

# Labour Focus on Eastern Europe

United States Army Base, Taszár, Hungary



**László Andor** Hungary and the US Invasion of Iraq **Boris Kagarlitsky** The Russian Communist Party and the 2003 Elections  
**Catherine Samary** Old and New Europe Against War **Gavin Rae** Polish Social Democracy  
**Colin Meade** End of the Havel Presidency in the Czech Republic **Peter Gowan** The Bush Strategy and the Possibility of Overstretch  
**Michael Newman** British and US Response to the Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968

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**László Andor**

## **Hungarian politics and the US-UK invasion of Iraq**

Hungarian participation in the Iraq war has been determined by a few circumstances that had emerged in the post-communist transition period. It was clear from the end of 1989, that the country would follow a Euro-Atlantic orientation, and the political elites wanted to join both European Union and NATO, whichever comes first. NATO membership materialized first in 1999 and by the end of 2002 it was announced that May 1, 2004 would be the date of EU accession. However, on security issues, the leading power of NATO, the United States of America has enjoyed an overwhelming influence over government positions in Hungary. Whatever requests came in previous wars - Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan - the Hungarian government was eager to fulfil. It would have been very hard to change this course before or during the invasion of Iraq by the armies of the United States and the United Kingdom. However, anti-war opinions among the public have become much wider and stronger than at previous cases.

### **Hungary in the US alliance**

Hungary became member of NATO in March 1999, together with Poland and the Czech Republic. Just a few weeks after joining the allegedly defensive alliance, we were at war with a neighbouring state that had not attacked us - and did not attack any other state - Yugoslavia, through NATO. Hungarians learned quickly that in NATO there are

duties but it is not an organization small states could really influence. Superiority of the US in security affairs became a common sense.

A summit meeting between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy in Washington in November 2002 gave confirmation to this alliance. The left of centre government took advantage of the possibility to cooperate with the White House republicans also because in the last period of the right wing government in 2001-2002 a variety of issues created tension between Bush and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. On the other hand, Tony Blair had emerged as a main idol for Medgyessy and his chief political advisor Ferenc Gyurcsány. Blair's full support for US policy on Iraq gave confirmation for the leaders of the Socialist-Liberal coalition in Hungary.

In addition to organizational loyalty the Hungarian military and security establishment sided with US policy in order to compensate the lack of substantial progress with the reform and modernization of the army. The general perception of NATO accession in 1997 was that it opens an opportunity to free ride on US military power. Contributions to common projects from our side can remain largely symbolic. This attitude translated into a complete verbal commitment to the initiatives coming from Washington and London, with the hope that the pressure for material sacrifice would be eased as a result.

However, actual contributions could not be avoided completely. A major point of US-Hungary military cooperation has been the air base of Taszár. This small village in South-West Hungary became a US base during the Bosnia operations of US in the mid 1990s. In the early period, the locals welcomed the American forces because they expected business opportunities from the US army. Taszár was used by the US air force in the wars of 1999 and 2001 as well. In the run-up to the Iraq war, the US embassy announced that Taszár would be used as a training camp for interpreters. The announcement was ridiculed by the public for obvious reasons. Later the understanding of the situation was that the Americans were preparing Iraqi expatriots to serve as contact persons between the occupying forces and the Iraqi population after the major military operations are carried out.

Secretary of State Colin Powell named Hungary among the close allies of the US in the war against Iraq. In the international

press, Hungary was accordingly placed into the pro-war camp, mainly because Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy signed the Aznar - Blair "letter of eight" in support of the US argumentation in January 2003. The Hungarian signature was put on the letter in Greece, during the PM's visit in Athens. At home, the PM needed to explain why he signed the apparently pro-war letter without consulting his government and parliament, when the positions of Germany and France had been known already, and when the opinion polls in Hungary showed a declining support for the war. Medgyessy defended himself by saying that he signed up in exchange of a small amendment to the text, and he believed that the letter remained far from a declaration of war. He claimed that Hungarian soldiers would not go to Iraq even if there was a war there. The trouble that was caused by the letter and the PM's signature is indicated by the fact that a new national security advisor was appointed afterwards.

### **Party positions and the war**

Since participation in wars is an authority of parliament in Hungary, the position of various political parties on the Iraq conflict has been a crucial issue. The party political support for the Iraq war was somewhat different from the time of the Balkan war four years earlier. The similarity of the two cases is that parties of government have always supported the wars of Washington, regardless of time and space. In 1999, it was the right-wing coalition of Fidesz-MPP and MDF, and in 2003 it was the left-wing coalition of MSZP and SZDSZ. Governments in both cases had a priority to remain in good terms with the US administration, though in both cases they came from the opposite political pole. In both cases the opposition parties had a greater room for manoeuvre to link up with the public opinion and common sense.

Foreign minister László Kovács, who has been president of MSZP since 1998, was not so moderate in his public messages that Medgyessy. The latter always attempted to balance between external military requests and domestic public opinion. Kovács, on the contrary, completely identified with the war rhetoric of the Bush administration. On his meeting with British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw just a few weeks before the war started, he represented the view that the United Nations should be ignored. Defence minister Ferenc Juhász, who

was vice-president of MSZP at the same time and a self-promoted heir-apparent for Kovács as party president, had even less ambition to develop a Hungarian opinion about the conflict. Siding with the aggressors did not remain without repercussions from the circles of international social democracy. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder refused to address the congress of MSZP at the end of March, though his previous participation in the November 2000 congress provided an enormous support and stimulus for the Hungarian socialists.

#### **Political Parties and Their Positions on Recent Wars**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Balkan War 1999</b>	<b>Iraq War 2003</b>
MSZP	supported with reservations	supported
SZDSZ	supported	supported
Fidesz-MPP	supported	opposed with concessions
MDF	supported	opposed with concessions
MIEP*	opposed	opposed
WP**	opposed	opposed

\* *out of parliament in 2003*

\*\* *out of parliament in 1999 and 2003*

The table summarizing party opinion towards recent wars reveals that the most militaristic party of Hungary is SZDSZ, the Alliance of Free Democrats. They started as a small group of dissident intellectuals in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and became a larger network when the disintegration of the state socialist regime was already visible. When they turned into a party, they issued the programme of the systemic change (i.e. the transition to capitalism), and dominated the political agenda for six months after the collapse of the ruling MSZMP. In 1990, however, they only came second at the general elections, and became the main party of the opposition.

During the subsequent years, they went through a continuous decline, mainly because their original programme - transition to capitalism - had been implemented, and it was not a great success. Their problems also came from the fact that several major currents of liberalism constituted the main pillars for SZDSZ, like concern for human rights and economic libertarianism. They are not necessarily compatible with each other, but they both have a strong background in

the United States, hence they created a common ground in the judgment on the Balkan and the Iraq conflict. SZDSZ has become weak politically but intellectually they are still strong, and have a great impact on large sections of the Hungarian media intelligentsia. In certain issues, they even enjoy an intellectual hegemony over the Socialist Party.

The main extremist parties opposed both wars. The far right MIÉP was in parliament between 1998 and 2002, and supported the right wing coalition it was not part of. In case of the war, however, MIÉP stood against the intervention of the American empire. They had opposed NATO entry at the referendum of 1997 November, so it was a consequent position from them. Opposition of the Iraq war was supported by another argument on their behalf: the US was executing Israeli policy. The Kádárist Workers' Party opposed the war over Kosovo partly because they maintained good relations with Slobodan Milosevic, last post-Communist leader in the region. Another reason for them to oppose both wars was that Russian geo-political influence was diminished by US intervention in both cases. Both MIÉP and the Workers' Party took over a lot from the arguments of the independent anti-war movement that denied the right to war for oil worldwide.

## **Intellectuals and the media**

Concerning the wars, the mainstream of the liberal intelligentsia has always been supportive. Some dissidents have always showed up, nevertheless. In the case of the Balkan war, George Konrád voiced his protest, though he became pro-war by the time of the Iraq conflict. His fellow-writer, István Eörsi became the leading critic of US policy by 2003. Former chairman of the national council of SZDSZ, philosopher G.M. Tamás also published a number of articles against the new imperialist policy. Formally he had left SZDSZ in 2000 but still exercises a great influence on the liberal public opinion in Hungary in matters other than war.

Similarly to 1999, anti-war academics organized demonstrative events. In 1999, historian Tamás Krausz organized a conference on the great powers and the Balkan wars, which was later published in a volume. Concerning the Iraq conflict, two academic conferences were held at the Institute of Political History, headed by György Földes. The first one was held in November 2002, when it was already clear that



the US and the UK prepare for war and they just search for the best possible legitimization for the invasion. Professor Zsolt Rostoványi, head of department of international relations at BKÁE, called this situation a war of interpretations. Professor László Valki, head of department of international law at ELTE, made it clear that the invasion without another UN resolution would not be legal.

The second conference was held in April, just when the US forces announced the fall of Baghdad. This conference was also dominated by anti-war academics, and none of them gave credit to the US-UK rhetoric about liberation. It was clear that the US pursued economic and geo-political goals well beyond the destruction of the regime of Saddam Hussein and his alleged weapons of mass destruction. Speakers shared the concerns of the European public opinion about the future of international law and the world order. The two conferences had a significant impact on the academic and press community by elaborating on the intellectual arguments against the war and thus feeding those who organized demonstrations and held a balanced view in the press.

Public broadcasting and the mainstream of the private press followed the general „national interest”, i.e. the pro-American line of the government. *Népszabadság*, the daily paper with the highest circulation, established Samuel Hungington’s views as a main guide to understand world politics and particularly the current conflict. Their editorials and reports showed a strong bias for Washington and London, and against Berlin and Paris. The online edition of *Népszabadság* and two other left of centre daily papers (*Magyar Hírlap* and *Népszava*) presented a more balanced supply of opinions on both terrorism and war. It was left to the right-wing *Magyar Nemzet* to represent the anti-war position in the daily press. Their columnists often quoted left-wing Western newspapers like *The Guardian* to support their articles with facts and arguments.

Security experts of the media were given a seductive role. Until the first bombs fell, they claimed that the war had not yet been decided, and it may not even take place. Everything was up to Iraq’s cooperation. The military and security experts most frequently appearing on television were invited to discuss the issues with the Prime Minister, and their analyses were orchestrated in a way to mitigate public discontent with government policy, i.e. with the Bush - Blair

policy. However, neither the liberal warriors, nor the security experts could really influence the broader public properly. From November to February, public support for the war was falling steadily, so that it was less than ten per cent of the population that actually agreed with starting a war against Iraq with or without a UN resolution.

### **The anti-war movement**

The Hungarian anti-war movement had a significant pre-history and roots in the protest against the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. Many of the organizers were the same and the planned route of the main anti-war march would have been the same too. The Hungarian Anti-war movement was given a great impetus in November 2002, by the very successful European Social Forum held in Florence, when more than one million people demonstrated against the US planned war on Iraq. From that point, the Hungarian ATTAC organization became a vanguard of anti-war protest in Hungary. An umbrella organization called Civilians for Peace was established.

At the beginning the majority of organisations involved were the same which initiated the Hungarian Social Forum (HSF), i.e. TET (Council of Social Reconciliation - with 102 member organisations), ATTAC - Hungary, Left Alternative Association, Council of Left Cooperation, environmentalists (green organisations), religious communities (e.g. Pax Romana), Society for People Living Under the Poverty Line, some trade unions (e.g. Railworkers' Trade Union) and Feminist Organisations. The meetings of the coordinating committee of the anti-war organizations were held at the headquarters of the Steelworkers' Union.

It was particularly important that the anti-war cause created a common platform for the environmentalist groups of the youth and the more conventional left-wing organizations. Some surprise positioning took place, nevertheless. The Alliance of Hungarian Resistance and Anti-Fascists (the successor organization of the Hungarian Partisans's Alliance) participated in the preparatory work but opposed the anti-war arguments by claiming that the Iraq was a fascist state and intervention would be legitimate.

Anti-war conferences took place in December 2002 and in January 2003, and they received minor media attention. At the end

of January, the Hungarian Police banned the planned demonstration against the war on Iraq. It was a scandalous political decision, explained by concern for traffic, though a Saturday afternoon is not a sensitive period from that point of view in Budapest. At the same time the Police gave permission to a demonstration organised by the neo-fascist “Blood and Honour” organisation. This decision of the police has contributed to the increasing media attention to the Hungarian anti-war movement.

Prime Minister Medgyessy, was obliged to make excuses and order the Minister for Interior to instruct the police chief to change their mind. As a result more than 50 thousand people demonstrated in the streets of Budapest on 15th of February 2003. It was a great success, if we consider the size of Hungary and the post communist changes in this region. It was particularly striking that the proportion of young people was high in the demonstration, while in previous cases the left mainly attracted the older generations.

However, it needs mentioning that the peace demonstration of February 15 was split into two: a Peace Chain by a few thousand youth in the morning, and the march to Heros’ Square in the afternoon. It was apparent that the February 15 demonstration was organized by left groups, but the number of demonstrators was also boosted by some right-wing organizations as well. Towards the end of the programme, the speeches and songs of the peace activists were disturbed and eventually disrupted by provocative acts by the right-wing circles that had joined the demonstration. Such factors made it easy for the liberal commentators to write articles about the shared anti-war platform of the extreme left and the extreme right.

Some right-wing opponents of the war held a protest outside the barracks of the US army at Taszár. Opinion polls showed that this time the Hungarians started to be concerned that they may become exposed to terrorist threat because of Taszár and other forms of Hungarian involvement in the US war. This factor may or may not have played a role in the American decision to abolish the Taszár base soon after the invasion of Iraq.

In February, March and April, further smaller demonstrations were held and press releases were issued by Civilians for Peace. The leaders of the movement presented petitions to the Hungarian Government and the Parliament, as well as to the US and UK Embassies

in Budapest. However, the outbreak of the war and the progress of US-UK military operations broke the commitment of the Hungarian people, just like in other countries. The polls showed an increasing support for the war, and the number of participants at the demonstrations declined.

Anti-war activists had to organize in a hostile media environment, though their leaders have been invited to television discussions several times, and their visit to the president of the parliament was also reported on television. It also needs mentioning that the anti-war campaign had a very low budget, given the low incomes of the potential participants and the left-wing constituency in general. Most of the trade unions did not want to sponsor a political campaign that confronts the opinion of the government they sympathize with.

However, it is not true any longer that the lack of information would be a cause for passivity among the youth. Through the internet, young people have access to anti-war press and other communication in an unlimited way. All the polls suggested that most people in Hungary have been anti-war, including the youth. It is a different matter that people do not like demonstrations here, and many anti-war leftists did not want to demonstrate against a left of centre government because it would have apparently supported the right, which used anti-war rhetoric through the whole period.

The uniqueness of the February 15 demonstration was not sufficiently appreciated by the leaders of the movement. Some organizers took a wrong conclusion from its success and did not realize that it cannot be repeated. Budapest is not London or Rome. People do not see the Hungarian opinion decisive in the shaping of the international order and thus they are not prepared to initiate or demonstrate about it time after time. People in London did know that a lot depends on Blair and went to demonstrate whenever it was necessary.

Subsequently the organizers of the Hungarian anti-war movement made efforts for the enlargement of the peace movement by convincing trade unionists to join the campaign and the actions of the Alliance of the European Trade Unions but without success. In early April, the same organizers were involved in the first Hungarian Social Forum as well, which took energies away from the anti-war projects, though HSF also passed an anti-war document.

The traditional Mayday picnic coincided with the end of the

major operations in Iraq. ATTAC Hungary organized a forum at the picnic at the Budapest City Park where the issues of the war were discussed. The discussion showed that the majority of the left in Hungary explains the war by pure material and geopolitical ambitions of the United States, and they are deeply concerned with the future of international law and development.

### **Post-war issues**

Following the outbreak of the war in March, and particularly after the fall of Baghdad, the Hungarian press became triumphalist and even more pro-American than beforehand. The everyday problems of occupation, the continuing deadly fighting and the lack of consolidation in Iraq produced small pieces of news but rarely trickled into the analysis.

However, the party political conflicts were not ended by the fall of the Hussein regime. Before the end of the major operations in Iraq, the request arrived that Hungary should join international peace-keeping there. The pro-war camp supported the idea without hesitation, and many of the anti-war platform also believed that this is the opportunity to show that we are not isolationists. However, the obstruction of Fidesz-MPP in parliament resulted in a delay of the decision. The vote only took place after the resolution at the UN Security Council was passed already, thus providing a legal background for the Hungarian decision. However, the small expedition unit was not easily organized. Estimated costs suddenly tripled soon after the decision was made. The troops to be sent to Iraq were given special psychological training to prepare for the acceptance of possible loss of lives. Nevertheless, about 15 soldiers still thought the pay would be too low and withdrew from the unit at the end of June. It may well happen that it was not the pay but the news about the attacks on the occupying forces made them think again about their commitment to participation.

The issue of Iraq became secondary for the media by June. However, the lack of evidence about Saddam's weapons of mass destruction may have influenced the political mood of the urban population in Hungary. According to certain political analysts, this factor may have played a role in the sudden fall of the public support for the government and MSZP in June.

If not a moment of truth, but a period of reckoning emerged in both Washington and London. Since, however, other issues had started to dominate the public mind in Hungary, the clarification process in Hungary was slow and sporadic. It was only June 28, when the online editor Pál Léderer wrote in a leader article of the printed *Népszabadság*, that the review process that had unfolded in both the US and UK should start in smaller member countries of the war coalition as well. In order to develop a more sensible foreign and security policy, he wrote, we do not only need to know who our allies are, but we also need to know what they are like.

## Boris Kagarlitsky

### Russia: the Elections, the Crisis of the CP and the New Left

*(In the parliamentary elections of December 2003, the party behind President Putin (United Russia) won around 38 per cent of the vote. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) won 12.7 per cent. The Liberal Democratic Party won 11.8 per cent while the Homeland Party (Rodina Bloc) 9.1 per cent. In the following article, written just before the election, **Boris Kagarlitsky** looks at the role of the KPRF in Russian politics.)*

A year ago, political life in Russia was like a stagnant swamp. President Vladimir Putin's victory in the presidential election had solved none of the country's problems, while providing ample demonstration that looking for solutions within the existing political set-up was pointless.

The "official" Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) was fully reconciled to the fact that it would not be allowed to take power. The well-known journalist Anatoly Baranov observed that the KPRF was not even a party, but a state-licensed monopoly charged with providing opposition services to the population. Nor can the KPRF be described as left-wing in any but a highly conditional sense.

While declaiming in ritual fashion about the miseries of the population, the KPRF leaders have no inclination to summon anyone to struggle. Instead of socialism, they speak of "great-power patriotism", and view Russia's main problem as the excessive number of Jews among the country's capitalist oligarchs. This is all strikingly reminiscent of fascist propaganda. Even in repeating the slogans of Russian nationalism and of anti-Jewish pogroms, the KPRF leaders have managed to seem doleful and ritualistic.

The party chiefs are a group of apolitical, ageing men; their

hopes are first of all to serve out their time in a sham parliament formed on the basis of rigged results, and then to retire on generous pensions. Unfortunately for these people, by the middle of Putin's first term in office his team had decided to recast the political landscape. The new people who had taken over the Kremlin following the departure of Boris Yeltsin were experiencing acute frustration. Several years had gone by, and they had not managed to steal anything of consequence. The time had come for a redistribution of property.

The oligarchs who had stolen factories and oil wells from the population would have to share some of their booty with the new team, which had been too late to catch the first wave of privatisation. There was, of course, no question of nationalising property or of handing it over to the population. Nevertheless, the squabbling between the oligarchs of the first and second waves was destabilising the political space.

### **Managing democracy**

As the members of Putin's team began redistributing the plunder, they decided to start tightening the screws. Yeltsin had preferred to rule through the chaotic manipulation of a multitude of warring groups. Putin, by contrast, understands the managing of democracy in strikingly simple terms. The struggle between parties is reduced to competition for the sympathy of a single voter - the president. The number of seats a party gets to hold in parliament corresponds to the number of points scored in this contest. Trying to retain the remnants of its independence, the KPRF would not be drawn into this game. And so, the Communists were stripped of their posts in the Duma committees.

The scale of the electoral fraud increased dramatically, and provincial governors who earlier had been considered "red" hurriedly crossed over to the presidential camp. However, the oligarchs who had lost favour with Putin began making generous financial contributions to the KPRF, seeing it as a defender against presidential arbitrariness.

Even after receiving money, unfortunately, the KPRF was in no state to resist the Kremlin. The party proved incapable of political struggle. Worse still, it had lost its usual supporters - apolitical old people pining for Soviet times, or young careerists hoping for a warm



and not too burdensome post in a regional parliament or the federal Duma, where they could serve out their time until collecting a handsome pension.

### **The left in society rejects the KPRF**

Russian society is moving to the left, as is shown both by surveys of public opinion and by the growing print-runs for translations of radical texts, from the works of Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein to those of Herbert Marcuse and Georgy Lukacs.

The KPRF, with its monopoly of opposition, has been the main obstacle to the development of the left movement in Russia. The party regularly receives 25-30% of votes, a very impressive result, but surveys show that as many as 60% of people in Russia espouse left-wing values.

Left-wing parties in Europe and Latin America find most of their support in large industrial cities and in university centres, while the KPRF receives most of its backing in the countryside and in small towns. The international left is traditionally strong among young people, while the KPRF puts its stake on pensioners. The left normally rests on workers and on the broad layers of the intelligentsia (people like health workers and teachers), while these groups firmly reject the KPRF.

Despite the spread of left-wing moods among young people, and especially students, finding young people to fill the ranks of the KPRF remains an unsolved problem, since joining the party is something that young leftists simply will not do. Ideologically committed leftists can be found almost anywhere - in the environmental movement, in human rights organisations, and in Trotskyist groups, but not in the KPRF.

In some voters, the KPRF arouses memories of Stalinist repression, while other people are alienated by the party's nationalist rhetoric. For large numbers, the KPRF is too moderate, and most importantly, ineffectual. The left-wing sectors of the population tend not to vote at all, or as is possible in Russia, to record a vote against all the candidates. The increasing numbers of non-voters, and of those who reject all the candidates, is a reflection not just of dissatisfaction with the political system and with electoral fraud, but also of the fact

that the leftward shift that has been observed in the country has found no expression on the political level.

