censorship or restriction, the confrontation of different views, conceptions and programmes; the idea of trade-unions as a tool of workers defence and not as a tool of the bureaucracy serving to oppress them.

On the other hand we have been cured by many illusions. We no longer believe in the myth of legality, since we know that the bureaucracy uses the law to its own interests and against the people and we are prepared to break these anti-people laws, to combine legal work in the trade-unions with illegal work gradually; if necessary, abandon legal forms of struggle. We do not believe in the realisation of our demands within the framework of the existing system, since their dynamic threatens the interests of our bureaucracy and the international bureaucracy and they will not abandon their privileges voluntarily.

The attempts at decentralisation also tend to evoke the self-activity of the people and this constitutes a danger for the bureaucratic regime, and arouses a tendency to a takeover of power in the factories and workplaces by workers' councils, which will no longer be answerable either to ministries or to the bureaucratic centre. We do not believe in the Action Programme of the CPCz — we know that it is humane, that it was written with the best intentions and that we can agree with it in many respects, but we are aware that it is the programme of the liberal wing in the leadership of the CPCz, and that its aims must align — we all saw this in August — with the interests of the international bureaucracy, led by the rulers in the Kremlin. The August invasion demonstrated that this programme is not correct, for it is unworkable. We no longer believe in a system where the leadership, even when it is as humane as Dubcek, decides for the workers without them, for only the workers themselves have the right to decide their own destiny. We do not believe in socialism in one country, or that the power of the bureaucracy can be broken in a small isolated country like Czechoslovakia, which would from then on have "gone its own way"; it had its own "socialism with a human face"; for socialism is only one and its face is human, otherwise it is not socialism. We do not believe in neutrality, since in a world of social struggles we cannot be neutral, as we were in 1956, and as the Poles, Hungarians and Germans were in August 1968 — that is not neutrality, that's a crime. We do not believe in help from UNO, we do not believe in "peaceful coexistence" of imperialism and the Kremlin counter revolutionaries.

We believe only in ourselves, in our own reason, our own understanding and powers. When we say ourselves, we are not thinking only of the workers, technicians, farmers, students and intellectuals in our country, but of all those who are in a similar social position anywhere in the world, for we have understood that our struggle and our organisation must have an international character. Our position is very little different from the position of the workers in the neighbouring peoples democracies and it is above all with them what we must link up, and it is finally different from that of the people in the USSR, where social oppression is often joined to oppression of nationalities in the Ukraine, the Baltic Republics, Transcaucasia etc. Even if the political awareness of the people in these countries is often lower than here — and it is lowest in Russia itself — they are our allies, our brothers, who are gradually becoming our comrades in struggle, just like the French and Italian workers, just like the oppressed people of Africa and Latin America, just like the workers of the whole world.

The 21st of August and the days following it must not remain the only period of resistance; opposition to Husak's police terror, which is increasing and enveloping the entire country, must become (otherwise it would lose all its mass character) more organised, better worked out and each one of us must link himself to this work, for otherwise our perspectives will be lost for many years. That is why it is necessary gradually to work out a programme for your factory, your workplace, because it will be YOU who will decide the future economic policy as the supreme and sole owners of the means of the means of production with which you work (tools, machines, equipment, means of transport, soil, etc).

The ideas which emerge from your discussion about the economic, social and political programme of your factory together with your views and experiences should be written down, put up on posters/wall newspapers/distributed as widely as possible, passed on to workers of other factories, spread about in town districts and villages. It is your right and responsibility to know how the managers run the factory and what pressure is exerted on them by higher organs — trade-union leadership, ministries, party apparatus etc. You should know the prices of raw materials, the prices of the products and how they are determined. It is your right and responsibility to know whether you are working for consumption or for further production, or whether you are producing for storage. It is essential to know what rewards, shares, prizes, etc., the economic leaders get. This is your right and you should try and attain it through RTUMFC — REVOLUTIONARY TRADE UNION MOVEMENT FACTORY COMMITTEE, an official organisation. You should make use of this right of workers' control of your own initiative. Publish the facts you discover and inform all the workers. Any form of "participation" of the workers in running factories and enterprises must be rejected. Councils of workers which do not and under the existing system cannot have any real influence on economic management should not in the name of the workers accept a share in the responsibility for an economic policy which is heading for total collapse.