### **KPRF “modernisation”**

Naturally, the leaders of the KPRF have concluded that “modernisation” is essential. Their utterances, which even in the past were not noted for their logic, have become completely post-modern. To give the party a new face, the “political technologist” Ilya Ponomarev was invited in; Ponomarev then set about desperately trying to repair the KPRF’s image. The party was supposed to become young, left-wing, modern, radical, fit to appear at the European Social Forum and attractive to voters who had grown tired of constant deceptions. The efforts of Ponomarev and his team, however, shattered on the bankruptcy of the party’s bureaucratic structures. All talk of giving the party a new face was stilled at the sight of the dismal group of people with whom the KPRF are going into the parliamentary elections on 7 December 2003.

A blatant contradiction had appeared. On the one hand, there was Ponomarev, speaking of joint actions with anti-globalists, and young party members discussing the ideas of the Frankfurt School with Trotskyist contemporaries. On the other hand, there was the party slate, featuring in second place the name of former Krasnodar governor “Papa” Kondratenko, renowned for his fiery speeches against Jews, and for his attempts to oust the Meshety Turks from the territory under his control.

There were fresh stirrings in the stagnant swamp of party life. The creatures that had crawled out into the sunlight, however, were far from attractive. Fights began erupting between the groups within the KPRF. Ideological differences were less important than the question of who would finish up with money. Arguments about the sale of positions on the party slate became commonplace, with the average price of an “electable” spot exceeding a million dollars.

Nevertheless, the fact that the KPRF was coming apart placed the independent left in a difficult position. Earlier, it had been possible simply to criticise the opportunism and crude post-modernism of the party leaders. Now, leftists had to react somehow to the “dialogue” and “modernisation” that had been proclaimed within the KPRF.

## **Golitsyno forum**

On June 20-22 the first Forum on the Future of the Left took place in the town of Golitsyno, near Moscow, lending impetus to the process of political regroupment. The gathering aroused a good deal of enthusiasm. More than 130 people attended, representing both the new left and “renovators” from the KPRF. The common ground that was observed was described by the left social democrat Viktor Militarev as the “Golitsyno consensus”. The participants joined in condemning authoritarianism and totalitarianism, recognising democracy as a fundamental value. They declared that renewal needed to be carried out on anti-capitalist and socialist principles.

The left would have to revive internationalism, and restore the working-class character of its politics. Unity, meanwhile, presupposed respect for differences; the optimal form of unification would be an alliance or united front that allowed different tendencies to coexist. This political idyll, however, has not come to pass.

In November, inspired by the Golitsyno success, the left gathered for a second forum, but no agreement was achieved. The problem lies not only in ideological disagreements (and at times, a lack of elementary political culture), but also in the weakness of the movement at the grass-roots level.

Instead of forging links with the workers’ movement, leftists still prefer to take part in pointless electoral contests whose outcomes are rigged in any case. The authorities make no secret of the fact that they regard elections as tools for punishing the opposition. Any and all means will be used, including the falsification of results. Meanwhile, the KPRF meekly awaits its fate.

All the same, there is cause for optimism. The present crisis is opening up prospects for the formation of a new left movement, free of nationalist demagoguery, cowardice and provincialism. These opportunities, of course, will only be exploited if the left devotes less attention to pseudo-parliamentary scheming and more to genuine work among its social base.

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## **Boris Kagarlitsky**

### **Aftermath of the 2003 election**

The 1999 election demonstrated that the ruling elite leaves nothing to chance or to democracy, which amounts to the same thing. The succession crisis that year revealed the extent to which a change of president causes problems for the entire ruling elite. After taking over the Kremlin with the backing of the Yeltsin-era family, the Putin team gradually began to force their predecessors out of key posts in politics and the economy. This is a slow process, however, and even in the best-case scenario the new oligarchs will just be coming into their own in 2007 and 2008. The closely controlled transfer of power in 1999 and 2000 ensured that the first wave of oligarchs enjoyed a lengthy grace period. But even that sort of grace won't be enough to help the second wave.

The only thing to do is to prevent another transfer of power - at least not in 2008, and by no means via the ballot box. On Dec. 7, revision of the Constitution became inevitable because voters in Komi-Permyatsky and Perm approved a referendum on merging the two regions. Such a merger would require a Constitutional amendment.

United Russia and its new comrades have enough votes to amend the Constitution and extend the presidential term or remove the limit on the number of terms a president may serve. If all goes as planned, Vladimir Putin will become president in 2008. And in 2015 as well.

We are witnessing the progression from "managed democracy" to an authoritarian regime with a democratic facade. The Communist Party, which provided the ideal opposition in the old system, must be replaced with a new lapdog opposition. The Rodina bloc fits the bill. It has no organization to speak of, and its political viability will last only so long as its leaders are allowed to appear on state television.

The liberal parties called for capitalism and bourgeois democracy, but unfortunately the two only go together in wealthy countries. In a country where 80 percent of the population is shut out of consumer society and living in poverty, democracy inevitably turns into an attack on private

property.

Is there a future for political opposition in Russia? Yabloko is no longer in parliament, and the Communist Party has lost forever the conservative, nationalist voter, who has gone over to Rodina, LDPR and United Russia. The Communists' notion of a "red-white union" is no longer viable. Internecine squabbles within the party are heating up. The Kremlin's main goal in Sunday's election was to eliminate parliamentary opposition as a political institution. In this it was successful, though the downfall of the Communist Party and Yabloko could give rise to a new, non-parliamentary radical political resistance and a new left. The widespread refusal to vote speaks for itself. We did not stay home because we're lazy; I say this as someone who has avoided taking part in our farcical electoral process for a decade now. We vote with our feet. And this is the last democratic right that hasn't been taken away from us.

Candidate "none of the above" is already raking in 20 to 25 percent of the vote in the single-mandate districts. This is also a symptom of the changing political reality. There is no point in trying to build a political campaign on this discontent, however. People who don't vote will not unite without a positive ideology.

The new opposition will arise not from parliamentary intrigues and petty politicking. It will only emerge when we refuse to play by the rules imposed on us by the current system. Sooner or later democratic longings will fuse with social protest. The finale will be extremely interesting. But how long will this take?

At a meeting held by the Georgian opposition last month, one speaker remarked that he had been 6 years old when Shevardnadze took power in the republic. Now his own daughter was 6, and he didn't want her to grow up as he had under Shevardnadze's thumb.

I'm reminded of the movie "Groundhog Day," whose hero wakes up every morning to find himself reliving the day before. But who needs images from Hollywood. My generation still remembers the stability of the Brezhnev era.

**Gavin Rae**

## **Polish Social Democracy: The Failure of “Third Way” Policies**

Since the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) transformed itself from an electoral coalition into a single political party, in 1999, it has exerted a dominance over the Polish left, winning over 40% of the vote (in an electoral bloc with the Labour Union - UP) in the 2001 parliamentary elections and forming a government with the Polish Peasant Party (PSL). Leading up to these elections leading members of the SLD often talked about following the example of New Labour and the third way.<sup>1</sup> It was assumed that the left was able to extend its electoral base because of its move towards the political centre and that market orientated economic policies would provide the means for carrying out the party's social democratic manifesto pledges. However, after little more than two years in government, the SLD has lost its leading position in the polls, is surrounded by corruption scandals, has lost around 35% of its membership and is currently proposing more budget cuts that would further distance itself from its electoral and membership base. This is being reinforced by its refusal to introduce any significant social liberal reforms (such as abortion law liberalisation) and a foreign policy of being a loyal ally of the US in an expanded Europe.

### **A return to normality**

The previous 'post-Solidarnosc government (1997-2001) speeded up the privatisation process and market orientated reforms, which severely worsened the country's socio-economic. By the end of this government's term in office the economy was stagnating; unemployment neared 20%;

social divisions had risen dramatically and the state budget was on the verge of collapse; as revenues from privatisation decreased after the country's most desired assets had been sold. The Polish electorate cast its judgement on these policies, at the 2001 parliamentary elections, as both parties of this coalition (Solidarity Electoral Action - AWS and the Freedom Union – UW) failed to gain enough votes to even enter parliament.

The SLD ran a parliamentary election campaign under the slogan of 'A Return to Normality'. In this sense they were claiming that they could return to the path of economic growth, enjoyed during the last SLD-PSL government (1993-97). Poland was the first country in central-eastern Europe (CEE) to increase its GDP to a level higher than that attained before the transition process began. In 2001 Polish GDP was 127% of the pre-transformation level and virtually all of this growth was achieved during the term of the first SLD-PSL government (1994-97), while the net effect of the remaining seven years was a drop in GDP by 1%. This was largely achieved by slowing the pace of reforms (especially privatisation), which lessened their socio-economic costs, helping to bring down unemployment and thus halting the recessionary spiral instigated by the implementation of the shock therapy reforms in 1990.

Although the SLD lost the 1997 election it increased its share of the vote and retained the presidency under Aleksander Kwasniewski in 2000. The newly formed SLD-UP/PSL government was elected with the hope that they could repeat the performance of providing rapid economic growth, along with declining social inequalities and unemployment. However, by the time they returned to office in 2001 the state sector had been further diminished and therefore a strategy of slowing the market reforms could not bring the same results as it had done earlier. Also, a dependent form of capitalism had been established in Poland after the sale of large sections of Polish industry and banking to foreign buyers, often at a low cost.

### **A short-lived Third Way**

In response to the inherited budgetary crisis the first action of the newly elected SLD government was to introduce a series of spending cuts including freezing some public sector wages and cutting maternity

leave. The SLD produced a pre-election programme in which it promised to maintain and develop free and comprehensive public services. However, the appointment of Marek Belka as Finance Minister ensured that they would attempt to fund this through the use of the market mechanism and he adopted a formula that the level of social expenditure would not exceed the inflation rate plus 1%. Shortly after becoming finance minister he said:

The realisation of this goal will not be easy or pleasant. The Minister of Health will either have to introduce a package of minimum benefits or change the system of medicine refunds and start a struggle with pharmaceutical companies and/or bankrupt one-third of the hospitals, the choice belongs to him. The minister of Education could save part of his money through freezing the teachers card and reducing the huge level of employment in education.<sup>2</sup>

The first few months of this government's term were dominated by its conflict with the National Bank of Poland (NBP) and Monetary Policy Council (RPP). The government was urging a significant reduction in interest rates, combined with intervention to devalue the zloty. Belka attempted to play a mediating role in this conflict, arguing, along with President Kwasniewski, that the independence of the NBP and RPP must be defended.<sup>3</sup> The result of this stalemate was that Poland's economic situation continued to decline, there was no serious fall in unemployment, a number of industries faced bankruptcy and the situation in the agricultural sector worsened. The government's problems came to a head as it emerged that the budget deficit would reach ZL43bn (5.5% GDP) although it was previously assured that it would not rise above ZL40bn. Tensions grew in the government with, for example, Belka conflicting with the Health Minister's plan to introduce subsidies for pensioners buying medicines. Simultaneously, some domestic industries were facing collapse, with workers from a number of enterprises demanding that the government intervene to protect them. Most notable was the situation in the Szczecin shipyard, a privatised industry facing bankruptcy, whose collapse would have led to around 60,000 redundancies, which led to a series of protests. A new phenomenon was, therefore, emerging within Polish politics, whereby workers from privatised industries were demanding government intervention. Combined with the SLD suffering a dramatic decline in



the opinion polls, Belka resigned as Finance Minister in July. After less than a year in office it had become clear that the government's market style economic policies were not providing the means for it to meet its social democratic election promises.

Grzegorz Kolodko, who was Finance Minister for most of the last SLD-PSL government, replaced Belka and he promised a return to economic growth, combined with a reduction of social inequalities. In the programme he presented before becoming Finance Minister, he argued that it is possible to resume growth of 5-7%, a level necessary for Poland to 'catch-up' with western Europe. Priority was to be given to the formation of domestic capital, helped through a significant devaluation of the złoty (which would then be tied to the euro) and a subsequent reduction of interest rates. He added that there should be a shift in employment from low-technology branches to more advanced industries and services. This process should be driven by state intervention, including projects funded by public money, as these projects should bring significant returns after some time.<sup>4</sup> He argued that for the past few years a policy of deliberately redistributing income in favour of the most privileged sections of society has been maintained and Kolodko supported increasing the level of taxation for society's richest. As well as supporting the creation of domestic production he favoured the development of human capital, which would entail a significant increase of public spending on science and culture, including wages. He added that too much inequality negatively affects economic growth and that the state should adopt active policies to reduce the scale of inequalities through the use of industrial, trade and fiscal policies, including an increase in education spending. He argued that the question in the post-socialist states is not about how to limit the role of the state but how to redefine its role and restructure its involvement in economic life. In his opinion the rapid withdraw of the state from economic life helped to precipitate the recession throughout the former socialist states, which (twelve years after the start of the transition period) left the region's national income over 25% below the level it was before 1989.

The significance of Kolodko's programme is that it attempted to combine economic growth with a reduction in inequalities and an increase in public spending. Shortly after being appointed as Finance

Minister, Kolodko introduced an anti-crisis package aimed at supporting endangered industries. This change in government policy brought with it an increase in support for the SLD. However, this upturn in the government's fortunes was short-lived and pressure for further monetarist reforms was exerted as Poland moved closer towards entry into the EU.

### **Towards EU entry**

The SLD has identified EU entry as being the main goal of its government and the completion of negotiations and the successful referendum result in June 2003 are seen as its main successes. However, the financial package for new EU members, agreed at the December 2002 EU summit in Copenhagen, creates the conditions for a new group of second category EU states. From day one of membership the new states are expected to pay full payments to the EU, even although they will not be receiving full subsidies. The area of negotiations, which caused the most controversy, was that of agriculture. Before the Copenhagen summit the EU was offering the candidate countries 25%, 30% and then 35% of full EU agricultural subsidies in the first three years of membership. These were to rise by ten percent each year until they would reach 100% by around 2013. This proposal proved to be politically unacceptable and threatened the possibility of a positive referendum vote in Poland. At the Copenhagen summit Poland managed to win an agreement whereby direct agricultural subsidies would be paid at the level of 55%, 60% and 65% in the first three years of membership, which was presented in the Polish media as being a great success. However, the direct subsidies coming from the EU will actually only reach 36%, 39% and 42%, with the government allowed to make up the rest of the difference from their own state budget. Whether this is possible or not is doubtful, with Kolodko announcing after the budget that he was not sure whether the state budget would be able to make up the full amount. Also the increased amount of money, given in agricultural subsidies, is not new money but simply money shifted from the structural funds. Therefore one-billion zloty, which was meant to be paid in structural funds in 2007, has been brought forward and will be paid to Poland in 2004 as part of the agricultural subsidies instead. Agriculture is such an important issue, as it remains

an area of the Polish market which still has tariffs with the EU. These are still relatively high tariffs and the lifting of them will pose a huge challenge to Polish agriculture. Therefore the new EU members will be expected to compete with countries with far more competitive agricultural industries, whilst receiving significantly less subsidies.

The lack of direct investment coming into the new candidate states is not restricted to the sphere of agriculture. At the October 2002 EU summit in Brussels it was announced that the ten new states would receive €2.6bn less in EU structural funds than previously planned. This is the second largest source of EU funding and means that Poland will receive €1.5bn less than they had earlier expected. Although the EU has assured the candidate states that they would not be net payers into the EU budget, during the first years of membership, it was becoming clear what strain EU membership could have on these countries' budgets. In the first year of membership Poland would have to pay €2.4bn in payments to the EU, which is equal to 6-7% of the government's income. The budget would also lose money it currently receives through tariffs and would be expected to partly pay for the implementation of EU legal standards. In order to receive any structural aid, the government needs to meet twenty five percent of the cost of any proposed project. In 2004 alone this would amount to at least €1bn. Before the Copenhagen summit Kolodko announced that, under the proposed conditions, current government spending pledges could be blocked, after joining the EU. Facing such a drastic situation the Polish government managed to receive a half a billion zloty recompensation for payments in 2004, which should help ease a possible immediate budgetary crisis. They also received an increase of €108m (to €289m) to secure Poland's eastern border. It is perhaps unsurprising that the only new money, forthcoming from the EU at Copenhagen, was given to close the EU's borders to countries such as the Ukraine and Belarus.

The ability of the government to raise the necessary money to receive significant structural aid and meet its domestic budgetary obligations is in serious doubt. This is further threatened by the obligation of new member states to move towards entering eurozone, meaning that these countries' budgets will have to be adjusted to meet the requirements of the growth and stability pact. This includes reducing their budget deficit to 3% (from, for example, Poland's present 5.5%)

as a first step towards having a balanced budget. As well as leading to a new round of budgetary cuts it will also make it more difficult for the new EU states to find the funds necessary for them to receive significant structural aid from the EU. Also by the end of 2004 the currencies of these new states have to be fixed at a rate from which it can only deviate by 15%. Undoubtedly the EU would favour these currencies being brought into the eurozone at a high rate, as this would make imports coming into the new member states more competitive.

The future of the new states' industrial sector is in doubt after EU accession. After joining the EU the government is not allowed to give subsidies to businesses without an agreement from Brussels. These subsidies can only be given to businesses, which are predicted to make a profit in 3 to 5 years. However the majority of the candidate states are countries which have undergone 14 years of transformation from a socialist to a capitalist economy. During this period of market reform there have been huge cuts in industry leading to massive job losses. The further opening of these economies to foreign competition and withdraw of subsidies threatens another wave of closures and redundancies. The Polish government presently provides subsidies to sectors such as the railways (€250m) and mines (€350m.) It is, therefore, no coincidence that these are two areas that have seen large industrial unrest in recent months. An example of what the withdrawal of subsidies would mean can be seen clearly in the steel sector. The EU is demanding that Poland cuts its steel production by 10%, i.e. by 900,000 tons. Although in recent years the number of steel-mills has reduced by half, the EU is calling for this number to be reduced further by 1/3. This would entail employment being cut in the sector from 23,000 to 16,000. As official Polish unemployment is pushing 18%, any further round of redundancies could have severe socio-economic consequences.

### **A neo-liberal road to the EU**

We have seen how the SLD was unable to fulfil its social democratic manifesto promises through a third way market orientated economic strategy. It was this failure that led to the return of Kolodko as Finance Minister and the implementation of more interventionist style policies. After the Copenhagen summit the SLD expelled the PSL from the

government, which signalled an intention to look for political alliances with parties from the liberal right (see below). After winning the EU referendum in June, a new political chapter opened and PM Leszek Miller made clear the government's intentions when he announced, the day after the referendum, that they would consider the implementation of a flat-income (i.e. non-progressive) taxation rate. A flat income tax rate already exists in Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, with Slovakia announcing that they will introduce it from the beginning of 2004. However, this would be, I believe, the first time in history that a ruling social democratic party has implemented a flat income tax rate, which is the antithesis of a fiscal policy based on the principles of redistribution. This announcement was followed, shortly afterwards, by the resignation of Kolodko, who expressed his opposition to the flat income tax rate, with responsibility for public finance reform handed over to Jerzy Hausner and his Ministry for Labour and the Economy. Hausner has promised that he will consider the introduction of a flat income tax rate and he also proposes a series of public finance reforms known as the 'Hausner Plan'. This includes social expenditure cuts, such as decreasing subsidies for mines and railways; abolishing the automatic rise in pensions; reducing sickness allowances; cutting help for companies employing disabled workers; increasing the retirement age for women and limiting public sector pay.<sup>5</sup>

We must place Polish social democracy in its European context to understand its political trajectory after the EU referendum. During his speech at the SLD's second party congress, shortly after the EU referendum, Miller said:

Just as the EU has its Lisbon strategy, that is a long-term plan to catch up with the USA, so Poland needs its Warsaw strategy – a plan to catch up with the EU<sup>6</sup>

Miller attached the slogan 'More Growth, More Fairness' (Wiecej Rozwoju, Wiecej Sprawidliwosci) to the Warsaw strategy. The importance of this Warsaw strategy is that Miller has identified liberal policies, such as the flat income tax rate, as the way to stimulate economic growth. Similar quandaries exist within the social democratic parties of the current member states, most significantly in the German SPD, as well as the other CEE ruling social democratic parties in

Hungary and the Czech Republic. Already, the Czech social democratic led government has announced a package of welfare cuts that includes freezing the pay of government employees, slowing the growth of pensions, tightening regulations concerning early retirement and cutting sickness benefits. These cuts are part of the Czech government's desire to bring down its budget deficit to 4% from the current 6.2%. In Hungary the government has promised that it would support the country's rapid entry into the eurozone and promised to introduce a series of budget cuts worth at least \$350m and bring its budget deficit down to 4.5% this year. Although, CEE social democracy could often galvanise wide support around its pro-EU position before accession, thereafter its hegemonic appeal corrodes. The Czech and Hungarian social democratic governments have governed with a liberal party that may provide them with a parliamentary majority to push through reforms. This has not been possible for Polish social democracy and is the reason why the SLD has increasingly been seeking an alliance with a section of Polish liberal parties such as Citizens' Platform (PO). With no alternative programme the second SLD-led government has begun advocating neo-liberal economic policies, which go beyond those presently being considered by social democratic parties in western Europe. The extent to which this has occurred can be seen in the post-referendum policy statements of Leszek Miller's government. Miller now argues that economic and social policies are two separate areas of concern and that a social democratic government must concentrate on creating the best conditions for business in order to expedite economic growth.

Generating national wealth and its redistribution are to a large extent separate spheres. The first is decided by the hard and objective laws of economics and the market and the second by social justice. Policies must have a liberal character because the market can only fulfil its potential in conditions of a free economy. The problems of society must not be placed on the market nor should ideology be an impediment for the free market. Economic growth will be quicker through low taxes, a low budget deficit and better management of budget resources.<sup>7</sup>

### **Social and international policies**

This drift towards neo-liberal economic policies has been accompanied

with the SLD leadership adopting more conservative social policies and re-affirming Poland's position as an ally of the United States. The first SLD-led government liberalised the restrictive abortion laws, introduced by the early post-Solidarnosc governments, who in turn passed new restrictive abortion legislation during the 1997-2001 AWS-UW administration. The SLD undertook to liberalise the abortion law, in its 2001-election manifesto, something that has wide support in the country.<sup>8</sup> However, the second-SLD government made a compromise with the Church, promising not to liberalise the abortion law and to campaign for a reference to God to be made in a future EU constitution, in return for the Church's support for a 'yes' vote in the EU referendum. Since the EU referendum the SLD leadership has continued this policy, although some SLD MPs are proposing a bill to reform the abortion law and legalise gay relationships.<sup>9</sup>

Following 9/11 Kwasniewski firmly placed Poland in the 'alliance against terrorism' and as a loyal ally of the United States. The Polish government began to consider its relationship with the USA and Europe, attempting to create a role for itself as a strong ally of the USA, within a new expanded Europe. Poland's Chief in the Office for National Defence, Marek Siwec, says:

In Europe there are two countries, which are very good models for developing a relationship with the United States: Great Britain and Spain. In our place, in our reality, with our aspirations we can be the third such country.<sup>10</sup>

When Poland agreed to buy American F-16 fighter planes, instead of choosing a European option, some European countries claimed that this was a politically motivated decision. Certainly behind this decision lay offers of American offset investments in Poland and the possibility of Poland allowing the stationing of USA military equipment on Polish soil, perhaps even for the development of the Star Wars II programme.<sup>11</sup> The reality of a host of new 'pro-US' states entering the EU was driven home when the signatures of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were added to the UK sponsored letter supporting a war against Iraq. Donald Rumsfeld's subsequent definition of 'old Europe' and 'new Europe' helped to crystallise this division. What is noticeable is that apart from Britain the only countries, with social democratic

governments, to sign the letter were from CEE.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, we can see how CEE social democratic parties, such as the SLD, have moved outside of the mainstream of European social democratic thinking on an issue that caused a serious divide between the EU and the USA.