NO PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT, BUT WORKERS' CONTROL TODAY AND WORKERS' MANAGEMENT TOMORROW
That is our slogan for the attainment of
POLITICAL power by the Czech people. In this respect it is very important to link up with workers from other factories; both from the same industry and same trade-union and also outside irrespective of what trade-union you belong to. Horizontal links are forbidden but it is up to you to defy this prohibition: working in the RTUMFC you have full rights to contacts, exchange of information and experiences and to co-ordination of further activity irrespective of trade-union membership. Only your own activity is a real check to the gradual totalisation of our life and only direct action can prevent a return to the darkest days of Stalinitism. Only resistance and the unity of us all can hinder the bureaucracy from repression against students, intellectuals, trade-unionists or any of us. It will be difficult to reintroduce political trials in a country where the workers are prepared to go on strike in protest against these trials. Strike action can have tragic results for the bureaucracy. This joint united resistance against the bureaucratic centre is also the political creed of our Revolutionary Socialist Party. In conditions of active resistance we can struggle for our concepts against others, we can justify them in mutual discussion: in an atmosphere of fear and political trials we will become a small, isolated sect, since we can have no influence over people largely cynical and despondent. Not only our party, but each one of us is a guarantee of the future development of our society. Everyone must think deeply about what he has done and what he could do for our liberation.

Let us try to inquire into the essence of our system. There can be no talk of socialism here, we are not talking only about Czechoslovakia. If we examine this system, we must evidently always come to the necessity of an antibureaucratic, genuinely socialist revolution. It turns out that the CPCz and the unions are bound by warnings and instructions from above, from the moment they are prepared to respect them. Thus they are progressively becoming, just like the state and economic apparatus, the army, the police and the courts, mere tools of bureaucratic power. Two things follow from this:

1. Not to abandon the positions which the workers have, especially in the TUs, RTUM FCs. We must hold them chiefly because it is within our power to prevent repressions and safeguard the interests of the workers in the face of the higher organs. It is of course not possible to have any illusions that the unions and the CPCz could become really revolutionary instruments of the workers. The decisive factor will of course obviously be the struggles of the independent organisations of the workers against the bureaucratic power. The situation hitherto - especially in the unions - permits a certain faction in the committees of the RTUM to agree in advance on united action against the conservative minority which may consider itself bound by party discipline. In numerous party organisations it is then possible to declare a complete boycott of commands from above, wait for the dissolution and set up other forms of struggle after dissolution - illegal work by the revolutionary part of the organisation, of course strictly conspiratorial. It could pay to follow a policy of not voluntarily leaving the CPCz, but merely disengaging from it. This will cause the bureaucracy a lot of difficulties, and at the same time help the polarisation of forces: those who will progress further, those who retire into private life and those who sell themselves to Husak.

2. Gradually to build up illegal groups, which will work alongside the legal activity in the RTUM and the CPCz, and if we eventually lose our positions in those organisations, will go over to exclusively illegal activity, of which we spoke at the beginning. It is important for them to have an influence on the workers, even if nobody can know that they belong to such a group. They must also have contacts in other factories, which should always be maintained only between two comrades, so as to minimise the risk of exposure. Do not keep any printed matter in rooms at the factory: rely on your memory, not on a notebook or address book. Collect information, meet, pass on the information, publish it on wall newspapers. Do not let us allow ourselves to be driven into retreat, let us not turn our backs just out of cowardice. The atmosphere at workplaces depends only on our courage and cunning. We are the overwhelming majority and against us there stand only a handful of people.