### **Decline and divide**

This rightward political drift and attempt to form a political alliance with PO has meant that the SLD is open to criticism from its left, with the OPZZ trade union association, UP and peasant parties PSL and Samoobrona all rejecting elements of the SLD's neo-liberal course. For the moment the SLD remains the dominant party of the left and this pre-eminence is unlikely to be challenged soon.<sup>13</sup> The immediate fate of the Polish left will largely depend on what happens inside the SLD and whether it can both retain power and internal unity.

After the SLD's poor showing in the October 2002 local elections a number of critical voices were raised, from within the party, about the tendency for SLD MPs and leaders to be concerned mainly about their own self-interests and the distancing of the party from its social democratic roots. Support for the SLD has fallen to below 20%, behind PO, along with the revelation of successive corruption affairs.

Since the party congress in June a process of verification of SLD members (whereby all members have had to reapply for membership) has been carried out in an attempt to clear the party of its corrupt elements. However, far from removing a small corrupt minority, it has resulted in the SLD losing over 35% of its membership (over 50,000 individuals). This startling loss of membership is probably the result of growing dissatisfaction with the government's policies; such as its alliance with the Catholic Church, support for US foreign policy and especially proposals for social expenditure cuts included in the 'Hausner Plan'.<sup>14</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The SLD managed to establish itself as the leading party of the Polish left mainly because of its successes during the 1993-97 government when it (at least partially) fulfilled its social democratic promises. However, during the second SLD-led government the party has not



been able to bring down unemployment, improve public services, reduce social inequalities or implement any meaningful social reforms.<sup>15</sup> This has meant that the party has lost the support of its electorate and disillusioned large swathes of its membership. One of the defining features of Polish social democracy has been its support for EU entry. This has been popular due to the belief that it would not only facilitate economic growth but also provide the conditions for Polish welfare and labour rights to reach the level of those in western Europe.

However, as EU entry nears pressure is being put on the government to introduce more expenditure cuts and move Polish capitalism further away from any form of European ‘social model’. Also, richer countries are increasingly unwilling to fund enlargement, which is essentially the cause of recent divisions around the EU constitution. While western European social democratic governments in the EU have been faced with the problem of carrying out liberal reforms connected with the dismantling of Welfare States, CEE social democracy has to contend with the transformation of an entire socio-economic and political system in countries that are at a lower point of development. This means that the present SLD government is trying to implement liberal economic reforms that go far beyond those considered in western Europe. In recent years a number of western European social democratic parties have suffered electoral defeats as they have tried to introduce these welfare reforms. It may be expected that the decline of CEE social democratic parties, such as the SLD, will be much deeper and far reaching. For the party’s adoption of a market orientated third way programme has led the party towards decline, defeat and divide.

## Notes

1. For example SLD leader, Leszek Miller, said ‘I talked in London with theoreticians from the Labour party about the third way and I believe that in this respect the Labour Party is the best developed. I asked them whether this move to the centre was a move to the right. In response I heard: we are not going to the right, we are going forward. Although this may not explain everything, it is a nice expression, which makes sense in our circumstances.’ (Leszek Miller, *Dogonmy Europe*, Hamal Books, Łódź, 2001.)

2. *Polityka*, Miód z octem, 2.2.02. The teachers card is the wage

agreement made between the government and the teachers' unions, whereby teachers wages automatically rise each year. It is significant that Belka previously worked in the presidential office as an advisor for Aleksander Kwasniewski, who represents the most neo-liberal wing of the party. This was seen most clearly when Kwasniewski nominated the architect of the shock therapy reforms in the early 1990s and Finance Minister in the previous government, Leszek Balcerowicz, as President of both the National Bank of Poland (NBP) and the Monetary Council (RPP). This went against the wishes of the SLD parliamentary club.

3. Kwasniewski made it clear that he would veto any bill, which he believed threatened this independence. At one point PSL and UP presented a bill to parliament aimed at increasing the RPP by another six members, to be appointed by the parliament. This was never voted on however.

4. It is worth noting Kolodko's opinion on the Chinese economic reform of which he writes, 'The opposite tendencies vis-a-vis recession and growth in China and Russia should be seen as the most striking event in the world economy in the last decade of the twentieth century. Whereas during this time GDP in China was doubled, in Russia it was halved. This also has significant geopolitical implications.'

5. Public disagreements between Hausner and Kolodko had been running for a number of weeks before Kolodko's resignation. However these divisions cannot be placed into a liberal/Keynesian axis. For example, Hausner believes in moving towards the eurozone more slowly than Kolodko and retaining a higher budget deficit. At the same time he is more in favour of cutting taxes for business and is more willing to carry through social expenditure cuts. Although Kolodko managed to introduce some measures to protect endangered industries he was unable to carry out the majority of his programme when in office, with some of his proposals blocked by the President.

6. Skazani Na Millera, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30.06.2003.

7. Ostatni Dzwonek, *Trybuna*, 09.10.2003

8. 56% of society agree that women should have the right to an abortion, compared with 28% who disagree. (OBOP opinion poll research, quoted in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27.06.2003)

9. Some signs are evident that the SLD's leadership will oppose these bills. For example, Minister of Internal Affairs, Krzysztof Janik, said that the government does not take sides on the divide around gay

relationships and that there exists an understanding around the question of abortion which should not be disturbed at the moment. (Uznanie Dla Hausnera, *Trybuna*, 15-16.11.2002)

10. Dobrze z Ameryka, Dobrze z Europa, *Przeгляд*, 29.07.2002

11. The Polish Minister of Defence, Jerzy Szmajdzinski, commented, "We are prepared to work jointly towards an agreement regarding the installation of military technology on our territory". (Nie dam sie oczarowac, interview with, *Trybuna*, 3-4.08.2002)

12. Although in the Czech Republic the then President, Vaclav Havel, signed it and not the ruling social democratic government.

13. Although UP has criticised policies such as the flat-income tax rate, it is closely associated with the SLD government making it difficult for the party to build a left alternative to the SLD. Other parties on the left, such as the Polish Socialist Party have remained marginalised.

14. For example the secretary of a local SLD branch in Slask says that membership has fallen from 269 to 145 and that the majority left due to dissatisfaction with the social cuts being proposed in the 'Hausner Plan'. (Plan Hausnera z Wefyfikacja w Tle, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 28.11.2003)

15. Despite this economic growth has improved and now stands at around 3.5%. This improved economic performance is due to a number of factors. Firstly, although many of Kolodko's economic proposals were blocked, his partial reforms did manage to stop the decline of a number of enterprises. Secondly, the government has maintained relatively high public expenditures, through allowing the budget deficit to grow. Thirdly, the zloty has devalued, especially in relation to the euro, which has strengthened Polish exports and industry.

**Colin Meade**

## **Populist Replaces Playwright as Czech President**

On 28 February 2003, at the third attempt, the Parliament of the Czech Republic elected a new President. The chosen successor to Vaclav Havel was Vaclav Klaus, former Prime Minister and moving spirit behind his country's radical privatisation and restitution programmes in the aftermath of the collapse of the Communist regime. Klaus' opponent in the final round of voting was Jan Sokol, the candidate of the incumbent government, which rests on a coalition between the largest party, the Social Democrats (30.2% in the 2002 general election) and some right-wing formations hostile to Klaus. While the vote was secret, the electoral arithmetic meant that in order to win, Klaus must have gained, on top of the votes of his own party, the ODS (24.5%), at least some support from the Government parties and that of most of the MPs from the KSCM (Communist Party) (18.5%). Thus, his victory reflected both disarray in the ranks of the Government parties and what seems at first sight an unnatural alliance between the heirs of the former regime and one of the architects of its destruction.

Klaus' credentials as a right-winger are impeccable. A great admirer of Margaret Thatcher, he believes religiously in the free-market ideology, peppering his speeches and writings with quotations and old saws from the gospel according to Hayek and Samuelson - often inserted in English into the Czech text. He had arrived at his conclusions well before 1989 and thereafter was utterly dismissive of any diversionary talk of a "third way" between socialism and capitalism. This for him

was the province of unserious people, by which he meant the dissidents associated with the Charter 77 movement and his predecessor as President. In his opinion “the Chartists consisted by and large of reform Communists who were necessarily unable to step over their own shadow and who constantly referred back to the ideas of 1968. Out of this declarative mishmash mainly made up of moralistic flimflam arose today’s ‘unpolitical politics’, and a distaste for normal political parties and a pluralist democratic system”.<sup>1</sup>

His unequivocal determination to swiftly and thoroughly dismantle the socialist economy proved immensely popular with the Czech electorate. After rising to the head of the Civic Forum movement following a personal triumph at the polls in a proletarian bastion in North Moravia in 1990, he formed the ODS (Civic Democratic Party) and became Prime Minister in 1992 following his party’s emergence as the strongest party in the general election of that year. During this term of office he helped organise the dissolution of the federation with Slovakia, taking the view that the bitter wrangling over various forms of federal constitutional arrangement was an obstacle to the main goal of privatisation. Although denounced by, among others, the KSCM as a dangerous weakening of the viability of the two nations carried out by undemocratic means (there was no referendum), the split did not dent his popularity: in 1996 the ODS was again the best-supported party (29.6%) and Klaus continued as Prime Minister. However, in the face of a campaign around the theme of corruption during the privatisation process, Klaus was forced to step down in November 1997 and remained on the backbenches until his election to the Presidency. In the 1998 general election, the CSSD (Social Democrats) overtook the ODS, a position they subsequently maintained in 2002, and the country got a Social Democratic Prime Minister.

Despite its paradoxical appearance, the support of the majority of the KSCM deputies for Klaus against Sokol was based on a number of solid reasons. At the most self-interested level, despite his ideological aversion to socialist ideas, he has never been in favour of ostracising the Communist Party and its members. For a party eager to have its voting strength reflected in what it considers a fair share of power and influence, this is a significant consideration. He is also opposed to granting special privileges to the Catholic Church, which

is campaigning to undermine the separation of Church and State, a principle firmly rooted in the political traditions of the Czech Republic, the majority of whose people are non-believers.

Another possible motive for the unnatural alliance between Klaus and the Communists was the latter's desire to sow confusion in the CSSD, whose current leader and Prime Minister Vladimir Spidla, is under strong internal pressure from critics of the coalition with the small right-wing (and in some cases clerical) formations. The failure of the Government's Presidential candidate was a major blow to Spidla's credibility. The KSCM's strategic aim is clearly to build up a current favourable to collaboration with the KSCM in the CSSD, which is currently explicitly committed by the so-called Bohumin Resolution to shunning any such collaboration. The issue of the repeal of this resolution or at least a relaxation of its application was raised at the CSSD congress at the end of March 2003. The party leadership also came under pressure there over the issue of the Iraq war, with an CSSD Senator, Richard Falbr, promoting a strong antiwar resolution.

From the point of view of the outside world, however, the crucial reason for the left-wing support for Klaus is his adherence to the principle of national sovereignty. This is reflected in his attitude both to the defence of Czech interests and to international events in general. It found expression in opposition to European sanctions against Austria over the inclusion of members of Jörg Haider's extreme right-wing FPO in the Government, as well as in relation to the US-British war against Iraq. With the replacement of Havel by Klaus, the Czech Republic dropped out of the pro-US "New Europe", on this issue at least. Shortly after his election he made it clear that he would not have signed the "letter of the eight", a recent letter of statesmen of eight European countries, including then Czech President Vaclav Havel, who expressed support for the US attitude towards Iraq. This brought the Presidency into line with the position of the Czech Parliament, which had approved the participation of Czech soldiers in military operations against Iraq only with a UN mandate.<sup>2</sup> The people's representatives are in this respect wholly in tune with public opinion. An opinion poll at the end of March found that 83% of respondents were strongly (53%) or rather strongly (30%) against an unmandated military action. Moreover, only 21% took a positive view of US foreign policy with

62% taking a negative view.<sup>3</sup>

Klaus' distaste for the US-British action in Iraq goes beyond the legalistic consideration of the absence of a Security Council mandate. "In an interview with *Hospodarske noviny* on 21 March, he said that he did not share the opinion of Bush and Blair that the inhumane and undemocratic regime in Iraq is sufficient grounds for justifying its overthrow. 'There are many inhumane and undemocratic regimes in the world. After all, we also lived under one of them'".<sup>4</sup>

Klaus is a Eurosceptic of the British Conservative kind. That is to say, he is in favour of the Czech Republic joining a single market, but not in favour of political federalism. He has been highly critical of the single currency project as contrary to economic rationality. His election as President was, therefore, greeted with some dismay in some quarters in Europe. According to French commentator Jacques Rupnik

That the Czech Republic will enter the Union with a new President who holds a radical Eurosceptical stand will confirm in the eyes of the members of the old Europe at least what a majority already anticipate: that new members do not want to deepen the process of integration, but that they see the European Union mainly as an economic institution.<sup>5</sup>

The dismay was especially intense in Germany and Austria. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* quoted without comment an anonymous "Czech political analyst" who considered Klaus' election as

a catastrophe for the political culture of the Czechs: the result strengthens the Communists, furthers the self-dismemberment of the Government and strengthens those economic grey areas which had previously, at the start of the 1990s done much damage when Klaus was head of Government.<sup>6</sup>

An Austrian political analyst, Anton Pelinka, explained the real bone of contention. Pelinka told the CTK press agency that

from the point of view of the European Union and Austria, Klaus' election 'is not much good', adding that Klaus had of late bet on the nationalist card. This had secured him the support of the Communists, but in relation to Austria, which demands that the Czech Republic makes a gesture of apology for the postwar

transfer of the Sudeten Germans, it heralds nothing good.<sup>7</sup>

The right-wing German daily, *Die Welt*, was overtly hostile and for the same reason:

Klaus owes his victory above all to the unreconstructed Communists, whose head, Miroslav Grebenicek used the election once again to raise, sixty years after the war, the bugbear of an imaginary Sudeten German threat to the country. He accused Sokol of wanting to make an arrangement with the Expellees. Sokol had described the collective forced transfer of over three million Sudeten Germans as ‘shameful’ and in 1995 supported an appeal to the Government to enter into negotiations with the Expellees. The Communists had therefore already decided to prevent the election of Sokol at all costs.

The KSCM considers Klaus to be ‘reliable’ on the Sudeten German issue. The present Honorary President of the ODS peddled the lie about the Sudeten German threat in the last elections and asked the EU for a guarantee of the Benes decrees before entry into the EU.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, the “Sudeten German threat” in question is, seen from the Czech side, absolutely real and not at all, as *Die Welt* implies, a fantasy conjured up by Communists and other nationalists for their own ends.

In the 1930s, the three-million strong German-speaking population in Czechoslovakia fell increasingly under the sway of a communalist current led by Konrad Henlein, which sought separation from the Czechs in the name of the unity of the German Volk. Working in tandem with the Nazi regime in Berlin, the efforts of Henlein’s movement laid the basis for the notorious Munich Agreement of 1938, under which large areas of Czechoslovakia became part of the Third Reich. A few months later the rest of the Czech Lands was occupied and Czechs became second-class citizens in their own country, with the prospect of being expelled en masse once the war was over.

At the end of the war, virtually the entire Sudeten German community was expelled from Czechoslovakia on the grounds of disloyalty to the Czechoslovak state and their property confiscated. Legal provision was made for those who had demonstrated their loyalty to the Czechoslovak Republic to remain, but Germans were, essentially,



considered guilty of the disloyalty charge until proved innocent.<sup>9</sup>

In the postwar Federal Republic, exiled Sudeten German communalist leaders established mass organisations which, to this day adhere to the basic tenets of the Henlein programme: a German Sudetenland, separated from the Czechs. Exploiting<sup>10</sup> the suffering experienced during the postwar transfer and the moral ambiguities in the expulsion programme and its implementation, the Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft (SL) continues to view itself as the political expression of a people in exile, with its own Government and Parliament, preparing for return to its Heimat. Restitution of rights and property, plus “autonomy” for the regained areas remain the programme, to be pursued through direct negotiations between the Sudeten German movement and the Czech authorities.

The Czech position has been to attempt to draw a line under the past by renouncing demands for German reparations for wartime losses, which were never paid due to the outbreak of the Cold War, as a quid pro quo for the cessation of German pressure around the Sudeten German issue. However, apologies from the Czech side, including a formal statement of regret in the 1997 Czech-German Declaration for the injustices suffered under the transfer, have had no impact on the determination of the SL to win its full demands.

A concentrated (albeit so far unsuccessful) effort was made to make repeal by the Czechs of decrees issued by President Benes ordering the expulsions a condition of Czech accession to the EU. This campaign has been spearheaded by Bavarian Euro-MP Bernd Posselt, a leading member of Otto Habsburg’s Paneuropa movement which claims the backing of 80 MEPs, and has the support of Austrian Chancellor Schüssel and Bavarian Regional leader Eduard Stoiber. Although the incumbent “Red-Green” government does not support the linkage, its representatives have sought to reassure the SL that they will be able to seek satisfaction within the EU legal framework, through getting “minority rights” enshrined in the future European Constitution.

The SL’s demands and activities would not arouse the controversy they do in the Czech Republic were it not for the political and material support the SL enjoys from the German state and political establishment. The Region of Bavaria has extended official patronage to the SL since 1954. In December 2002, the Bavarian Regional Assembly

adopted, with the support of the CSU and SPD groups, a motion on “European values and EU enlargement” which stated that the Benes Decrees were “contrary to human rights” and calling on the Federal German Government to raise this issue within the EU.<sup>11</sup>

Within the Czech Republic, the SL has striven to consolidate a “German minority” as a vector for its demands. In March 2003, the SL opened an office in Prague, described by Bernd Posselt at the opening ceremony as an “Embassy”. While a number of Czech politicians attended, Vaclav Klaus described the opening of the office as “inappropriate and unnecessary”. In addition, his first visit after assuming office was to Slovakia, rather than Germany, his predecessor’s first port of call. Such behaviour is enough in today’s Europe to earn the sobriquet of “nationalist” and “populist”. Certainly, on this issue, Klaus is in touch with the mood of his people. A survey in May 2002 found that 67% of respondents thought the Benes Decrees should remain in force, with a mere 5% supporting their repeal.<sup>12</sup>

30 March 2003

1 Petr Jüngling, Tomas Koudela, Petr Zantovsky: *Tak pravil Vaclav Klaus* (‘Thus spake Vaclav Klaus’), Prague, 1998, p. 16.

2 CTK, 2 March, 2003

3 CVVM poll, summarised in Pravo, 28 March 2003 (Internet edition).

4 REE/RL newslines, 21 March 2003 (Internet edition)

5 CTK, 28 February 2003.

6 Quoted in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2 March 2003 (Internet edition).

7 CTK, 28 February 2003.

8 *Die Welt*, 1 March 2003 (Internet edition).

9 Mass expulsions also took place from other parts of Europe, in particular Poland and East Prussia and movements analogous to that of the Sudeten Germans also exist in these cases.

10 As well as by exaggerating that suffering by massively inflating the death toll and distorting the real circumstances of the transfer in various ways, for example by failing to distinguish between acts of revenge by Czech just after the collapse of German power and the organised transfer itself.

11 www.german-foreign-policy.com, 2 January 2003.

12 www.german-foreign-policy.com, 5 June 2002.

**Catherine Samary**

**Divorce Between Society and Political  
Leadership:  
Old and New Europe Against War**

The Iraq war showed there was a convergence between eastern and western Europe and that people were far more vocal and active against the war than they have been for accession to the European Union.

Jacek Kuron, the former popular minister of labour, said

The Iraqis will not like us until we solve the problems of employment, health and administration: that's what a Polish general in charge of our occupation zone thinks. So instead of marching off to Iraq, why don't we just tackle those problems here in Poland?<sup>1</sup>

He was one of the few Polish politicians to oppose the war in Iraq.<sup>1</sup> He was surprised at the support for the United States from the Polish president and government. "They were probably looking for short-term political benefits," he says, "but that does not justify involvement in this shameful business." His view probably reflects the opinion of the majority of people in Poland and all the countries of the "New Europe" more accurately than pro-US positions adopted by their official representatives.<sup>2</sup> The divorce between society and the present political leadership in those countries is not confined to the war in Iraq, as shown by the massive abstention in the referendums on

accession to the EU.

Four years ago, when Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary had just joined Nato, the war in Kosovo opened a gap between the peoples and governments of the countries of eastern Europe, except Poland.<sup>3</sup> The Iraq war widened that gap. In February 2003 an average 75% of the population in all countries applying for EU membership opposed military intervention in Iraq without a UN mandate, and a majority (49% to 42%) was against it even if the Security Council gave the go-ahead. Compare this with western Europe, where 57% favoured military intervention in the event of a UN mandate and only 38% maintained their opposition.<sup>4</sup> The Letter from the Eight and the Vilnius Ten Declaration, supporting a war planned in advance by the US, reflected neither the opinion of their citizens nor the outcome of their parliamentary debates.<sup>5</sup>

László Andor, chairman of the Scientific Council of Attac Hungary, [see his article in this issue] explains how Hungary signed the Letter from the Eight.

The prime minister, Peter Medgyessy, initialled it on a trip to Greece. On his return, he was taken to task for approving a document supporting the war without consulting the government or parliament, when the positions of France and Germany, as well as the growing opposition to military intervention shown in Hungarian opinion polls, were already known. He claimed he had secured a minor amendment to the letter, which was not a declaration of war, and assured his critics that Hungarian soldiers would not be sent to fight in Iraq. The affair raised so much dust that a new national security adviser had to be appointed.

Egdunas Raciús, a lecturer at Vilnius University's Institute of international relations and political science, writes:

The Lithuanian as well as Latvian and Estonian governments sanctioned the sending of their national troops to Iraq, with almost no debates either in the government or in public, in what they meant to be a gesture of loyalty to the US.<sup>6</sup>

Professor Rastko Mocnik of the University of Ljubljana told

me of “the embarrassment and heated political debate” caused by the Slovenian signature on the Vilnius Ten Declaration. Mocnik signed a petition protesting that “no political party in Slovenia has a mandate to drag the country into a war of aggression” and demanding that “the government withdraw its support for the declaration issued by the foreign ministers of 10 eastern European countries”.

In eastern and southeastern Europe protest against forms of support for the war, and then against the occupation, went far beyond opposition exploitation of a government blunder. The Czech, Slovenian and Croatian leaders officially objected to the presence of their countries on the list of coalition partners. Many governments, including Romania, Bulgaria and Slovenia, were openly divided on the issue.

The pressure on the new and future members of Nato and the EU has both business and foreign policy aspects, and is further complicated by the recycling of former senior members of the communist nomenklatura. More is now known about Bruce Jackson’s complex role as US “pro-consul”:<sup>7</sup> he is a former senior official in the Department of Defence and chairman of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq (he persuaded many well-known eastern Europeans to join this); vice-president of the arms firm Lockheed Martin and a prime mover in the eastward expansion of Nato; chairman of the US neo-conservatives’ Project for a New American Century. One of his biggest coups was negotiating the contract of the century for the sale of 48 Lockheed Martin F-16 fighters to Poland. The US is funding this deal itself, since the cost of the aircraft has been covered by a US loan and the purchase of \$12bn of Polish goods.<sup>8</sup>

Poland was the only eastern European country to join the coalition led by Bush and Blair, so it is not surprising that it has taken command of a multinational force in southern central Iraq. It may be rewarded by the appointment of President Aleksander Kwasniewski, a former communist, as head of the Atlantic Alliance, and by the transfer of four US bases from Germany to Poland. Other eastern European leaders, like many in the West, allowed the US to use their territory and airspace or sent soldiers to protect their diplomats and humanitarian operations, while ensuring their firms were properly represented in current discussions on the reconstruction of Iraq.

But demonstrations - including one against Czech military

police guarding the field hospital at Basra - and attacks on occupation troops and UN personnel have dampened enthusiasm. As for US bases in eastern Europe, local people thought they would boost trade in surrounding areas but now see them as potential reprisal targets. On 15 February 50,000 people were out on the streets in Budapest, in response to a call from Hungary's Citizens for Peace movement, to demand an end to support for the war and the removal of the Tazsár air base, conveniently closed down once military intervention began.

The increase in military expenditure when health and education budgets are being cut raises the question of the Maastricht criteria imposed on the new candidates and the construction of Europe on neoliberal lines. While budgetary austerity is imposed at national level, there is growing disappointment with European aid. Structural funds, which are the second-largest European budget section after agriculture, are supposed to compensate for market mechanisms and help the poorest regions, but they are now capped and subject to co-funding arrangements. Reduced public funding and the orientation of private credit towards profitability has shifted aid towards the better-off.

Poland and Spain may present a united front on Iraq and on the criteria for representation within the EU, but if there is no increase in the EU budget - capped at 1.27% of the combined GDP of member states for the current period <sup>9</sup> - the already weak redistributive effect of the structural funds will be further reduced by the accession of poorer new members. Spain will lose almost all the European funding it has been receiving and the amounts awarded to the new members will be revised downwards. A Polish farmer will receive, from the start, only 25% of what a French farmer gets.

Brussels does not want to encourage what it calls "unproductive self-consumption". But small plots of land remain the only support for many people in eastern Europe when social services once provided by large enterprises disappear. The real aim is to remove all social welfare protection to ensure the emergence of 19th-century-style wage-earners subject to an implacable rule of flexibility. The new labour codes are already installing this system. Instead of catching up with the West, the working population is growing poorer all the time.

But if the aim is simply to establish a large free market in eastern Europe, why bother with an enlargement that worsens EU problems?

The countries of eastern Europe are already open to trade, social protection has been removed, the most profitable enterprises have been sold off, and firms have delocated. Brussels was in no hurry to start official negotiations: these did not begin for the first group of countries<sup>10</sup> until 1998 - and then only because the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall was approaching, not because the countries had made a successful transition to a free-market economy. In 1998, after several years of falling GDP, only two had caught up with their 1989 levels; and Poland has since had a considerable drop in its growth rate.

Lázló Andor is a Hungarian economist. Last March he organised the first conference in eastern Europe of a network of economists for an alternative European policy.<sup>11</sup> In his view

the new eastern European political elites were afraid of seeing their authority questioned. To consolidate the changes that had taken place, they were desperate to join anything in the West - Nato or the EU, whichever came first.

To keep candidates waiting, the 1993 Copenhagen summit imposed three criteria for accession: political pluralism, a market economy "capable of coping with competitive pressure", and incorporation of the *acquis communautaire*.<sup>12</sup> But, he explains, "application of those criteria implied a strict selection; this meant that the initial promise of opening up to the East would be honoured only for one or two showcase countries."

The decision to go for a big bang was taken at the European summit of December 1999, when the accession of all the candidate countries was decreed irreversible, although no dates were given. The Copenhagen criteria were increasingly inapplicable. The candidates had negative balances of trade with the EU and were unable to cope with competitive pressure; the *acquis communautaire* kept changing, particularly in the common agricultural policy and the structural funds, the two main issues in the final negotiations. On a political level, the big bang was precipitated by the growth of abstentionism and xenophobic movements,<sup>13</sup> aggravated by Nato's war in Yugoslavia.

In June 1999 the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe was adopted to help fragile governments there by creating an EU

antechamber for the western Balkans.<sup>14</sup> Andor argues that “a regional solution was imperative, otherwise the fragmentation of the region would accelerate and the only stability that could be achieved would be the kind imposed by the US airforce”.

Eastern Europe has moved directly from the censorship and bureaucratic mess of one-party regimes, which did provide social protection, to the intellectual terrorism and unbridled capitalism of liberal dogma. In this painful transition, the EU appears to some as a moderating influence and a source of hope for a new convergence.

“The Iraq war brought out the links between the peoples of eastern and western Europe,” says Czech political commentator Petr Uhl, a former Charter 77 activist and fervent supporter of EU membership. Writing in the daily *Pravo*, he described the signing of the Letter from the Eight by Czech president Vaclav Havel, who had only a few days left in office, as a criminal act. Uhl sees the construction of Europe as a means of “promoting the rights recognised by the Council of Europe”. He denounced Czech responsibility for the break-up of the Czechoslovak Federation and is critical of the Czech Communist Party’s anti-EU campaign which, he says, is based on hostility to Germans and other foreigners.

Anna Sabatova, a former Charter 77 spokesperson appointed deputy ombudsman of the Czech Republic two years ago, also rejects anti-EU nationalism: “I see no alternative to accession.” While recognising the retreat from social protection since 1989, Sabatova stresses that ideas are changing.

Ten years ago, solidarity was a dirty word implying a dependency mentality. Now it is possible to criticise the expulsions that are hitting the poorest, and the removal of social welfare assistance. I realise accession will not only bring benefits, but I don’t see how we can change the world in isolation. We can draw on many examples in the EU to help us resist what is happening here.

The Hungarian historian Tamas Kraus, a Social Forum activist, agrees that EU membership is the least of all evils:

Faced with the Europhobic far right, we shall have more room



for manoeuvre in defending sexual and national minorities (especially the Roma) in the framework of the Union - and more opportunities for cooperation between trade unions. We have been colonised to a greater extent over the last 13 years outside the EU than we shall be inside it.

This last point highlights the EU's share of responsibility for the extreme capitalism that eastern European elites have promoted to their own advantage. It also explains some of the "no" vote in the accession referendums. Most of that vote came from the xenophobic nationalist far right, often representing the most disadvantaged sections of the population, and Thatcherite ultra-liberals like President Vaclav Klaus's party in the Czech Republic. The League of Polish Families, a rightwing Catholic party that, despite the Pope's position in favour of EU membership, is virulently anti-European, actually proposed that Poland join the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) in preference to the EU.<sup>15</sup>

"The very high abstention rates raise more questions than they answer," says Professor Nicolas Bardos-Feltoronyi of the Catholic University of Louvain. "But they seem particularly high in regions where incomes are low or average." Piotr Ikonowicz, an organiser of a social forum held in February in Elk, a city in one of Poland's most damaged regions, says: "Poland's representatives are demanding the right to veto EU social legislation, but these people do not speak for us." The forum, which brought together associations of the unemployed and trade unionists, passed a resolution calling for a European social welfare policy.

Alternative proposals to the liberal construction of Europe, breaking with traditions of the clerical and nationalist right, are just beginning to emerge. "The EU is still the area of the world where secularism is strongest and citizens enjoy the most extensive social and civil rights," says Michal Kozlowski, who publishes *Bez Dogmatu*, a Polish magazine with a strong anti-clerical platform. "The accession terms are scandalous, so Polish integration will be a real challenge." Like Polish feminists, Kozlowski fears "the strength of the Pope's religious lobby in Brussels".

These fears are echoed by Polish historian Marcin Kula, who

reminds us that many Poles think that “because Poland has always been part of Europe, it is up to the EU to adhere to Polish values”. He is critical of this prevalent mythical view of Poland’s European past, which ignores the fact that, seen from western Europe, Poland is on the margins. In the 1970s, Kula explains, communist leader Edward Gierek “opened up prospects of a Western-style existence through his imports policy”. During the Solidarity period,

unemployment remained inconceivable and no one anticipated privatisation. As a result, the trade union movement, which was at the origin of the transformation, has practically disappeared, especially in private companies. People were disappointed by Europe after the fall of communism. They remembered the aid given in the 1980s and thought that, once they were free, they would be welcomed with open arms. All this means Poles now have a more favourable view of the communist past than in 1989.<sup>16</sup>

Like many eastern Europeans, Professor Kuna has mixed feelings about the EU. He is concerned about the demand to close Poland’s borders with its eastern neighbours.

If I have to chose between membership of the EU and Belarus under Alexander Lukashenko, my vote goes to the EU. I’m worried about erecting a new wall between us and a new eastern Europe, whose citizens will in turn be despised as second-class Europeans.

(1) Interview in *Zycie Warszawy*, 4 September 2003.

(2) On how the US is perceived by the people and new elites of central Europe, see Nicolas Bardos-Feltoronyi, “Le centre de l’Europe et la guerre en Irak”, *La Revue nouvelle*, Brussels, May-June 2003.

(3) See Catherine Gousseff, “L’effet Kosovo sur les nouveaux partenaires”, *Courrier des pays de l’Est*, n° 1001, January 2000; François Guilbert, “L’OTAN, d’un élargissement à l’autre”, in Edith Lhomel, ed, *L’Europe centrale et orientale, dix ans de transformations (1989-1999)*, Paris, Documentation française, 2000.

- (4) *Le Monde*, 1 February 2003, which ran the headline “The countries of eastern Europe justify their loyalty to the US”.
- (5) The Letter from the Eight was signed on 30 January 2003 by the Polish and Hungarian prime ministers and by the Czech president, with the Spanish, British, Portuguese, Italian and Danish prime ministers. The Vilnius Ten Declaration was signed on 5 February 2003 by the foreign ministers of Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.
- (6) *The Baltic Times*, Vilnius, 19 September 2003.
- (7) *The Baltic Times*, 15 November 2001; International Herald Tribune, 20 February 2003; Radio Free Europe, 10 February 2003.
- (8) *The Guardian*, 12 June 2002 and 16 May 2003.
- (9) In the US the budget is 20% of GDP.
- (10) The first five countries were Slovenia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Estonia. The second wave will be Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria.
- (11) The EPOC Thematic Network is dedicated to “the improvement of economic policy cooperation for full employment and social cohesion” (See [www.epoc.uni-bremen.de/home.htm](http://www.epoc.uni-bremen.de/home.htm)).
- (12) *Acquis communautaire* refers to the principles, regulations and objectives that prospective member states must integrate with their own legislative frameworks before being considered for EU membership.
- (13) See Jacques Rupnik, “L’Europe du Centre-Est entre quête de stabilité et tentation populiste”, in *Etudes du CERI*, n° 81, December 2001.
- (14) The former Yugoslav republics (except Slovenia) and Albania, together with Romania and Bulgaria, whose accession was put off until 2007.
- (15) See Jean-Michel De Waele, ed, *La Pologne et l’intégration européenne*, University of Brussels, 2003.
- (16) Over 70% of Poles view the Gierek years positively.

*Translated by Barry Smerin. This article first appeared in Le Monde Diplomatique, November 2003 and is reprinted here with their permission.*

**Peter Gowan**

## **Does the Bush Strategy Face Overstretch Risks?**

The Bush administration's strategic turn since 9/11 has revived discussion about the possibility of American 'overstretch', a topic that had been intensely debated in the 1980s but which had died out in the 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

The term 'overstretch' suggests a dangerous degree of strain in the relationship between the resources of a great power and its commitments or national strategy. Paul Kennedy's use of the term in the 1980s was of this sort: he defined what he called the problem of 'imperial overstretch' in relation to America as follows: 'the sum total of the United States' global interests and obligations is nowadays far larger than the country's power to defend them all simultaneously.'<sup>2</sup>

Conventional wisdom in the 1990s has been that the American state does not suffer from any risk of resource overstretch in pursuing its strategy on a global scale. Its military resources are greater than those of the next 8 or 9 great powers combined, while simultaneously the US military budget absorbs a very manageable part of overall American resources. As a proportion of US GDP, the US military budget remains modest. In April 1989, US defence budget outlays peaked at \$304bn. In 1996 the military outlays hit a low of \$266bn. Relative to GDP, defence spending was 6.7 per cent in 1990, but only 3.8 per cent in 2000.<sup>3</sup> In

1989, US military budget was 30 per cent of federal taxes. In 2000 it was only 15 per cent of federal taxes. The military budget has now, under Bush climbed back up to close to \$400bn. But this still remains low as a percentage of GDP - about 4 per cent.

Yet these kinds of general calculations made by military planners can obscure some crucial political dimensions of power projection and in practice overstretch issues are always politicised. Thus, in some political circumstances a power's domestic population may be willing to devote 15, 25 or even 40 per cent of the country's GDP to military operations; while in other circumstances there may be resistance to even a 4 per cent commitment. Furthermore, there can be acute problems caused by the lack of particular kinds of resources, despite the fact that other resources are plentiful. And the supplies of some kinds of resources can be squeezed by particular bottle-necks which aggregate pictures of resource issues skate over.

In short, to explore questions of overstretch concretely we must look at:

- (a) the political substance of the strategic goals and strategic path of the US government
- (b) the specific resource demands made by the strategy.
- (c) the specific sources of the resources needed and the concrete context in which these sources are being tapped.

We can then see if the general relationships suggesting an absence of overstretch apply in the concrete circumstances or not. We will attempt to explore the extent to which the Bush administration's concrete post-9/11 strategy and tactics place the American state under serious resource constraints and risk bringing the US to an overstretch crisis.

But this requires us to spell out what the Bush strategy has actually been since 9/11. Part One attempts to characterise this Bush strategy: its goals, the mainlines of its strategic path and its key tactical elements.<sup>4</sup> This analysis is then used as the basis for exploring, in Part 2, the extent to which the key elements in the strategy bring with them overstretch risks.

## **Part 1. The Programme and Strategy of the Bush Turn**

While all agree that the Bush administration made some sort of strategic turn from 9/11, there is no agreement whatever about what the goals of the new strategy actually are. One of the problems in much of the discussion of this issue is the fact that analysts do not separate out different dimensions of the Bush Turn – the overall programmatic dimensions from the strategic and the tactical dimensions. We will briefly attempt to do this, relying as far as possible on evidence from the Bush team itself.<sup>5</sup>

### **Programmatic goal: a world order based on US primacy**

We have some journalistic evidence of the subjectivity of the Bush team about its most basic, programmatic goals in making its turn on and after 9/11. We also have some documentary evidence on these goals and some scholarly work on them. All this material points fairly clearly in the direction of one big programmatic goal: what is called, in the jargon of American Grand Strategy debates, ‘primacy’.

Journalistic accounts, notably a series of articles by *Washington Post* journalists Woodward and Balz, show that in the days following 9/11 the Bush team saw the event as an opportunity for reshaping American relations with the rest of the world via a big strategic turn. Afghanistan, Iraq etc were to be tactical steps in this larger strategic turn to change US-global relations. 9/11 was to be the legitimating mechanism for this strategic turn. Describing the Cabinet meeting on 9/14, Woodward and Balz report: ‘Like Bush, Powell saw the attacks as an opportunity to reshape relationships throughout the world.’<sup>6</sup> In other words, 9/11 gave the US an opportunity in the field of grand strategy.

On 9/11 Bush had ordered Rumsfeld to prepare for an attack against Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> On 9/12 at the National Security Council, attended by Bush and his top officials, the key issue, according to Woodward and Balz, was the risk that after crushing al Quaida and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan the whole new campaign might fall apart or fizzle out. To avoid this danger Cheney gained agreement that the campaign should, from the start, be not only against terrorism but against states that sponsor terrorism. This was agreed. Rumsfeld, backed

by Wolfowitz, urged that Iraq be made a target from the start. Others (Powell and Shelton) disagreed. Bush decided that first there would be a mobilisation to conquer Afghanistan and then, after that had been accomplished, the target could be shifted to Iraq later.<sup>8</sup>

Rumsfeld later explained to Woodward and Balz that the first 36 hours were vital because ‘You’ve got to think of concepts and strategic action’.<sup>9</sup> It is evident that this remark from Rumsfeld does not refer to strategic action for the campaign against the Taliban or against Iraq. It rather refers to strategic action for global goals - for reshaping relationships throughout the world. Attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq were to be tactical means in a global strategy for global programmatic goals. Woodward and Balz report that as early as 9/12 Rumsfeld spelled out his global strategic goal for: the idea that ‘US power was needed to help discipline the world’.<sup>10</sup> The war on Afghanistan and then Iraq as well as the other campaigns against the axis or evil and the Palestinian armed resistance should thus be seen as steps towards the goal of asserting US disciplinary power at the global level.

Rumsfeld’s phrase about US global disciplinary power is really a synonym for a unipolar or monopolar world. Cheney has used another formula for the same idea, stating in the run-up to the attack on Iraq that ‘the world is in our hands’.<sup>11</sup> In the contemporary American language of Grand Strategy debates these are all synonyms for the doctrine of American primacy. The Woodward and Balz reportage thus suggests that 9/11 was used by the Bush team as the occasion for launching a campaign for US global primacy.

Another journalist who has also carried out interviews with a wide range of the key foreign policy officials of the Bush administration, Nicholas Lemann, provides further enlightenment on this concept of 11 September as an opportunity for achieving US global goals. He had lunch with National Security Adviser, Condoleeza Rice, and she brought up the concept of 11 September as an opportunity, or rather as creating opportunities in the plural. Lemann reports as follows:

Rice said that she had called together the senior staff people of the National Security Council and asked them to think seriously about ‘how do you capitalize on these opportunities’ to fundamentally change American doctrine, and the shape of

the world, in the wake of September 11. ‘I really think this period is analogous to 1945 to 1947,’ she said that is, the period when the containment doctrine took shape “in that the events so clearly demonstrated that there is a big global threat, and that it’s a big global threat to a lot of countries that you would not have normally thought of as being in the coalition. That has started shifting the tectonic plates in international politics. And it’s important to try to seize on that and position American interests and institutions and all of that before they harden again.’<sup>12</sup>

These comments by Rice again re-enforce the centrality of global programmatic goals and introduce a conception of the global conjuncture. She suggests that we are in a period analogous to 1945-1947: a period, in other words where a new global order can be established. But she also makes clear that 9/11 was an opportunity for building a new global order and not the source of the need for a new global order.<sup>13</sup> That source is not spelt out by Rice. Rice’s phrase about what Acheson called, biblically, ‘the creation’ - when the US world was made in the late 1940s, is illuminating. She saw the Turn as being on the same scale as that: a new ‘creation’ or perhaps a ‘re-creation’.

Turning to documentary evidence, one document is enough to re-enforce the case that the Bush administration’s goal in making the Turn is primacy: the September 2002 National Security Strategy. This document makes it abundantly clear that the Bush Administration is driving for a world order anchored on US primacy. In that document, the administration presents the American state as the guardian not of American security but of global security. The US must have the task of deciding, for the world, who the world’s friends and enemies are. And it will lead the world in crushing the world’s enemies. And it will do so on its own if necessary but with friends if possible. And in language reminiscent of the Platt Amendment it speaks of “convincing or compelling states to accept their sovereign responsibilities.”<sup>14</sup>

### **The meaning of primacy**

The notion of ‘primacy’ is an old, long established concept in American elite debates about grand strategy. It surfaced prominently in the deep splits within the elite in the 1970s.<sup>15</sup> And it has been a central concept in elite debates on US grand strategy since the collapse of the Soviet Bloc.



Posen and Ross (see note 19 below) distinguish between primacy, selective engagement, cooperative security and isolationism as the different grand strategy programmes or doctrines in play within American elite debates in the 1990s. They remark that all such doctrines have their economic dimension but they do not treat this economic dimension. Indeed, although we know that the economic dimension looms large in discussions of grand strategy, it is typically not covered in public materials discussing political and military dimensions of grand strategy.

The contemporary isolationist doctrine is, in reality, a doctrine for a US military pull-back from its massive power projections during the Cold War. It does not imply that America will play no role as a leading international political power. Co-operative security implies that America will be the biggest player (by far) in various international security institutions and the UN, but will broadly accept their institutional disciplines and will thus pursue a collegial policy, at least with the other core capitalist liberal democratic allies. It thus posits a basic, organic harmony of interests (as well as values) with these states. But both primacy and selective engagement have a different analysis of the situation. They both see other capitalist liberal democracies as the main potential threats to American interests in the 21st century. They may also see China, of course, as eventually falling into the same category. The reasons why these powers could pose a threat is because of their industrial and technological capacities and because of the possibility of their forming regional blocs that could then have a scale that would make them equal to the US. There is an obvious capitalist economic dimension to this potential threat as well: such regional powers would also be very large centres of capital accumulation, generating huge credit power, product market power and bases for launching new growth sectors. They would thus also act as magnets for swathes of other capitalisms in their vicinity.