At the present time in our country discussions are going about variants of the overall social programme. Our conception is that of a socialist, self-managing society, of direct democracy of the producers. It is that of the fulfilment of the age-old ideals of free peoples, ideals of liberty, equality and brotherhood, which can be reached only by the removal of class differences and the creation of the possibility for everyone to decide individually about his own life, about his work and its results. But for our society to reach these goals, it must - we are convinced - pass through a revolutionary process, must first of all destroy the bureaucracy as a social stratum, which means that they must take political and economic power from it. This is connected also with the destruction of all the repressive instruments of its power, especially the SIS, State Security Police (Czech KGB), the army, the so-called people's militia and the censorship, which finally destroys the state apparatus and introduce general arming of the people. The working people, which will thus take power, will combine according to its own interests in various organisations, which will put forward various conceptions and programmes. But its will will be expressed through its own non-party institutions - councils at the workplaces, in the various branches of industry, a central council of workers and organs of self-management of the people in towns and villages. These councils will no longer be responsible to a bureaucratic centre, but to the workers, who in an atmosphere of free discussion, freedom of the press and of assembly and association will themselves see to it that their representatives express their interests. We are, however, of the opinion that our people cannot set out on this road alone: the geographic and economic situation does not allow that, the power of the international bureaucracy run from the Kremlin will not permit it. The revolutionary process must spread to other countries: in co-operation with the people of those countries we want to live and work in the future. But not even our central and eastern Europe can be separated from other countries - socialism pre-supposes
the co-operation and brotherhood of the people of the whole world. And therefore our sympathies are on the side of the Latin American partisans, the French students and workers, who in May 1968 gave to the workers of Western Europe a socialist alternative for their future; on the side of the Vietnamese, who are fighting against American imperialism. For the world is only one, and people must decide whether they will accept the alternative of Messrs. Nixon, Brezhnev or Franco, the alternative of passivity, fear, and unfreedom, or the alternative of a free, socialist society. We believe that the Czechoslovak people will take one of the first places in this decision. Our programme will be constantly perfected and will be influenced by the sharpening tensions and contradictions in our countries between the workers, the intelligentsia and the students on the one hand and the bureaucracy, led by the pro-Moscow power centre, on the other. That is how we understand the class viewpoint in this historical period.

This programme cannot be realised unless numerous groups of vanguard workers and technicians, intellectuals and students exert every effort to organise. The organisations which arise, irrespective of differences in conception and programme would have to work together and carry out actions in common: they could join in a Front of popular resistance. Some of you may possibly join our party, and gradually gain contact. We would like to co-operate with other organisations and parties.

An important place in the popular resistance will of course be taken by the young, who are not bound by family responsibilities and worries and who were most severely hit in August – they lost their perspectives and again became deprived of rights. The bureaucracy will be convinced that this youth without rights is a historical powderkeg of great explosive force. We all consider our programme for the next period to be:

1. To support and uphold as much as possible popular activity, independent actions by the workers, to keep each other informed and to maintain as close contact as possible with workers of other factories.
2. To hold the positions gained in the CPCz, in the unions at workplaces.

3. At the same time to found small illegal groups on a strictly conspiratorial basis, to link up together, to carry out activities in concert and to work out in them a programme for anti-bureaucratic struggle, for the taking of power, a programme for the future socialist society.

To All Young People

To all who have not yet got scared and who want to continue resistance to those who at home and abroad brought about the shameful occupation, drove thousands of people into emigration and robbed us young people of our future.

On the 21st of August many young people want to show that they will never be reconciled to the occupation. Pamphlets have appeared, there has been an attempt at a broadcast, the police have begun to strike back. But arrests must not dissuade us – on the contrary we must try to help the arrested. In future struggles we must avoid their errors. In a time of increasing police terror it is not possible as hitherto – i.e. work legally in official organisations. The contemporary conditions do not allow a classic guerrilla war, but the maturity of our people makes possible other, often far more effective forms of resistance, as we were convinced in autumn last year. For the moment it must not go as far as open confrontation. Separately, the organisations of resistance are for the moment weak and disunited. It is necessary to form a popular front of resistance. The Revolutionary Socialist Party also wants to be part of this popular front. Its programme can be expressed in a single sentence: for our future to be the future of a free people, which itself decides about our own affairs, it is absolutely indispensable to have the conscious and resolute activity of each one of us, for liberty cannot be won as a gift, freedom has to be fought for.