This type of analysis has nothing to do with current intentions of current leaders of the main capitalist states in the two rimlands of Eurasia. It is about trends and logics of evolution. But it is important to stress that both doctrines insist that the prime target of US strategy today should be ensuring that these powers cannot threaten the US tomorrow.

But the two doctrines differ critically on their programmes for

dealing with these potential threats. Selective engagement is really a doctrine of off-shore balancing, akin to the approach adopted by Britain towards 19th century Europe.<sup>16</sup> It involves the idea that the US will make its programmatic goal a purely negative one: that of ensuring that the regions in question remain internally divided, thus ensuring that no threatening coalition or bloc could emerge in the future. The US should thus have a policy of tilting and balancing off the main powers at each end of Eurasia.

The doctrine of primacy offers a quite different solution to the problem. It says America should lead and manage the other powers' relations with the rest of the world. It is an activist policy of US global management of world politics: something like an American global government. Primacy does not mean abandoning international institutions like the UN and many others. It does mean that America exercises a kind of sovereignty over them such that it is not bound by their rules, can decide unilaterally when the world faces a state of emergency and what should be done about it. America also can decide who is an enemy of the world and who is not. The institutions in normal circumstances can handle hum-drum issues according to their rules, but all understand that when the hegemon is roused by what it sees to be a threat or major challenge to the world order, it can be bound by no institutional constraints.

Primacy thus means that the US takes on responsibility for a community of states above all for the main core capitalist states, the chief problem zone that primacy is there to address. And the US must pay prices and actually secure benefits of some kind for the members of the community, tackling real problems that they perceive themselves to face and producing real solutions. But in return, it will gain the privileges owing to the hegemon.

Yet what this elite discourse about primacy does not spell out is exactly who are the members of this community. They are usually called states, but it would be more accurate to call the members 'capitalisms'. Primacy does not, of course, enhance the international power and international influence of the member states of the community-under-primacy. But it is designed to enhance the social power, security and wealth of the member capitalisms. For American primacy means a global programme designed to enhance the power of capital over

labour everywhere and to provide capital everywhere with an overall development project, in economics, social and political life. In the eyes of the American proponents of primacy, it is a positive-sum game for the capitalisms of the world. This is what the neo-cons mean with their insistence that their projected American empire is a benevolent empire.

### **Primacy as a traditional US goal**

The Bush administration's programmatic goal of primacy is not in fact innovative. It was the reality of the political order in the capitalist world during the Cold War. The rules of the Cold War alliance systems led by the US and tying all the main capitalist powers to it gave the US unipolar dominance over the relations of the capitalist core with the rest of the world and also gave the US the right to take unilateral decisions about issues of war and peace in situations which it interpreted as an emergency.

The political basis of this US primacy was the global cleavage of the capitalist world and the Soviet Bloc/Communism. The acceptance by all the other core capitalist states of the centrality of this cleavage gave the US primacy over them because only the US could supply their security.

At the same time, the primacy system did not just structure the external geopolitical orientations of the other main capitalist powers. It also to a large extent structured their internal political systems. These were polarised on a free world/communism axis (though France with its Gaullist/nationalist Centre Right was a partial exception internally just as France's exit from the NATO military structure also made it a partial and limited exception in geopolitics).

Thus the collapse of the Soviet Bloc was simultaneously a collapse of the US Primacy Political Order in the capitalist core. Strategic dependence on the US did remain intact in East Asia (in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Australia) but it largely collapsed in Western Europe. And simultaneously, the ideological-political structuring of domestic political systems in line with US political leadership also eroded.

One symptom of the change was the tendency of European and other core states to focus upon the UN and claim that the aggressive use of US military power should be constrained by the UNSC. Another

symptom was the effort by some major West European states to turn themselves into a political caucus in international affairs - something the US never tolerated during the Cold War.<sup>17</sup> But from the moment when the Soviet Bloc collapsed, Washington sought to rebuild a primacy system, this time on a global scale.

Both scholarly and journalistic literatures suggest that a commitment to American primacy runs very deep in American state-business establishment circles.<sup>18</sup> A lengthy and detailed study in the late 1990s by Posen and Ross notes that primacy was the programmatic goal for the elder Bush administration and was also the goal of the Dole candidacy.<sup>19</sup> But they also note that key figures amongst strategic thinkers associated with the Democrats also share the goal of primacy. And they add that despite the presence of some opponents of primacy, notably amongst Defence Department officials, the basic concept of the Clinton administration was also that of primacy, albeit wrapped up in the language of cooperative security. Clinton's National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake, made this very clear in his first major keynote speech on US grand strategy. Lake stressed the fundamental

feature of this era is that we are its dominant power. Those who say otherwise sell America short..... Around the world, America's power, authority and example provide unparalleled opportunities to lead...our interests and ideals compel us not only to be engaged, but to lead.' The word 'lead' here is code for protectoratism. And he continued: 'The successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement — enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies.'<sup>20</sup>

Clinton's first Secretary of State, Warren Christopher also left little room for doubt as to where he stood on this issue. As he declared after his retirement, 'by the end of the [first Clinton] term, "should the United States lead?" was no longer a serious question.'<sup>21</sup> The Clinton NSC's chief analyst, Philip Bobbitt, also leaves us in no doubt about his own passionate commitment to US primacy in his book, *The Shield of Achilles*. It was also strongly supported by Madeleine Albright and her mentor, Zbigniew Brzezinski.<sup>22</sup>

Paul Wolfowitz, a leading architect of the contemporary doctrine of primacy, acknowledged before the Bush administration came to

office, that the Clinton administration had espoused the doctrine as outlined by himself and others around Dick Cheney in the first Bush administration. Although Wolfowitz acknowledges that when he, Lewis Libby and others in the Bush Senior administration first expressed the doctrine in the *Defence Policy Guidelines* leaked in 1992, there was a great deal of criticism, he claims that the doctrine had by 2000 become the consensus, questioned only by Pat Buchanan on the Right.<sup>23</sup> Wolfowitz criticism of the Clinton administration was not that it rejected his goal of primacy (or Pax Americana). It was that it did not pursue it vigorously and boldly enough. As he puts it: ‘in reality today’s consensus is facile and complacent....Still, one should not look a gift horse in the mouth.’<sup>24</sup>

William Pfaff, from a different political standpoint than Wolfowitz’s, nevertheless concurs on the broad consensus for primacy. He points out that Al Gore shares the same programmatic goal of American primacy or unipolar hegemony as the Neo-Cons.<sup>25</sup> And he adds that the American coalition for this programmatic goal is very wide, including the leadership of the US business class.

### **Problems in finding a strategic path to a new primacy**

What was dramatically new in the Bush Turn of 9/11 was the adoption of a new strategy for achieving the programmatic goal that was broadly consensual among American political leaders. Before spelling out the key features of the new strategic path, we should note the very considerable strategic problems facing American political leaders after the Cold War in order to restore primacy.

*1. The scale problem:* During the Cold War the primacy order was, in geographical terms, quite small scale: it covered the two rimlands of Eurasia: Western Europe and some states in East Asia - Japan, South Korea, Taiwan. Now a primacy order over the decisive centres of capitalism must be built on a far wider scale: it must somehow incorporate China and Russia and must also include some important ‘emerging markets’ elsewhere, not least in East and South East Asia.

*2. The dependency-generating problem:* Dependency on the US was

generated during the Cold War in large part by other core states' strategic dependence on the US, given Soviet Bloc capacity. This has now gone, especially for Western Europe (though much less so for Japan and East Asia). Clinton's efforts to rebuild European dependence on US military leadership via the manoeuvres in the Western Balkans and the expansion of a US-led NATO up against Russia did not really work and remained largely at the level of institutional manipulation rather than genuine military security dependency. And the possibilities exist for Eurasian powers to develop mutual security arrangements would make US military power increasingly redundant as a security guarantee to important capitalist centres: Russia and Western Europe could build such structures; Korean unity could, in some scenarios also create such structures, threatening the one American land base in East Asia.

*3. The political cleavage problem:* A world order structured by American primacy cannot be legitimated as such. Non-Americans and indeed many Americans will not accept that all states should be under some kind of American imperial sway. So a primacy order must be based upon a stable, long-term international political cleavage: American exemption from the rules and institutional constraints applying to others and its right to 'lead' others must be justified instrumentally - as necessary in order to tackle the threat generated by the cleavage.

In the contemporary world such political justification for primacy is necessary, because mass, popular politics is an important and inescapable dimension of world politics. This was a spectacularly successful feature of the Cold War. The Clinton administration began to attempt to develop a new cleavage structure around rogue states and genocidal or egregiously oppressive regimes in which the US would lead a cosmopolitan coalition for human rights and democracy but this was a rather weak cleavage structure and one which generated contradictions in American policy while offering the West Europeans great scope for trumping the US on both cosmopolitan law and human rights. Furthermore, America's enormous military and intelligence apparatus and all its other statecraft instruments could hardly be legitimated by the problems of Serbia, Rwanda or, for that matter, Saddam Hussein.

*4. The hub-and-spokes problem:* Closely connected to the dependency deficits is the tendency towards the erosion of the hub-and-spokes structure of US relations with other capitalist centres necessary for stable primacy. While the US allowed low-level cooperative caucuses on political economy issues (provided they did not exclude US capitals) as in the case of the EC, it did not permit caucuses for geopolitics or for large international political united fronts on the part of other core centres (eg on the Middle East). But the weakening of dependency structures has been combined with steps towards a geopolitical caucus in Western Europe (eg with the European Security and Defence Policy) and with political united fronts outside the hub-and-spokes alliance frameworks: for example, using the UNSC, for example with the EU's efforts to play a role on the Korean crisis, over Kyoto, the ICC etc. In aggregate none of these phenomena amounted to much, but they were symptoms of the erosion of hub-and-spokes relations.

*5. The American domestic linkage problem:* The drive for a new Primacy order had to make sense as an urgent priority for the domestic American electorate. Again the Cold War order was spectacularly successful in this respect. But there has been a dangerous lack of compelling domestic politics in the US since then, raising the possibility that a political force could arise in the US challenging the American transnational capitalist class with a politics of putting American domestic issues first.

The direction of transnational American capitalism over the last twenty years had appeared far from optimal to significant, diverse sectors of the American domestic economy and society. There has been resistance from what could be described as American domestic capitalists, as in the Ross Perot challenge in the early 1990s and also from American labour, fearful over the declining American manufacturing base. All sorts of groups have also been making claims on the American federal and state budgets for a whole range of needs which the American state has seemed unable either to meet or to decisively reject.

The Clinton boom eased all these domestic strains and indeed the resistance to the line of the transnational wing of American capitalism remains fragmented, especially in the ideological field where it is

divided into right and left fringes of the mainstream. But without the solvent of rapid economic growth these centres of potential resistance could grow stronger and could be accompanied by a rejection of the costs of the political expansionism of the American state as well as its international economic orientation.

*6. The collective class rationality problem:* One of the fundamental bases of primacy during the Cold War was what can be described as the class rationality basis of American primacy. The United States was the trusty sword of capitalism on an international scale against the class enemies of capitalism everywhere. It needs to demonstrate how its reconstruction of a primacy order can serve the broad interests of the business classes of the world today.

*7. The thick social linkage with Europe as a problem:* Though frequently overlooked in the journalistic and even academic literatures on international relations, the advocates of a new primacy order in Washington see the main potential threat to an American primacy order as coming from Western Europe. This is first of all because the West European capitalisms are no longer enthusiastic supporters of American primacy and do indeed favour a more collegial form of world management. In such a collegial arrangement, America would retain predominant influence because of its size and resources. But they want the US to negotiate key objectives and tactics, to accommodate their interests.

The West European states, in other words, reject neither the idea of a core capitalist community nor the idea that the United States would be the leading power within it. But they try to re-negotiate the terms of US leadership and to subordinate such leadership to collegial norms and rules.

There are powerful reasons why Washington should handle these West European claims with care. Western Europe remains the most important centre outside the US for American business. Furthermore, Western Europe and the EU are by far the closest to the US in approach to organising the international political economy. Indeed, typically Western Europe has been the key partner-transmission belt for launching new regimes onto the international political economy. In addition, the



politically engaged American population retains a strong sense of the importance of the cultural/value links with Western Europe, and it has supported the idea of West European unity and transatlantic partnership for over 40 years. And very large American economic groups gain great advantages from the EU.

It should also be said that the West European stance for a collegial world order involving a group of leading capitalist states rather than a primacy order, commands great sympathy among many other states, so that even if the West Europeans themselves currently lack much political cohesion, their message resonates widely. Apart from Britain and Australia, the solid, positive coalition for American primacy amongst major states seems very thin. And last but by no means least, the West European states have substantial credit power and other non-military resources which the American state sorely lacks for many kinds of international operations.

All these factors exert pressure on the American state to avoid an open confrontation with the West Europeans. The Clinton administration was sensitive to this. It sought to engage in all kinds of pre-emptive manoeuvres to build a new European order under American dominance through a reorganised NATO. But it did so with a discourse and public diplomacy of multilateralism. Yet simultaneously, Western Europe, however loosely organised, has been the main centre of opposition to the goal of US primacy.

### **The Clinton approach**

Although the Clinton administration prioritised the IPE dimensions of US grand Strategy it also pursued the goal of restoring a world order centred on US primacy. It focused especially on the crucial European theatre, driving to ensure that the US primacy was re-established there through making a reorganised NATO the central political-military institution of the whole continent. Its manoeuvres in the Western Balkans were above all guided by that goal and sought to crown this with the NATO attack on Yugoslavia in 1999. It also devoted great efforts to ensuring that the US would be the gate-keeper on West European relations with Russia. It launched the concept of rogue states

and of 'pre-emptive' actions without UN mandate and of a regime change war against Iraq.

Yet the end results of all these manoeuvres were quite meagre. The West Europeans bandwagoned with US thrusts on Bosnia and Kosovo but did so subversively, continuing to attempt to build a political caucus autonomous from the US. The Russia policy suffered a blow-out in 1998 and the NATO attack on Yugoslavia was followed by the emergence of Putin and his drive to strengthen links with Western Europe, a drive warmly welcomed by the German government. In the Middle East the US was increasingly bogged down in a failing Iraq policy while the West Europeans refused to accept Washington's rogue state line on Iran and continued to insist on a UNSC mandate for US military actions. At the same time, the Clinton administration utterly failed to find a political language that could link the US electorate to the drive for primacy. Thus, as Wolfowitz said, the Clinton administration accepted the Primacy idea but was complacent about it. It was also timid about the use of America's trump card, its military power, and terrified of American military casualties.

### **The Bush campaign as a new strategic path to primacy**

The Bush team came into office determined to address these strategic problems for achieving the consensual American business class goal of rebuilding a primacy order. This was its mission. As it came into office, it was particularly exercised by the European problem.

As the Bush team assembled in Washington at the start of Bush's Presidency in January, 2001, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that it's approach would be to 'talk softly and carry a big stick' - the Teddy Roosevelt approach at the start of the 20th century.

The New American toughness may start over European integration....No, the Bush administration should not be expected to launch a campaign against European integration....But don't expect the new administration to stand by passively and uncritically when the transatlantic link appears to be in jeopardy. Hard bargaining is ahead.<sup>26</sup>

The *Financial Times* confirmed this. It reported

...a common EU approach in NATO's councils...is anathema to

US foreign policy doctrine. Those close to Mr. Bush have made it clear the US will not tolerate an agreed European approach to NATO questions.

And Henry Kissinger, who was advising Bush, warned the *Financial Times* that the West Europeans should not adopt caucus institutions ‘that drift inevitably towards political decoupling of the US from Europe.’<sup>27</sup>

A second general principle of the Bush team was the need to make much more use of America’s main political asset in power politics: its unrivalled military power.

### **The post-9/11 US strategy for achieving primacy**

To understand the Bush strategy it is essential to distinguish between its tactical and strategic targets on one side and its programmatic targets on the other. Its tactical and strategic targets have been in the Muslim world; its programmatic targets have been amongst the great powers - Western Europe, the East Asian powers and Russia and China. Only by changing the environment of the great powers can the US consolidate a new primacy order. The strategic path for changing this environment has been the development of a new cleavage involving the Muslims world and aggressive push of US power into the Muslim zone of Central Eurasia.<sup>28</sup>

If one fails to recognise these dimensions, the Bush team appears, in many respects, stupid in its activities. But if one does recognise these dimensions the stupidity may be seen to lie in the eyes of the blinkered beholder.

#### *1. The Bush geopolitical solution to the scale problem and dependency generation*

By targeting the central zone of Eurasia from the eastern Mediterranean to the western Chinese Border, the US is pushing into a region of great security importance for all the Eurasian land powers: Western Europe has two main geographical axes of security problems: Russia and Ukraine to the East and the Middle East/Black Sea area. For Russia the zone from Ukraine through the Caspian to the Central Asian Republics is of critical security significance; and China is also pre-occupied by problems with Islamic political forces in Xinzhian and further West.

American military-political predominance over this region thus turns all these powers towards Washington in an effort to influence it on their security problems from and in the region.

Secondly, all these same powers, except Russia, but also Japan and other East Asian states heavily dependent for their economic security on the oil reserves at the heart of this region: the Persian Gulf, the Caspian zone and Kazakhstan. Insofar as the US can gain political-military control over these oil reserves and over their supply routes, they make all these states critically dependent upon the US.<sup>29</sup>

## *2. The Bush solution to the cleavage problem*

The Bush strategy has also produced a new global cleavage structure. This is discursively framed in a two-dimensional way: there is the formally universalistic language of the terrorist, state-sponsor of terrorism, evil state and WMD threat: this could in principle be used as a signifier anywhere. But there is also the second, more substantial discourse of a Islamist threat. Both these threats are used as the defensive legitimators of American primacy: American power is needed to protect the world from these dangers. But the new cleavage structure also offers as positive legitimation of American primacy: the American state and American capitalism will lead the world in a great mission to bring democracy, modernity and prosperity to the great central zone of Eurasia. The positive as well as the negative dimensions of the cleavage structure are equally important as instruments for reorganising mass politics on a global scale, particularly in the core capitalist regions.

And as in the case of the Soviet threat during the Cold War, the threat structure must not simply be a matter of American propaganda: it must become a real potential threat, just as Soviet SS20s really did point at Western Europe at Western Europe during the Cold War. The Bush strategy does this by rousing and baiting the Islamic world with its support for Sharon's policy and its flagrant aggression against Iraq. Intellectually, of course, these are violations of core Western liberal principles of international politics and they have, of course, raised great ethical outrage in other capitalist centres committed to liberalism. But it will be in the Islamic and Arab world where popular political opposition to these Bush drives will be sustained and such opposition can scarcely be sustained under the banners of Western liberalism: it

will rise and deepen under Islamist, anti-Western banners since those within the region championing the West have been utterly discredited by American actions. And since many of the Eurasian powers have large Islamic communities an Islamist threat to these societies will tend to become real and sustained.

This cleavage structure is then used by the American state to impose a kind of imperial global sovereignty in which the US can decide which states are evil and should be crushed, which armed groups challenging states anywhere in the world should be crushed, where American intelligence and special operations personnel should operate, which individuals in any other jurisdiction should be seized extra-legally and taken to the Bagram base in Afghanistan and to Camp Delta in Cuba, completely flouting international and domestic law.

### *3. The Bush solution to the hub-and-spokes problem*

To these strategic concepts, the Bush administration has added a crucial demand to the main Eurasian powers: they must fall in behind the new US strategic path to primacy or risk being targeted publicly as opponents of US vital interests. They must be for America or be dubbed as being against it: no third way or neutrality. Furthermore, West European attempts to get the Bush administration to respect the collegial institutionalised structures of NATO and the UN as the frameworks for deciding the objectives and methods of the campaign against terrorism were brushed aside. And equally, European efforts to treat the EU as an institutional partner were brushed aside.

Instead, the Bush administration ensured that whoever joined the new coalition under US command would be entering a hub-and-spokes alliance in which the goals determine the coalition and the US alone sets the goals: a pure primacy hub-and-spokes structure. And in case there was any doubt on this the Bush administration made clear by publishing its National Security Strategy programme of September 2002 that those supporting the US campaign were supporting that programme legitimating US global primacy explicitly and giving the US the unilateral right to laid down the objectives of the coalition. This way of framing the options for other great powers has already successfully split the West European states.

#### *4. The Bush solution to the domestic linkage problem*

Last but by no means least, the Bush strategic path has offered a powerful domestic American politics for integrating the American electorate into the American state's drive for primacy. The strong opinion poll ratings for Bush through the campaign demonstrate the Bush Team's effectiveness in developing the domestic political linkage.

#### *5. The Bush solution to the capitalist rationality problem*

This seems to be that the rules of the Campaign enable the US to defend pro-Western regimes everywhere and to removed anti-Western regimes. This seems to be what Rumsfeld meant when he said that the world needs US disciplinary power. Of course, the term 'West' here seems to refer to what the Bush administration calls 'Enduring Freedom' and the freedom in question seems, from a reading of the NSS, to refer essentially to the free market articulated in the language of the American right. Thus the NSS specifically insists that free movement of finance anywhere is an integral component of Freedom in a philosophical sense.

Given that very many states throughout the world are mired in social and economic crisis, often as a result of capital account blow-outs or crippling debt burdens generated by the American-led international political economy, the problems of serious internal fractures within states are real. Thus, under the loose rubric of a threat of 'terrorism', the state concerned can hope to gain US support. And both the Afghan and the Iraq wars give the US the opportunity to show-case its enormous military combat power and to demonstrate to all how dangerous it is to make the US your enemy. And last but not least, primacy does offer a single unified political roof for preserving the openness of the world economy.

#### *6. The Bush solution to the thick European linkage problem*

The run-up to the attack on Iraq was used effectively to split the EU through the British being turned into the leaders of a faction within the EU and including a number of East Central European countries dependent upon the US: a substantial tactical gain for the primacy drive.<sup>30</sup>

This was supplemented with a targeting of France in the

American media and with a disinformation campaign involving the planting of false news stories about French policy in the American and other media. All this is then combined with a propaganda to the effect that the EU and West Europeans are both impotent and irrelevant in world politics.

### **The key tactical steps in the new strategy**

If the above analysis is roughly right - and many would, of course, dispute it - then an end to Islamist fundamentalist bombings is not necessarily an important tactical goal for the US campaign. Indeed an upsurge of such bombings in Western Europe, Russia or, for that matter China, could assist the campaign. And the same would probably be true of another attack in the US. All such actions would tend to deepen the cleavage which the strategy is concerned to establish.

Another corollary of the above analysis is that the Israel-Palestine conflict is not a decisive tactical problem for the Bush administration. We may assume that there will not be any significant American demarche on the Israel-Palestinian conflict before the US election, no other international actors will play a major new role in the conflict and thus the only major new factor could be a decision by Israel to seek to take new initiatives vis-a-vis either Syria or Iran. An Israeli strike on Iran would tend to deepen US isolation on Iraq and thus exacerbate US problems there.

Iraq, rather than many of the issues concerning the struggle against 'terrorism' or the Israel-Palestine problem, is the critical tactical target: consolidating a US base there as a result of a unilateralist campaign that pre-figures US primacy will be the decisive stake in the US campaign to pull the other major powers (especially the West Europeans) around to accepting a Primacy Order. And if the Iraq tactic fails it will be seen internationally as a major defeat for the entire drive for Primacy. At the same time success in Iraq opens the way to the great prize of Iran and transforms the US relationship with Saudi Arabia and indeed with the rest of the Arab states. It thus sets the scene both for US suzerainty of the oil reserves of the region and for the consolidation of US political ascendancy over central Eurasia.

Success in Iraq does not of course require 'democracy'. It does require that Iraq is under a regime that gives the US effective indirect

(but exclusive, not collegial) control over those aspects of Iraqi public policy that are decisive for the Bush strategy: these include providing the political basis for keeping US military assets in the country over the long-term and policies that are amenable to US needs vis-a-vis Iraqi oil and regional issues. The regime must also assure domestic security to the extent that US corporations can invest safely there, in the oil reserves and in other fields.

Afghanistan is also important for the US but in a different sense from Iraq. There is far less need to build a state covering the whole territory of the country. But the US must remain the lead foreign power there and must also remain the lead foreign power in the other Central Asian republics to the East of the Caspian. As far as the Bush administration is concerned, the North Korean crisis has acted as a constraint and indeed as a diversion from the critical tactical issues involving Iraq. That crisis must be managed but mainly in order to contain it.

## **Part 2. The Risks of Overstretch**

The strategic concept of the Bush turn has thus been quite coherent. But it has also been extremely ambitious at a number of levels. It is important to stress at the outset that, if the analysis presented above is correct, the success of the Bush strategic path is not at all identical with the electoral success of Bush himself next year. Indeed, it is very possible that success for the strategy may be assisted by Bush's defeat at the polls by an appropriate Democratic candidate. In some scenarios concerning the politics of Iraq, a Bush defeat could be a boost for the Bush strategy because it could enable the Democratic winner to pursue the same strategic goals as Bush without being encumbered by Bush's historical baggage of enmities. And most of the Democratic candidates could be expected to say: 'we must not let the Iraqi people down'.



The critical issue concerning the strategy is ensuring that American power predominates in Iraq for the foreseeable future, ensuring that Iraq remains a US launching pad in the region and ensuring that Iraqi oil reserves are under effective US control.

### **The US-Iraq equations and overstretch**

The US drive to consolidate its control of Iraq raises a number of overstretch issues:

- (1) The unexpected collapse of the Iraqi state, along with the collapse of the Baathist government. This suddenly presented the US with a challenge for which it lacked the critical human resources.
- (2) The state collapse and the expected extent and sophistication of Iraqi resistance has also undermined the Bush administration's financing strategy for the Iraq occupation.
- (3) The critical human resources problem and the financing short-fall problems have then been aggravated by the Bush administration's adherence to its strategic goal of primacy.
- (4) These problems then intersect with a series of very specific economic, financial and monetary conditions, all of which produce serious vulnerabilities for the US economy and for the Bush administration's economic management goals.
- (5) The absorption of the US with its tactical issues in Iraq, offers other powers opportunities to manoeuvre for their own advantage in other areas of international politics. Such manoeuvres can add further strains to the strategy and to resource overstretch problems.
- (6) All these problems - both military-political and financial in Iraq and economic vulnerabilities in the US - can also provoke strains on the Bush administration's domestic political base for its external strategy, producing demands for the US to abandon its strategy. When such pressures mount in Congress, they can place a US administration under acute resource strains. We will look at each in turn.

### **The unexpected state collapse in Iraq.**

The Bush administration evidently did not expect that the invasion of Iraq would lead to the collapse of the Iraqi state as a coercive and administrative structure. But this seems to have occurred in a dramatic and thoroughgoing way. It thus presents the American state with its

classic Achilles heel: the American state is not configured for directly controlling hostile populations with its military forces, on the ground. It is configured for state-busting and state protection, using its air and sea capacities and its special operations and intelligence machinery. But state building on the ground in a hostile environment has been ruled out by US administrations since Vietnam, a position re-enforced by the experience of the Somalia debacle. Yet the US has stumbled into just such a task in Iraq.

The collapse of the Iraqi state seems to have been exacerbated by the Bush administration's failure to produce a clear socio-political programme for a new Iraqi state before and during the war. There were quite contradictory lines on this from the Bush team: some (eg Powell) wished to top-slice the Baath Party and preserve the dominance of the socio-political coalition which had been ruling Iraq; others (eg the Pentagon civilians) seemed to want to construct a more or less entirely new administration run by Iraqi exiles, while destroying the dominance of the socio-political groups which traditionally ruled Iraq. And between these two contradictory lines there emerged a third force: the Shia religious-led forces who seek to represent the majority of the Iraqi Arab population, but social classes traditionally subordinated under the Baath. These fundamental problems do not seem to have been resolved by the Anglo-American occupation forces. They seem to be trying to revive tribalism at a local level, yet have a Council and government in Baghdad which does not reflect tribal loyalties and is instead a melange of all kinds of groups including exiles. And neither the Iraqi collaborators at the centre nor the tribal leaders in the localities provide a stable security framework. Thus the US and British military are having to try to directly control the population at a street level. This makes them targets for resistance activity, initiating a spiral of repression and resistance.

### **Strength and sophistication of the Iraqi resistance**

The Bush administration must certainly have expected resistance to its occupation, given both the quasi-genocidal effects of the US blockade of the country and the obvious (to any Iraqi) US motive of acquiring control over Iraqi oil, not to speak of Iraqi hostility to other US policies in the region (for example, Israel-Palestine, etc).

But the occupation forces evidently did not expect the ferocity and sophistication of the Iraqi resistance movements. These seem to have been led by Baathist elements in the so-called central triangle but at least in that area the resistance movement seems to have a large mass base. The effects of the US blockade, devastating the Iraqi infrastructure, the effects of the war itself, the effects of the state collapse and finally the effects of resistance and sabotage have all conspired to create enormous reconstruction problems for the Anglo-American occupation forces. And they have also destroyed the American hopes that they could quickly rely upon Iraqi oil sales to fund the reconstruction effort.

### **The double resource strain facing the US**

These problems have placed the US under both personnel strains and financial strains that they had not expected. We will look at each of these in turn. The result of these developments has been two interlinked problems.

The first is *personnel strains*: It is difficult to assess how many different kinds of critical personnel shortages the US occupation authorities now face in Iraq. These shortages include not only military personnel but also, no doubt, police units and many other kinds of administrative personnel and technical specialists. These strains do not operate at the level of overall US military personnel aggregates: the US has 480,000 active duty troops and 550,000 reserves, globally. It can also call on the National Guard if necessary. Of these, only a small number are on a state of active duty or high alert: some 10,000 in Afghanistan, some 5,000 in the Balkans, and some 25,000 are in South Korea. There are then upwards of 150,000 soldiers in Iraq for the 'foreseeable future'.<sup>31</sup> This is not an acute aggregate strain at all.

The problem rather lies in the qualitative field: US troops are very poorly prepared for the kind of activity they are required to undertake in Iraq and they are evidently suffering from demoralisation: some 6,000 US troops are being flown home every month because of injuries but also and mainly because of mental breakdowns.<sup>32</sup>

The corrosive effects of moral breakdown can have quite rapidly spreading corrosive effects on the US Army. But bringing large numbers of extra US troops into Iraq would not necessarily solve the problem.

In the jargon of the US military, it could simply provide a more 'target rich' environment for the Iraqi resistance. The personnel shortages can also not be filled easily by infantry soldiers. They require different specialist skills.

The second is the *financial strain*: The reconstruction costs were always known to be very large because of the blockade and war damage. The blockade largely destroyed Iraq's industrial capacity, has gravely weakened the infrastructure of Iraq's oil industry and has left some 60% of the population dependent for survival on food hand-outs. State collapse has greatly increased these costs and so has sabotage. In addition, the Pentagon's pre-war estimate of the costs of occupation has proved to have been only about half of the actual military occupation costs, which now run at \$3.9 billion per month.<sup>33</sup>

The pre-war US budget allocated \$1.7 billion for non-occupation reconstruction costs and this small sum was justified by Bush team claims that Iraqi oil output would supply the bulk of the revenues needed for reconstruction. The US also managed to draw the UN apparatus for food aid to Iraq into co-operation with the occupation regime. But the Iraqi oil industry is incapable of generating the revenue needed for even the most minimal reconstruction effort. As a result, at the start of September the Bush administration felt compelled to ask Congress was a further \$87bn of spending for 2003-4 to cover the unforeseen costs of its operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, with some \$20bn of this being required for civilian reconstruction in Iraq.

These strains in the personnel and financial field are both crucially linked to the Bush administration's *strategic goal of primacy*. It was this that made it necessary for the US to push aside the UN in launching the war. And perhaps of equal importance, it was this that made the Bush administration refrain from turning decisively to the UNSC after the military victory for the UN to become the interim political authority in Iraq. Had it done so – as it did at the end of the NATO war against Yugoslavia – many of the resource problems might have been substantially alleviated. But doing so would have entailed sacrificing, or at least jeopardising, the strategic prizes.

Thus the usual array of agencies from the IMF and World Bank downwards through a mass of NGOs has not been available to the US. G7 states have blocked the US drawing upon the very substantial

resources of the IMF/WB for the occupation.<sup>34</sup> And the US effort to assemble a coalition of donors for Iraq reconstruction is similarly hampered. The EU, for example, which has a multi-billion euro aid budget is so far offering no more than 200 million euros for Iraqi reconstruction: a negligible and insulting sum. There is, however, one exception to this general picture: Japan among the major powers has stood out by offering substantial support to the US. We shall return to this interesting exception later.

### **The economic, financial, and monetary conjuncture**

When we set current costs of the Bush strategy in the general context of US resources, there is no cause for alarm over resource overstretch. Indeed, the suggestion would seem laughable when we consider that the extra \$87bn for Iraq and Afghanistan forms part of a budget totalling some \$1.3trillion. But when we sketch in the specific economic, financial and monetary conjuncture facing the Bush administration, we find a rather unusual combination of circumstances. This combination could trigger chains of events that could derail the domestic base of the Bush administration's external strategy.

Four current economic issues threaten to come together to create very difficult conditions for the Bush administration. These are:

- Certain features of the macro-economic crisis in the United States.
- The dependence of US government debt servicing on foreign lenders and the sharply rising total of US foreign liabilities.
- The structure of US financial markets
- The downward pressure on the dollar.

#### *Problems within the US's current macro-economic crisis.*

Although the US economy is not even technically in a recession, there is, in reality, a very serious underlying economic crisis which is being held off by quite extraordinary government efforts at counter-cyclical management. It has run a huge budget deficit swinging from a surplus in 2000 to a deficit of 5 per cent of GDP, simultaneously cutting taxes and increasing spending. The increased military spending alone has been responsible for some 40 per cent of industrial growth this year. Secondly, the Federal Reserve has pushed short-term interest rates almost as low as they can possibly go, pumping liquidity into the

banking system in the process; and thirdly, the Bush administration has allowed, and even encouraged the dollar to decline, thus making imports more expensive and stimulating both American import-substitution and American exports. If these measures are insufficient the Federal Reserve has indicated that it is prepared to print money to prevent the economy falling into recession.

The need for these drastic measures can be understood when we appreciate the very serious imbalances within the American economy. Most important in this respect are the following facts:

(1) There has been massive over investment in the main investment growth sector of the 1990s - IT and telecoms. This sector is burdened by excess capacity and debt and will take a long time to recover.

(2) The corporate sector and the consumer sectors are also heavily burdened by debt. US consumer debt rose from \$778bn in 1992, to \$1.523 trillion by December 2001.<sup>35</sup> Personal bankruptcies in the year to June 30 2002 ran at 1.4 million; those in the year to June 30 2003, at 1.6 million, the highest figures in US history. US corporate debt almost doubled between 1997, when it stood at \$2 trillion and May 2002, when it reached \$3.9 trillion.<sup>36</sup> According to *Moody's Investor Research*, by 2002 the US was facing the worst credit stress since the Great Depression of the 1930s. A sustained revival of the US economy requires the recovery of the corporate and the consumer sectors from this debt crisis, through being able to pay down their debts.

(3) At the same time, recovery seems to depend today on continued consumer spending, despite the historically unprecedented levels of consumer debt. During 2003, the main driver of such spending has been the fall in the cost of US mortgages. In the US home owners have fixed rate mortgages and face more or less zero costs for switching mortgages. So when mortgage costs drop consumers cash in old mortgages, take out new, cheaper ones and experience of wealth effect which encourages them to keep spending.

In short, the US economy has indeed, as the Federal Reserve Board has been claiming, faced a serious threat of debt deflation during the last two years. What has been preventing this threat becoming real has been the Fed's ability to keep short-term interest rates very low and Treasury bond yields low.

### *US government debt servicing*

At the end of 2001 foreign investors owned \$9.2 trillion of US assets, including stock and bond holdings and ownership shares of business enterprises.<sup>37</sup> This figure of US total external liabilities equals almost 90 per cent of US GDP. US investors, by contrast, owned \$6.9 trillion worth of foreign assets. This growth in US net external liabilities has risen very rapidly during the 1990s. In 1988 the US was in rough balance. By 1999 the balance had gone negative to minus \$1,900bn, i.e. 20 per cent of GDP.<sup>38</sup> And since that time, the negative net balance has risen dramatically, more than doubling since the end of 1999.<sup>39</sup> A calculation in 1999 by Catherine Mann, formerly of the Federal Reserve Board said that by 2010 US net liabilities could reach 64 per cent of GDP.<sup>40</sup> The growth in US foreign liabilities is a reflection of the chronic US current account deficits over two decades. The US relies upon foreigners accepting US liabilities.

Against this background, we should examine the trends in the US national debt and its ownership structure. Over the last 20 years, this national debt has risen from \$908 billion in 1981 to \$302 trillion in 1988, then \$4 trillion in 1992. The Clinton administration actually reduced the debt to \$3.2 trillion by December 2000 and produced a budget surplus of \$256bn.<sup>41</sup>

These figures may look enormous, but as a percentage of US GDP they are not particularly large in international comparison. At the end of 2000 the national debt was only 31 per cent of GDP, far below the West European Maastricht criteria, for example.

On the other hand when we look at the ownership structure of the bulk of the debt - which takes the form of Treasury bonds - we find something very unusual. As of September 2003, no less than 46 per cent of total US treasury bonds are owned by foreigners. Furthermore we cannot merely concern ourselves with aggregate relationships of total treasuries debts to GDP. We need to concern ourselves with the structure of maturities of the treasuries and with the amounts of new debt which the US government is attempting to raise through issuing Treasury bonds. It is, for example, one thing for US debt to be a small proportion of GDP. It is quite another for the US government to have to find new buyers of debt equivalent to, say 5 per cent of GDP in a very small time frame.

It is here that there are significant causes for concern. The maturity structure of the US treasury bonds is bunched towards this year and next. This means it has to be increasing its bond issuance, drawing on larger pools of finance in the short-term. And secondly, the Bush administration has suddenly and rather massively increased the US budget deficit and thereby required a large, quick increase in bond issuance to plug the hole in a budget gap of some 5 per cent of GDP. The question is whether this sucking of large funds into government through the Treasury bond market can be achieved cheaply, or whether demand for US government debt will fall precipitately. If that were to happen the US Treasury would find that it could auction its bonds only at a far higher interest rate (yield or 'coupon' in the jargon). And as to whether that does happen will depend crucially on the decisions of foreigners, who have become such unprecedentedly large players in the US Treasury bond market. But before looking at that issue, we must notice the structure of US financial markets and their linkages with the productive sector.

*The structure and linkages in US financial markets*

The Treasury bond market sets the benchmark for all other fixed interest securities in the US. Thus yields (interest rates) on the Treasuries market set the floor for rates on corporate bonds and on mortgage securities. If treasury yields rise, so do the yields on these other securities. Therefore, if demand for US treasuries slumped and the US government had to offer higher yields to sell its bonds, this would drive the costs of corporate bonds and mortgages higher too. Indebted companies would find their debt obligations rising and would be unable to exit from their debt problems. At the same time, the costs of mortgages would also rise, exerting downward pressure on house prices and choking off the housing finance bubble, exacerbating consumer debt distress and threatening to choke off consumer demand.

Thus, a shock rise in Treasury bond yields (and corresponding collapse of Treasury bond prices) can have devastating effects on heavily debt-burdened corporate and consumer sectors. Into this situation, we need to insert conditions in the foreign exchange market and the position of the dollar.



*The search for a controlled fall in the dollar*

In conditions of domestic economic distress, US governments have traditionally brought the dollar down against other main currencies, using the dollar as a great trade policy lever and also as a great external debt cancellation lever to revive the US economy. A lower dollar encourages import substitution and boosts exports, thus stimulating economic activity in the foreign trade-sensitive sectors of the US economy. At the same time the external debt liabilities incurred by the US during periods of a high dollar can be cut substantially by bringing the dollar down (assuming, of course, that these debts are denominated in dollars, the main world unit of account). Later, as the recovery picks up, the US Treasury and Federal Reserve typically swing the dollar skywards, cheapening imports, lowering inflationary pressures are enabling US companies to acquire assets abroad very cheaply. And so on.

But the bringing down of the dollar is always a perilous enterprise as the experience of both the 1970s and the late 1980s has shown. The danger is that the dollar's fall turns into a dollar collapse, as the dollar plunges swiftly without any secure floor. The reason why this could happen is that holders of dollar denominated US liabilities (whether bank loans or bonds or other securities expect the dollar to fall heavily and thus withdraw from holding these US liabilities to avoid the coming foreign exchange hit. They then speed the decline and push it into a rout. This could then have multiple grave consequences for the US economy and financial system as foreigners fled from the Treasury bond market, from the bonds of other government agencies and government backed agencies like Freddie Mac and Fannie May and from the stock market.

But how to control the fall of the dollar? This would require the Bush administration to gain wide and strong cooperation from the other main central banks and governments of the core capitalist countries and of other big economies. Can such co-operation be guaranteed? And could strains in the Treasury bond market precipitate a sudden sharp fall in the dollar which even concerted central bank intervention could not halt? In such circumstances, the pressures would mount for the US Treasury to sharply increase short-term interest rates and to sharply raise the yield offered on Treasury bonds in order to slow the dollar's fall. But such steps would tend to choke off any US domestic

economic revival.

### **The current jitters on Wall Street and the Iraq problem**

Over the last three months there have been evident anxieties about these problems. There have been moments when the government has come perilously close to the danger point in its Treasury bond issuance. When the bond market discovered how high the Bush administration was having to push the budget deficit for 2003-4 in August - to \$475bn, a Wall Street analyst firm reported that the ratio of bids for new Treasuries to offerings of new bonds (the 'bid-to-cover ratio') was coming, in the words of one bond strategist, 'uncomfortably close to 1:1. If that is the case, investors could become nervous that the government will have difficulty financing its spending needs'.<sup>42</sup> In the second week of September, the *Financial Times* reported that the Treasury bond market was having difficulty coping with Bush administration demands for it to buy more Treasuries. It reported that Treasuries prices fell 'as the market struggled to absorb \$12bn of new debt' in the form of 10 year treasuries, only a day after it had absorbed 16bn of 5 year bonds.<sup>43</sup>

And the *Financial Times* reported even more worrying news on 20/21 September:

Credit rating agencies are becoming increasingly concerned about the rapid deterioration in US public finances. The rise in the US budget deficit to around 5 per cent of GDP has also led to a sharp fall in Treasury bond prices compared with other dollar debt.<sup>44</sup>

A strategist at Lehman Brothers said that with the deficit above 5 per cent of GDP 'you're clearly in danger territory'. Lehman calculated that in the financial year 2003-4 the monthly net issuance of US treasuries would rise from an average of \$40bn to an average of \$50bn. And it quoted a top UBS strategist as saying: 'what matters is who buys your debt and how dependent you are on the buyers that you have no control over.'<sup>45</sup>

It is against this background that we should understand the September decision of the Bush administration to return to the UNSC in search of a new resolution on Iraq.

The *Washington Post* indicated the motives for this new effort

by the Bush administration at the UN. It reported Secretary of State Colin Powell as saying that the administration did not expect a new UNSC resolution to produce more troops for Iraq. The *Post* went on:

What the United States wanted, Powell said, was “to get the international community to come together and participate in the political reconstruction of Iraq” through greater financial donations and a larger role for international financial institutions.<sup>46</sup>

This is surely a clear indication that the Bush administration has been pre-occupied by worries of financial overstretch deriving both from the conditions facing the US in Iraq and from the US’s strategic goal of primacy.

## **Conclusions**

This analysis suggests that the Bush strategy since 9/11 has indeed run into overstretch problems which are potentially serious but which cannot be captured by aggregate equations concerning military-spending-to-GDP ratios and the like. Yet even on this conclusion we must be cautious.

In the first place, even if the financial strains of the Bush campaign did produce a dangerous rise in US bond yields with very damaging consequences for the US domestic economy and for the dollar, the result would not necessarily be a collapse of the Bush external strategy. It would rather be an erosion of the domestic political base of the Bush administration as a result of economic crisis. And this could even produce an attempt by the Bush administration to escalate its activities in the Middle East, for example, provoking a confrontation with Iran or Syria. Yet to engage in such an escalation would almost certainly require a reversal of some of the administration’s other main planks of domestic policy: for example, a reversal of its tax cutting efforts.