Our enemy is a small group of people who decide almost everything which happens in the state and to the state. The interests of this handful of people – presidium of the CC of the CPCz, party secretaries, ministers of key branches, heads of party organisations at the ministries of defence and the interior – are directly served by 22,000 party apparatchiks, 50,000 employees of the ministry of the interior, 50,000 professional soldiers, 100,000 legal and administrative employees, 50,000 members of the economic bureaucracy. And this upper 250,000 rules 14 million citizens of the CSSR, exploits them economically and oppresses them politically and morally. They are supported by their like in the eastern European countries, and just like them bow to Moscow. Our allies are above all the workers in the eastern European countries, who are in the same position as we are, the progressive layers, all the oppressed people of the whole world.

The centre of our activity cannot be legal work in the official organisations, before the eyes of the public and unfortunately also of the fuzz. We became aware in practice of the anti-popular nature of our laws, thanks to the benevolent interpretation of them by the state power, in the period of intensification of popular activity after January 1968. As soon as the state power could support itself with tanks and guns the interpretation of them drastically changed. We know that the laws are only a tool in the hands of the rulers, and that they will not afford us any guarantee. And therefore we must logically go over to illegal forms of struggle.

Wherever you are – in towns, in villages, factories, schools, in clubs, in gangs – organise form groups of active resistance. Such groups should not have more than ten members. Be careful when making contact with other groups. Study possible forms of revolutionary activity. Make use of the abilities of all your members – if there are among you printers, chemists, pyrotechnicians radio wipers, etc. Make use of the official organisation too – seek out these people with similar views, make agreements with them on common activity, and on the basis of activity gradually win them for our revolution. Form co-ordinating cells for whole factories, schools and villages. A basic principle would have to be voluntary discipline. Decisions would have to come from the initiative of separate groups. A presupposition of our activity is the obtaining of information about the situation here and abroad. A fair
amount of information can be gained from foreign radio: also contact reliable members of the RTU students. Do not undervalue the study of literature and discussion of theoretic questions. Make use of your own experience in factories, areas where you live etc. Learn how to manage things about which you have something to say, learn self-management in practice.

The steadily worsening economic and political crisis is facing the power centre with difficulties which the centre will try to solve by attacking the living standards of the population – the functionaries of the CPC will not want to give up their privileges. We must defend ourselves against these measures by protest actions, e.g. if prices of public transport are raised, block it completely for several hours by various means. Use the method of passive resistance – perhaps by literal carrying out of existing rules and regulations. In August we became convinced that even without weapons it is possible to fight effectively against superior forces. We have no expectations of instant success, we must employ a tactic of “creeping revolution”. We became convinced that a single isolated country cannot attain freedom – a state where the people itself decides its own destiny. In the other east European countries too there smoulders resistance to the police oppressors native and soviet. In the coming east European spring we will possibly have to go against tanks, for freedom does not fall from heaven for anyone. A people which does not fight its way to freedom will never be free!

signed:
Young members of the Revolution
Socialist Party of Czechoslovakia.
The very fact that you discuss, copy out and pass on this appeal will be a good start to your activity.

TO ALL – TO ALL – TO ALL!
CZECHOSLOVAK REALITY

The people of our country condemns the invasion of the intervention troops into the CSSR on August 21 1968 and the associated retreat from the post-January policy, which have produced and are increasing the crisis situation in the state. We protest against this state of affairs in the following way: by not
THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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- First Balance Sheet
- Czech Students’ Appeal
- The Prague Club’s Program
- Fidel Castro’s Position
  By Joseph Hansen

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