An escalation would also place new strains upon Bush’s relations with the other main powers. Yet here too there are complexities. For we must note that the key powers in the drama of the financial and potential monetary strains on the US are China and Japan. The foreigners who have been taking huge positions in the US Treasury bond markets have

in reality been the Japanese, Chinese and Hong Kong Central Banks. The Bank of Japan has been holding foreign exchange reserves of a staggering \$537.6bn and it has been using this money to buy huge tranches of US treasuries and other US Agency bonds.<sup>46</sup> The Chinese and Hong Kong central banks have together bought a further \$290bn of US Treasuries.<sup>47</sup> Both the Chinese and Japanese governments have good economic reasons for this strategy: buying US Treasuries keeps the dollar high and their exports to the dollar area competitive. But the Japanese government has gone much further. It has backed the US war against Iraq. It has also offered some \$5bn in reconstruction finance for the US occupation authorities in Iraq. It is also even offering to send some 2,000 Japanese troops to assist the US in Iraq.

What, we must ask, is this remarkable Japanese drive all about? What is the Japanese government asking for in return for this remarkable solidarity with the United States? Is it all a sign of American primacy in East Asia? Or is a sign of something else and quite different? This is a question that would lead on to a topic not covered in this paper: one concerning the geo-economic dimensions of international challenges the US faces in that field.

But even so, \$5bn from Japan plus 2000 Japanese troops on the Tigris and the Euphrates do not dramatically ease the strains on the Bush strategy. And even Japanese and Chinese vigorous support for US Treasury bonds may not be enough to avoid nasty shocks to the dollar and to the debt-burdened US economy. Thus success for the Bush strategy and avoidance of a blow-out on the monetary and financial fronts depends crucially on whether the US forces operating on the ground in Iraq with their existing capabilities and resources are able to establish and stabilise a new state order. If not, overstretch of a specific kind does threaten.

So the concept of overstretch does remain relevant despite impressive aggregate resources of the American state and the strategic sophistication, if not the tactical eye for detail, of the Bush administration.

### **Endnotes**

1. Paul Kennedy's book, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1988) was paradigmatic in the 1980s debates. Some American Democrats and some American defence analysts have raised concerns about financial overstretch.

See Jonathan Weisman, 'Democrats saw Iraq Spending with Tax Cuts is Unaffordable' *Washington Post*, 9 September, 2003, p. A13. In Britain the *Financial Times* has been stressing this theme. See, for example, 'Overstretched and Underpowered', editorial, 28 March, 2003 and Alan Beattie, 'A Muscular Foreign Policy May be too Costly for Americans to Bear', 15/16 March, 2003, p. 11.

2. Paul Kennedy, *ibid.*, page 666.

3. Amity Shlaes, 'War, Peace and America's Vanishing Surplus', *Financial Times*, 29 January, page 17.

4. This paper does not attempt to explain the sources of the Bush strategy; only to suggest what it is. For an exploration of the sources, see Peter Gowan, 'Variants of US-Global Relations in 21st Century', paper to conference on "The Triad as Rivals? U.S., Europe, and Japan", organised by the Walsh School of Foreign Service and the PEWS Network, Georgetown University, Washington DC. April 25-26, 2003.

5. The 'Bush Team' denotes Cheney and his assistant Lewis Libby, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and Rice. These are the core group, with Cheney at its centre. Powell and the top military brass have not been in this core. Bush has given Powell a 'braking' role, but since 9/11 Bush has followed the core around Cheney on the programme and strategy, with Powell giving his some tactical flexibility when Bush has wanted it.

6. Dan Balz, Bob Woodward, 'A Day of Anger and Grief', *Washington Post*, 30 January 2002, p. A1.

7. Bob Woodward and Dan Balz, "America's Chaotic Road to War", *Washington Post*, 27 January p. A01

8. Bob Woodward, "We will rally the world", *Washington Post*, 28 January p. A01

9. *ibid.*

10. *ibid.*

11. Quoted in *el Pais* (Madrid) 27 January, 2003, p. 4.

12. Nicholas Lemann, 'The Next World Order', *The New Yorker*, April 2002.

13. This Bush team stress on 9/11 as a opportunity recurs in the Bush National Security Strategy of the USA of September, 2002. It states: 'the United States will use this moment of opportunity to extend the benefits of freedom across the globe.'. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>

14. The 1903 Platt Amendment imposed on Cuba by the US, declared that the Cuban government must preserve Cuba's independence and that 'The Government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty,' etc. etc.

15. See, for example, Stanley Hoffman, *Primacy or World Order: American Foreign Policy Since the Cold War* (New York, 1978)

16. The classic statement of the doctrine was the famous Sir Eyre Crowe Memorandum of January 1907.

17. The Kennedy administration successfully blocked de Gaulle and Adenauer's effort to form a caucus in the early 1960s and the Nixon administration

successfully swept away the attempt by the West Europeans (including the Heath government in Britain) to form a caucus over Middle East and oil issues in 1973. Efforts by the French to try again with a revival of the WEU in 1984 were similarly aborted for fear of rousing American wrath.

18. These issues are covered in more detail in Peter Gowan, "11 September, American Grand Strategy and World Politics", *Recherches Internationales*, No.66 (Paris, 2002)

19. Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, 'Competing Visions for US Grand Strategy' *International Security* Vol.21, No. 3 (Winter 1996-1997) pp5-53.

20. Anthony Lake, 'From Containment to Enlargement', School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington DC, 21 September 1993.

21. Warren Christopher, *In the Stream of History: Shaping Foreign Policy for a New Era* (1998).

22. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chess Board* (1997)

23. See, for example, Paul Wolfowitz, 'Remembering the Future', *The National Interest*, 5, Spring 2000.

24. *ibid.*

25. 'The question of hegemony' *Foreign Affairs*, Jan/Feb 2001

26. Jeffrey Gedmin, 'President Bush to Europe: It's No More Mr. Nice Guy', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 January, 2001.

27. Gerard Baker, 'No More Third Way Camaraderie from the US', *Financial Times*, 25 January, 2001, p. 21.

28. The US does, of course, have specific regional issues in the Middle East that it has had to tackle: the crisis in Saudi Arabia, the strategic swamp that the US had been in there up to 9/11 with its economic blockade of Iraq being undermined and the rising hostility to US troops in Saudi Arabia. But the solution to these regional problems has to be inserted into the overall strategic path for Primacy.

29. Control of gulf oil offers the US not only the possibility of using the oil weapon again as it did against Japan in 1941. It also assures the international dominance of the dollar as the world unit of account, given the enormous size of oil finance; and steering oil revenues through US financial operators is also a crucially important boost for US financial strength.

30. In the thinking of the Bush team, the key role of Britain in the Iraq campaign was not its military capacity nor its capacity to give the US some 'international cover'. It was for its effects on the EU – splitting it.

31. Thom Shanker, 'Rumsfeld Doubles Estimate for Cost of Troops in Iraq', *New York Times*, 10 July 2003

31. I am grateful to Paul Rogers for this statistic.

32. Thom Shanker, *op. cit.*

33. The other main powers on the IMF governing board have refused to allow the IMF to recognise and give assistance to the US-imposed Iraqi government. See Alan Beattie, 'Nation's New Currency "will not be fixed to the dollar"', *Financial Times*, 24 September, 2003, p. 13.

34. White House figures. See: : <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/reports/taxplan.html>

35. Jennifer Beauprez, 'Corporate debt saps nation. Credit stress hits Depression level' *Denver Post*, August 18, 2002
36. Cedric Tille, 'The Impact of Exchange Rate Movements on US Foreign Debt', *Current Issues in Economics and Finance* January 2003, Vol.9, No.1
37. Martin Wolf, 'Careful Does it Mr. Greenspan', *Financial Times*, 7 June 2000, p. 25.
38. Cedric Tille, op.cit.
39. Martin Wolf, 'An Unsustainable Black Hole', *Financial Times*, 27 February 2002, p. 19.
40. *Financial Times*, 29 December, 2000, p. 4
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**Michael Newman**

## **Britain, the USA and the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968**

The brief 'Prague spring' of 1968 was a momentous episode in the post-war history of Europe. The changes initiated by Alexander Dubček after his accession to the Party leadership in January, and propelled by a popular movement, appeared to offer the possibility of 'socialism with a human face'. The military intervention on the night of 20/21 August by the Soviet Union and four other Warsaw Pact members to suppress the experiment then crushed the hopes of a whole generation.

In view of their importance, it is not surprising that these events have been analysed in immense detail and recent contributions and collections of documents have taken advantage of the opening of several archives since 1989 to explain the thinking and behaviour of the protagonists both in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> Much more is now known about the evolution of the Soviet decision to intervene and the newly available evidence has also provided more ammunition for critics of Dubček and others in the leadership group.<sup>2</sup> However, the general interpretation of the Soviet intervention has not changed substantially despite the increase in evidence. At root, the episode must still be viewed as one in which Soviet led forces intervened to eliminate the Prague Spring because of fears that the changes in Czechoslovakia could threaten their ideological, political and security interests.

NATO's reaction to the invasion was muted and the United Nations was the main forum for speeches deploring the invasion.



Western visits to the five countries that had carried out the military intervention were cancelled and there was a short-term reduction in cultural exchanges. But the elimination of reform Communism in Czechoslovakia hardly led to a dramatic response by the USA and its allies. Yet this relative passivity has not received very much attention and there has been virtually no analysis of British policy. This is rather surprising because at the time Harold Wilson took the matter sufficiently seriously to recall the House of Commons during the Summer recess for the first time since the Second World War and, although the majority of speeches did little more than deplore the invasion, there were clear signs of guilt about the passivity of the response, with many recalling the betrayal of Czechoslovakia thirty years earlier in the Munich agreement.<sup>3</sup> Nor was this solely in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet intervention, for it had also been expressed during the preceding weeks when this possibility had become increasingly evident. One person who had confided such feelings in his diary is of particular interest as he was a Cabinet Minister. Thus when the British Cabinet discussed the crisis for the first time on 18 July, Richard Crossman, wrote:

In Cabinet we started with a neat little Stewart [Michael Stewart, Foreign Secretary] lecture on Czechoslovakia where all this week a ghastly crisis has been blowing up. There's no doubt that Czechoslovakia is now threatened by the Russians with exactly the same crudity as Hitler threatened it with in 1938 and yet there is hardly a shimmer of indignation in this country. No one marches up Whitehall saying 'Stand by the Czechs', not even 100 people. In 1968 people here can work themselves up about Biafra and Vietnam but Eastern Europe is written off to the Russians, just as we wrote off Hungary in 1956. All our indignation has run into the sand and Europe to us just means Western Europe.

So we had the Foreign Secretary with his tidy little report and when it was over he asked for questions. Nobody round the table had a question to ask so I asked one: 'Have the Czechs approached us in any way or approached any Western country?' I was told there had been no approach. 'All right,' I said. 'Then I would like to know one further thing. If the Russians do march

in and the Czechs ask for aid, what will happen?’ Immediately Denis Healey [Secretary of State for Defence] and Stewart said that there would be no response whatsoever and that they must fend for themselves. It makes me shiver a bit. At least when Neville Chamberlain said of the Czechoslovakian crisis in 1938 that it was ‘a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing’, most of us were deeply shocked. Now we all know about Czechoslovakia but we avert our eyes from just as brutal a tragedy as that earlier one. So no more was said and I was made to look rather an old fool.<sup>4</sup>

On 4 August, when the threat to Czechoslovakia appeared still more intense, the Labour Party had finally called a protest meeting in Hyde Park, with Crossman deputed to speak for the government. After facing severe heckling from anti-Vietnam protesters and Trotskyist groups at the rally, he reflected:

But there’s very little a member of the British Labour Government can say at such a mass meeting or with which he is likely to impress the audience. All we can do is to show an understanding of what Dubček wants of us, show our friendship with the Czechs and give them a message of encouragement. But that’s not very much and as well as our own Labour Party difficulties we have the Foreign Office, which only wants to keep in with the Americans, already throwing great doubt on Dubček’s power to resist and anxious to accept a Russian-imposed *fait accompli*. At last week’s Cabinet meeting that was the impression I got of Michael Stewart and Denis Healey. They rule out the possibility of real Czech resistance and they assume the rapid creation of a Russian-controlled puppet government which we shall on no account exclude ourselves from recognizing. And at this point all the departmental Ministers intervene on the side of prudence. The Board of Trade, of course, is concerned to get the ban on strategic materials reduced and to see that there are no upsets in our improved trade relations with the USSR. Wedgy Benn [Tony Benn, Minister of Technology] is almost entirely concerned with the sale of computers to the Russians. All my colleagues have their departmental interest in economic relations with Russia and that takes the edge off any conviction that we are really in

any sense prepared to stand by the Czechs.<sup>5</sup>

Crossman's negative reference to the role of the United States was in line with a widely expressed contemporary view that the American administration had concluded a deal with the Soviet Union consigning Czechoslovakia to its sphere of influence or had even told the leadership in Moscow that it would not react if there was a military intervention. These rumours, which were circulating both before and after August 1968, were vehemently denied by the US government, but were revived when Zdenek Mlynář, one of the Czechoslovak leadership group held in the Soviet Union after the intervention, published his account in 1978. According to Mlynář, Brezhnev had spoken as follows:

'For us...the results of the Second World War are inviolable, and we will defend them even at the cost of risking a new war.' And then he said in so many words that they would have undertaken the military intervention in Czechoslovakia even if such a risk had existed. But, he added, there was no such danger. "I asked President Johnson if the American government still fully recognizes the results of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences. And on August 18 I received the reply: as far as Czechoslovakia and Rumania are concerned, it recognizes them without reservation; in the case of Yugoslavia, it would have to be discussed'.<sup>6</sup>

Naturally, US policy has received more attention than that of Britain, both because the Western reaction would ultimately depend on the stance it took, and because of these claims about a secret deal with the Soviet Union. In particular, A. Paul Kubricht published an important article on the subject in 1992 which provided a full account of US policy without being able to discover any evidence to substantiate Mlynář's claim.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, some key issues about the development of American governmental attitudes during the unfolding crisis, and the underlying motivation, have not yet been explained.

This article examines both British and American policy from the beginning of the Prague Spring until the invasion in order to answer four questions, which are addressed explicitly in the conclusion:

- 1) Was Crossman's analogy with the Munich Agreement appropriate?
- 2) How much co-ordination and agreement was there between the

American and British governments and to what extent was the US government responsible for British passivity?

3) Was there a spheres of influence deal between the US and Soviet governments?

4) What were the fundamental drives behind British and American policies?

Most of the basic assumptions underlying Western policies were established in the early months of the Prague Spring - before there was an apparent threat of Soviet invasion. The first section therefore discusses these early reactions, while section two considers British and US policies during the escalating crisis between May and the invasion itself.

### **1. Official Attitudes to the 'Prague Spring'**

The British Ambassador in Prague, Sir William Barker, realised that a major change had taken place in Czechoslovakia almost as soon as Dubček assumed the Party leadership in January 1968 and he sent an early verdict on the significance of the events, which was considered sufficiently important to print for the attention of the Foreign Secretary, and which was shown to the Americans. Despite his doubts about the future of the relationship between Czechs and Slovaks, the extent to which full artistic freedom would be realised, and the impact of a probable austerity programme, Barker was clear that the overall result was positive:

Mr Novotný's dead weight has been removed from the administration, the economy and the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia; the writ of Moscow has for once been seen not to run in Prague; the members of the Communist Party's Central Committee have been able to savour briefly the satisfactions of a modified parliamentarism; and hopes, perhaps wild and unrealisable but still inspiring, having been kindled in the hearts of thousands of Czechoslovaks. One expects to witness an early and bumpy return to earth, but for the present it is cheering to note in the people of this country a mild headiness of self-respect and even a modicum of genuine pride.<sup>8</sup>

Officials in Whitehall also found the changes extremely

interesting - even exciting - and shared Barker's belief that they were certainly positive. Nevertheless, they were also bewildered by the transformation that was taking place and by Dubček himself. On 7 March, Barker noted that the changes were 'exciting and encouraging', that it was 'not simply froth' and he was 'quite certain that Czechoslovakia can never be the same again'. But he also found it 'difficult to prophesy with any confidence the shape of things to come' and repeated a concern that he had already expressed as to whether Dubček would 'prove capable of controlling the forces he has released'.<sup>9</sup>

The State Department in Washington had also watched with interest as Novotny was jettisoned, but its appraisal of the new leadership in February 1968 was distinctly cautious, if not pessimistic. It thus suggested that:

As initial high hopes of progressives and of [the] watching public cool, interim solutions may fall apart and deepen [the] Czech crisis forcing [the] Party to take [a] firmer position re internal matters and to submit to bloc pressures.<sup>10</sup>

The general tone in Washington was positive, but hardly euphoric.

These cautious appraisals were still more apparent as soon as consideration was given to any possible international implications of the change in leadership. Thus when one British official speculated that Czechoslovakia might be even more obedient to the Soviet Union than before in foreign policy as a counterweight to domestic reform, Lord Hood, a Deputy under-secretary and one of the most senior officials, saw this as a plus.<sup>11</sup> This view was reinforced in March, particularly after the first overt Soviet bloc pressure was exerted at the Dresden meeting where the Warsaw Pact leaders met to discuss the situation in Czechoslovakia. Following this, another senior official, Peter Hayman, suggested that:

The big question seems to me to be whether Dubček will feel obliged, and if so if he will be able, to pull people back into line or whether there is a tide flowing in Czechoslovakia which will either carry him along or drown him. We must hope that things do not go so far and so fast that the situation in Czechoslovakia becomes intolerable to the Russians and others.<sup>12</sup>

This was a highly significant aspect of the British attitude to the 'Prague spring' and was maintained until the Soviet invasion. The Foreign Office was well aware that Dubček represented a centrist position within the government and that there was a popular movement that wanted to push the regime into far more radical changes. While it was generally hoped that Dubček would prevail over the traditionalists within the party and government, there was a continuing assumption that he must also maintain control over the popular movement. This was always justified on the grounds that a victory for radical forces would be more likely to provoke Soviet intervention - and this was no doubt true. But it also reflected an almost instinctive preference for stability and gradualism.

Policy recommendations followed from the cautious analysis. Barker first offered advice on this after surmising that the Soviet Union, East Germany and Poland would want to 'call for a halt' because of the highly contagious nature of the 'brave sentiments being so widely and loudly voiced in Czechoslovakia'. He now reached a crucial conclusion:

It is significant in this connection that none of the eager proponents of reform has suggested that either Czechoslovakia's domestic or her external objectives should be changed. All are agreed that internally the goal is still "socialism", though it is now usually labelled "democratic socialism" or "socialism with freedom"; and that her alliances in East Europe and especially her loyalty to the Soviet Union must remain the corner-stone of her foreign policy. For this reason any Western effort to weaken Czechoslovakia's connections with the "socialist" bloc at this time would be grievously misguided and inevitably doomed to boomerang.<sup>13</sup>

In the aftermath of the Dresden meeting, he made his advice more concrete:

..... I would suggest that insofar as it may be necessary for an official British spokesman to express an opinion on recent Czechoslovak developments he should confine himself to expressing Britain's profound and continuing interest without conveying either the blessing of approval or cynicism about their

motivation. Our press, of course, is uncontrollable but one can hope for a greater sense of responsibility and the abandonment of the practice of presenting wild speculation as fact (e.g. the headline in the *Daily Telegraph* of 25 March a propos the Dresden meeting: “Russians call Czech boss to face music”; such evidence as there is indicates that the Soviet representatives at Dresden were a moderating rather than an aggressive influence.<sup>14</sup>

The Foreign Office was not convinced that press discussion in Britain had been so poor<sup>15</sup> but agreed with Barker’s suggestions on public comment, while doubting whether it would have been possible to do very much more to guide comment beyond the normal background talks with the more serious correspondents. Barker was told that these had been going on and would continue.

And immediately after this, when the Scottish Office forwarded a request from a Czech radio correspondent in London to see the Secretary of State for Scotland to discuss Scottish social and economic problems, the FCO replied that they had no objections, but warned that he ‘should be careful not to express any view on current developments in Czechoslovakia, which might be published and misinterpreted’.<sup>16</sup> In other words, the British government had taken a policy decision, albeit a negative one: to avoid public comment on Czechoslovakia on the grounds that the more enthusiasm was shown in the West the more likely it was that an adverse Soviet action would be provoked. Furthermore, the position taken in the USA was similar. Thus on 27th April the State Department informed US Embassies that:

Our position on Czech developments is to make clear informally and discreetly to Czechs on appropriate occasions that we welcome steps they are taking toward liberalization. We believe it advisable to avoid any steps at this time likely to embarrass [the] new leadership in its internal course or its delicate relationships with Soviet Union and other East European neighbors.<sup>17</sup>

Such assumptions would underlie policy throughout the subsequent crisis.

There is a striking contrast between these attitudes towards reform Communism in Czechoslovakia and those just over a decade

later towards Solidarity in Poland, for which there was both overt and covert support in the West. Why was this? One possible answer would be to suggest that elements within Solidarity clearly aimed at the destruction of the Communist regime, while Dubček was seeking to reform the system rather than dismantle it. It might therefore seem plausible to suggest that the West had no incentive to offer help to a movement which, if successful, might strengthen the regime in Czechoslovakia and prove attractive to much of the Left in Western Europe. Yet there is little evidence to suggest that this was the reason for British thinking, which was again encapsulated by Barker:

It is beyond question that we should welcome the overthrow of Novotny and the reforms introduced by Dubček. On humanitarian grounds, the overthrow of tyranny must always be good: in the present case, it means the lifting of fear, the righting of wrongs and a refreshing draught of liberty for the people of Czechoslovakia. From the standpoint of our own self-interest, it is hard to believe that the drastically new means adopted by Dubček in his pursuit of Communist aims will not change his objective out of recognition. Communism allied to freedom may be a theoretically defensible concept but in the light of experience it looks like a contradiction in terms; in any event, as a form of government it represents a negligible threat to our own way of life.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, the British tended to believe that, whatever the professed intentions of the Dubček government, it was likely to evolve towards capitalist democracy. The reasons for its caution therefore probably had little to do with distaste for reform Communism. In the case of the USA, this might seem more likely. Certainly, the American administration appears to have been very reluctant to help Dubček and the fact that the new government in Prague continued to condemn US policy in Vietnam as vehemently as its predecessor did not endear it to Washington.<sup>19</sup> Yet the US was also keen that Dubček should maintain control rather than allowing more radical forces to gain influence. Clearly, the mass movement was generally on the Left and would have resisted overt US support, but if the American government had wanted to promote anti-Communist groups within Czechoslovakia it could surely have attempted covert action within some of the forces



that were pressurising Dubček.

The major reason for the difference between the attitudes of the British and American governments towards reform communism in Czechoslovakia and Solidarity in Poland twelve years later was the change that took place in Western politics between the two eras. 1980-81 was the Thatcher-Reagan epoch of ideological and political assault upon the Soviet 'evil empire', while the Prague Spring took place during the period of détente. Thus anti-Communist groups from Eastern Europe were excluded from White House functions in this era because the Administration did not want to aid their campaigns or allow them to damage its relationship with the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> The specific connections between this and the fate of Czechoslovakia will be considered below. But, more generally, the nature of inter-bloc relations meant that the US and Britain were likely to tread carefully in territory that the Soviet Union regarded as its own property.

## **2. Deterrence and contingency planning for the crisis**

The first military manoeuvres designed to intimidate the Dubcek regime took place in Southern Poland between 10th and 23rd May. H.F.T.Smith, the Head of the Department that dealt with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, expressed the general Foreign Office reaction as follows:

The Russians may be engaging in psychological pressure on Czechoslovakia, with no intention (at any rate at present) of going in, in the hope that this will lead to internal pressure on Dubček from the conservative elements who remain strong. Their hope might be that Dubček, under internal pressure encouraged by Soviet action, would change his policies to something more acceptable to the Soviet Union or, alternatively, that he would be removed and replaced by someone more acceptable to the Russians.

He concluded:

There is nothing that we can say or do that would be helpful to Czechoslovakia at present. We therefore think that we should refrain from any comment, and News Department have been instructed accordingly. Lord Hood spoke last night to the United

States Embassy, gave them our preliminary assessment and told them our view that it was best not to engage in publicity.<sup>21</sup>

The Americans adopted a very similar stance, with Dean Rusk informing US representatives in all European diplomatic posts that if Dubcek managed to keep the pace of liberalization gradual, the Soviets would have little alternative to accommodating themselves to it. If he failed to control 'the more extreme currents' the chances of Soviet intervention would rise sharply, so 'the former course of development' was 'clearly in the interest of all concerned'.<sup>22</sup> In other words, the initial reaction of both governments to the threat of Soviet intervention was to argue that it was better not to do or say anything. The rationale was that any statement or sign of interest by Western governments in the fate of Czechoslovakia would be more likely to provoke the Soviet Union than to help Dubček. Was there any justification for this viewpoint?

One important consideration is that the Czechoslovak government took the same line. Always anxious to insist that the 'Prague Spring' did not call into question either socialism or the Soviet alliance, Dubček never sought any Western support and continued to proclaim allegiance to traditional Warsaw Pact interpretations of the international system.<sup>23</sup> The official position was to maintain that any problems between Czechoslovakia and its Warsaw Pact allies could be resolved fraternally and without any external involvement.

This would obviously have made it more difficult for Western governments to play an active role, and the position of the Czechoslovak leadership was constantly invoked as a reason for maintaining a studious silence. Thus when both left-wing and right-wing MPs called for a more vigorous approach - for example, by referring the crisis to the United Nations - the British government was able to point out that the government in Prague would not welcome this.<sup>24</sup> However, this sensitivity to the wishes of the Czechoslovak government was clearly not a sufficient explanation for the circumspect attitudes of the administrations in London and Washington - neither of which was reluctant to intervene elsewhere in the world when their perceived interests were at stake.

Not only did the British government go to unusual lengths to attempt to persuade MPs not to express their support for the 'Prague spring', but on one occasion it transgressed its own professed principles

about allowing the Czechoslovak government to decide whether or not it wanted any Western support. Thus when the Foreign Office heard that the Speaker of the House of Commons was likely to receive an invitation to go to Prague, it immediately advised against a visit until the situation had settled down and Czechoslovak relations with the Soviet Union and other East European countries became less sensitive. The Speaker had also been invited to Yugoslavia but the Foreign Office cautioned against visiting Czechoslovakia on the way back:

Linking Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia in this way would be politically sensitive and might embarrass the Czechoslovak leadership: the Russians have been particularly concerned about Yugoslav support for the Czechoslovak experiment.<sup>25</sup>

No attempt was made to find out whether or not the Dubček government was in favour of such an invitation: the British government simply adopted the Foreign Office advice and persuaded the Speaker that it would be inadvisable to go. The susceptibilities of the Dubček government provided a convenient pretext for Western passivity, enabling the British and American administrations to claim that they were being as helpful as possible by refraining from making positive statements about the regime in Prague.

Nevertheless, there were certainly good reasons to exercise great care about the nature of any form of involvement. In August, the Soviet Union would try to legitimise its invasion by claiming that the West was intervening in an attempt to promote counter-revolution. This had very little credibility outside the ranks of Soviet loyalists in Communist Parties, but if the Western governments had meddled in Czechoslovak domestic politics, it would have been easier for the invading forces to convince more people on the Left that it was necessary to rescue Czechoslovakia from the threat of capitalism. However, there is surely a difference between illegitimate Western intervention and public statements supporting the general direction of reform? After all, if the ideological justification for opposition to the Soviet system was that it was a repressive dictatorship, it was bizarre to suggest that it would constitute 'intervention' to have welcomed open debate in Czechoslovakia.<sup>26</sup>

It is perhaps unlikely that the eventual outcome would have been

any different had the Western governments exercised less restraint and encouraged the expression of support for reform communism rather than seeking to limit it. However, this self-censorship was not simply calculated to minimise the threat of invasion, but was also embedded in the more general wish not to annoy the Soviet leadership.

Yet however anxious the Western governments were to avoid confrontation over Czechoslovakia, they could not remain indifferent to an invasion. The question was whether there was anything that they could do make it less likely. As will become evident, the British were generally more inclined than the Americans to believe that something should be done. However, the earliest and most interventionist suggestion was made by Walt Rostow, President Johnson's special Assistant for National Security Affairs.

After Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State, had reiterated the need for a passive policy, Rostow sent him the following minute on 10th May:

I have thought further about our conversation yesterday. I conclude that it would be a serious mistake not to give the Soviets a private signal of concern about troop movements near Czechoslovakia.

1. In retrospect, our failure to deter the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in 1948 was one of the most serious mistakes of our foreign policy since the war. Firm diplomatic action then - a period of our nuclear monopoly - could well have prevented the Cold War. Similarly, our public statement in 1956 that we would not intervene gave the Soviets a full license. Obviously, the situation has profoundly changed.

2. What is at stake now is the process of movement towards détente.... Progress in this direction would be set back if the Soviets intervened in Czechoslovakia. I simply do not agree that Soviet efforts in Eastern Europe would fail to stamp out liberal trends. They have long since proved their capacity to keep the animals tame by police methods, and their willingness to do so.

3. The Russians must be hesitating. The moment to give them a deterrent signal is therefore now. It will be too late once they cross the border.

4. We should use the occasion to the maximum to fortify our European and NATO relations, accelerating the processes which have been started during the last year.

I therefore recommend:

(1) that the President and you see Dobrynin [the Soviet Ambassador] together, preferably today

(a) to ask the Soviets what these reports [of troop movements] mean;

(b) to express the hope that they do not portend any change in the policy of movement towards détente. We could say that we have no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia, and hope that the Soviets will continue to pursue the same policy; that the present process of improving the political climate step by step is the only possible path to true détente in Europe, including the possibility of reaching an accommodation on the German question; that the use of force in Europe would set in motion processes we cannot now foresee, but which perhaps neither of us could control;

(2) that we use our new machinery of political consultation in Europe to consult intensively with our NATO allies about all aspects of these events;

(3) that we consider setting up a high-level special group of NATO allies - of those who wish to do so - here in Washington, to remain in continuous touch with us on the implication of these events, and to develop together proposals of policy for dealing with them;

(4) that the NATO military side examine these problems intensively, and be prepared to go on an alert or to make other appropriate demonstrations which might be warranted;

(5) that the President consider the advisability of sending messages to Wilson, Kiesinger and de Gaulle asking for their views on the significance of these events and offering to review together, perhaps at the Ministerial level, the policies which should be pursued as the situation evolves. Effective consultation with our principal NATO allies over a matter so vital to the future of Europe would seem crucial if there is to be any future growth of the Alliance. <sup>27</sup>

For reasons that will be discussed further below, this interventionist policy was completely out of line with that advocated by the State Department. This neither wanted to risk provoking the Soviet Union on an issue which might yet be resolved peacefully nor

to engage in collaborative policy-making with NATO allies. Under-Secretary Katzenbach thus commented:

I disagree strongly with both the analysis and the recommendations. So do the other senior officials of the Government with whom I have talked generally on this subject.<sup>28</sup>

Rusk recorded his agreement with Katzenbach. Furthermore, the State Department line received further reinforcement from the US Embassy in West Germany. Noting that, in theory, US forces stationed there could move to the border, or even cross it to help the Czechoslovak government repel any invasion, Ambassador McGhee summarised the points put to him on this by the German Acting Assistant Secretary, Sahm, as follows:

(a) the FRG must avoid any involvement internally in Czechoslovakia and (b) the United States should not undertake any action re Czechoslovakia from Germany, i.e. the utilization of any US forces stationed here. During the meeting this afternoon on border security .. Sahm, after a direct telephone call from State Secretary Duckwitz, emphasized the German wish that the United States fully respect German sovereignty in planning for a Czech emergency. Sahm also suggested that we review very carefully the output of Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and RIAS during the current period. He clearly meant that any statements emanating from German soil which might seem to constitute intervention in the Czech situation should be avoided.<sup>29</sup>

McGhee's current assessment was that it would be unrealistic for the US to think in terms of counter-measures involving action in or from Germany even if Washington was so inclined. The next day the State Department assured him that it would seek to avoid any military provocation by US forces within Germany and that it was restraining the content of broadcasts in an effort to avoid any pretext for Soviet military action. A telegram was also sent to the US Mission at NATO to pool information with other capitals, but to avoid anything suggesting the appearance of undue concern. The US Embassy in London informed the Foreign Office that the Americans and the West

Germans were speaking to their propaganda people, including Radio Free Europe, to try to ensure that broadcasts about Czechoslovakia avoided comment which could be exploited by the Russians as evidence of Western interference and propaganda. In Britain IRD [Information Research Department] had been in touch with the BBC and Smith in the Foreign Office reported that it seemed 'clear that they have been following a sensible line'.<sup>30</sup> Rostow's policy had been overruled and the State Department had reinforced the British stance of passivity. Yet the question remained as to whether anything could or should be done and the British attempted some co-ordination with the US in June on the issue of economic assistance to the Dubček government.

US-Czechoslovak relations had been particularly poor before 1968, partly because of general Cold War antipathies reinforced by Novotný's hard-line position, but also because of intense irritation amongst the Czechoslovak leadership with the US attitude on economic issues. The Americans had claimed compensation from the Communist regimes in East European states after the nationalisation of properties in which they had an interest. By 1965 the proposed level of settlement in Czechoslovakia was lower than elsewhere and the US had therefore blocked progress on other trade and financial issues until this was resolved. One aspect was a refusal to respond to pressure to grant most favoured nation status to Czechoslovakia, but the most sensitive matter in Prague was that the Americans linked the restitution of gold that had been looted from Czechoslovakia by the Nazis to settlement of the claims.

On 8 November 1967 the US had put a full proposal for a settlement to the Czechoslovak Ambassador and a month later, the Prague Embassy reported that Czechoslovak officials 'had been "stunned" by the offer which they regarded as a "provocation"'.<sup>31</sup> Following Dubček's accession, the US Ambassador in Prague had attempted to shift American policy, but with little effect. On 26th April the State Department had reiterated the refusal to release Nazi-looted gold, claiming that this was the only effective leverage for a settlement, and had insisted that there were legislative limitations with respect to financial assistance.<sup>32</sup> This meant that the November offer was all that remained and in May 1968 the Dubček government rejected this as 'unjust and unfair'.<sup>33</sup> It was this US position that the British now

hoped to change, taking the opportunity provided by a visit of the British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Patrick Dean, to London.

In a briefing note for Gore-Booth, the Permanent Under-Secretary, H.F.T. Smith argued that at official levels, the British and the Americans had very largely the same views on developments, but he now initiated a more active discussion of possible Western economic assistance. Arguing that very limited economic help might be possible through credit arrangements, he believed that the best course would be for the Americans to return the gold to the Czechoslovaks:

...since they have every right to the gold. [this] could not be exploited against their interests by the Russians or others on the grounds that it was a Western attempt at seducing them. The Czechoslovaks are, in fact, very cross at the American attitude. We are thinking of suggesting to the Secretary of State ... that he should prod Mr Rusk about the gold. It would be useful if, on Sir P. Dean's return to Washington, he would take another look at the file, which contains all the relevant information, to see whether he himself could usefully have another go at the Americans.<sup>34</sup>

Reporting his subsequent conversation with Dean, Gore-Booth confessed, in the context of the gold:

I explained to him ... that we were busily trying to encourage the Czech liberals without being caught doing so. The only way to do this was to do things which would help them without apparent reference to the present struggles. The solution of the gold question provided an admirable opportunity and I hoped that the Americans would see it this way.<sup>35</sup>

The lobbying by Britain and the US Ambassador in Prague may have had some impact for, on June 20 1968, the Czechoslovak government was informed that the United States would allow social security cheques to be sent to Czechoslovakia, was considering the liberalization of its trade controls, and would be submitting new proposals on the gold issue.<sup>36</sup> But nothing had been agreed by 20 August, again implying that support for the Dubček government was hardly a high priority in Washington.



This was evident in a State Department contingency paper of 12 July on the UN and Czechoslovakia. Its whole tone was that the issue was of relatively marginal importance to the US. Thus if the Soviet troops were not withdrawn from Czechoslovakia after the current military exercises and there was a question of taking the matter to the UN:

It would be preferable for Czechoslovakia itself, or a sympathetic Eastern European neighbor (Romania or Yugoslavia) to raise the issue at the UN. For the US to do so might risk the appearance of ulterior motives on our part, or of a cynical effort to manipulate a marginal matter to our own purposes. Possibly even worse would be for us to appear to be giving an implied commitment to help the Czechs. Nevertheless, in the event of outright Soviet intervention and Czech resistance, the US would probably take a leading role at the UN (if only because of domestic political pressures) either by introducing the question or by strongly supporting UN consideration if someone else moved first on Czechoslovakia's behalf.<sup>37</sup>

The implication was surely that, without such domestic pressure, the State Department would not even have believed significant US action would have been necessary in the event of a Soviet invasion.

It was less than a week after this that the British Cabinet meeting that provoked Richard Crossman to make the comparison with the betrayal at Munich took place. Yet the British government was not acting quite so passively as he believed. That afternoon in the Foreign Affairs debate in the House of Commons, Stewart made a carefully worded statement drawing attention to the tensions caused by the menacing comments about Czechoslovak internal affairs by certain Warsaw Pact countries and pointedly stated:

..it is not for us to order the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia - not for us, nor for anyone else, except the people of Czechoslovakia.<sup>38</sup>

However, this signal of concern was balanced by Stewart's disavowal of any particular interest in the Prague Spring and by the fact that the reference to the Czechoslovak crisis was buried within a

long speech on foreign policy. Harold Wilson himself must also have felt that some additional action should be taken for the previous day he had asked the Foreign Office whether Britain was working with the Americans or other allies on contingency plans to meet the possibility of military intervention in Czechoslovakia.<sup>39</sup>

The answer was highly significant, for it was noted:

At present, we are not, but the time has probably come to do so. At this stage, we would not favour discussions in the full NATO forum. NATO's posture of close observation and non-interference is right. Knowledge of contingency planning by the North Atlantic Council, which it would be difficult to keep secret, could have the effect of raising tension without bringing us any counterbalancing benefit. We must envisage discussions in NATO soon but we should prefer discreetly to approach the Americans alone in the first instance.<sup>40</sup>

In other words the reflex action of the British was to seek a secret tête-à-tête with the Americans, and this was communicated to the Ambassador in Washington on 18 July.<sup>41</sup>

Dean was to discuss the situation with Katzenbach in the State Department the next day and was given a full summary of the view of the British government in preparation for the meeting. In many respects the opening passage was the most significant:

In our view the Russians stand to lose a great deal whatever may happen in Czechoslovakia:

- (a) If Dubček eventually loses, the Russians will still be strongly criticised by world opinion for the actions that they have already taken in intervening in Czech affairs.
- (b) If the Russians do intervene militarily, world criticism will be all the stronger.
- (c) If Dubček wins, the Russians will have suffered a painful humiliation.<sup>42</sup>

The memorandum continued:

It is against this background that we have ourselves been considering what if any Western action might help to deter the Russians from continuing policies which could lead to forceful

intervention. It is clearly essential to avoid saying anything to the Russians which would appear to constitute interference in Czechoslovak affairs or intra-bloc relations.

On the other hand, we had been wondering whether, at some appropriate time, there might be advantage in a high-level confidential message from the Americans to the Russians in the general context of East/West relations. If Katzenbach shows interest in pursuing this aspect, you might say that we had it in mind to suggest that any such message might be interrogatory in tone and ask whether the Russians would not agree that any increase in tension in Central Europe over the Czechoslovak situation would have a very detrimental effect on efforts to promote East/West détente, or it might simply express concern lest this happen. It might say that the Americans had been encouraged by some recent progress in this field such as the signature of the non-proliferation treaty and the willingness to discuss offensive and defensive missiles<sup>43</sup>: But that public opinion had to be taken into account and if tension persisted this would be bound to impose serious limits to present efforts to foster détente. The message would of course have to be drafted to avoid the impression that the West was more interested in détente than the interests of the Czechoslovks themselves. It may well be premature to send such a message now. But, if the Americans did send some message, we should of course be ready to consider taking similar action if they thought it would be useful.<sup>44</sup>

The paper noted that Britain had not so far discussed this aspect of the problem with any of her other allies and would welcome the views of the Americans on the form and timing of any discussion in NATO; it asked whether the Americans thought that any other countries, for example, in the Third World, might be encouraged to warn the Russians of the possible consequences of intervention, and whether anything could be done to sustain Czech morale in the face of pressure, for example, by letting the Czechoslovak government know privately that the grant of private Western credits to Czechoslovakia would be welcomed; it suggested that it might be prudent to think of possible diversions the Soviet Union might stage in order to cover rapid intervention in Czechoslovakia; and it assumed that the Americans

would share the British view that it would be quite inappropriate to bring the UN into the arena at the present stage.

This was hardly a bold policy, but it did at least suggest some possible actions. Once again it exposed a major difference between Walt Rostow and the State Department. Rostow immediately sent a long memorandum to Rusk, entitled 'Deterrent action with regard to Czechoslovakia'. His starting point was that the possibility of military intervention in Czechoslovakia was a matter of basic concern to the US since it could torpedo the nuclear proliferation treaty and set back the trend towards détente in Europe. Overall, it would probably change the political atmosphere fundamentally in ways that were detrimental to US interests.

On the other hand, if the Soviets hesitate and withdraw, allowing the process of liberalization to proceed in Eastern Europe, the political atmosphere should improve fundamentally, in ways most favorable to us. Poland would almost surely follow the Czech example. Ulbricht would be isolated. New possibilities for a settlement in Europe would be opened. We could hope for a toning down of Soviet imperialism in the Middle East and elsewhere. The Soviet leaders responsible for the failure of Soviet policy in Eastern Europe might well be thrown out, as Khrushchev was, to be replaced by leaders who would at least be weaker for a time than the present group.

Since the US had 'an immense national interest in a Russian decision not to intervene, and would face unforeseeable risks if they do' Rostow argued that the British suggestion of doing everything possible to deter the Russians from such a step should be seriously considered. The US must not make any threats or take positions that would confirm Russian suspicions, but 'might still be able to affect the decision by carefully planned, and entirely conciliatory secret messages'. He also called for the active involvement of NATO, and the delivery of an aide-memoire protesting about the Soviet press charges that the US was fomenting counter-revolution in Czechoslovakia. When the note was delivered, several additional points could be made orally. The British, and, if possible the French, the Italians, the Belgians and the Dutch 'could be encouraged to weigh in as well'.

I realize that NATO consultations on the situation in Eastern Europe will be a striking sign. But why should we hesitate to give strong signals, so long as we avoid threats we do not intend to carry out? The Soviets are having all kinds of meetings on the subject. The outcome of the struggle between the Soviets and the Czechs will affect political and security conditions in Europe for years to come. It would be ridiculous to hesitate about being seen to consult with our European allies on a subject that vitally and directly concerns their political environment, as well as ours..<sup>45</sup>

This was strikingly different from the State Department's approach, which was reflected in Katzenbach's response to Dean. The British Ambassador thus reported that Katzenbach thought that there was nothing that any government could say or do that would make any difference to the Soviet Union because it would already have taken such reactions into account, and he also made it clear that that the President was not inclined to send any high-level message to Moscow, which could be counter-productive.

Nor did the State Department want any discussion within NATO, either in a restricted group or otherwise - this too would be counter-productive if, as was probable, it became public knowledge. He also repeated the claim that the US could do nothing economically because the administration was constrained by restrictions imposed by Congress. However, he added that he would be in touch again when the State Department had had time to consider the British suggestions, particularly as its top Soviet advisers were currently away.<sup>46</sup>

The State Department clearly neither wanted the US to do anything nor to allow the British government to secure any influence over its policy. Furthermore, communications from the US Ambassadors in Prague and Moscow supported the State Department's position.<sup>47</sup>

Yet complete American passivity was precluded, as the Soviet Union was now claiming that a secret cache of American-made arms had been discovered near Karlovy Vary, close to the border with the Federal Republic, and that these had been intended for 'Sudeten revanchists and reactionary forces that are currently attempting to tear the CSSR from the socialist path and to carry out subversive action against the socialist countries.'<sup>48</sup> Rusk called in Ambassador Dobrynin to refute the allegations of US involvement in the arms caches found in

Czechoslovakia. The official report of the meeting recorded:

The Secretary mentioned that this was the first time that anybody had spoken officially to Ambassador Dobrynin about the Czech situation. He added that the US Government had not wished to point out that undoubtedly the Soviet Government had a highly professional intelligence which would make it clear that there was absolutely no truth to these allegations. We therefore were entitled to wonder what purpose was being achieved in their dissemination and whether or not this might be a pretext to lay a basis for some future action against Czechoslovakia. If this happened we would deeply regret it and it could not possibly have anything but a very negative effect on our relations, all the more so if the US was to be presented as a scapegoat.<sup>49</sup>

No doubt Rusk spoke sharply in anger about a false allegation. But there was surely also a different signal in his words - whether intentional or not. For he could be understood to be saying that Soviet military intervention would have a negative effect on US-Soviet relations, but it would not lead to any direct response, and that even the negative effects would be reduced if false claims about the US were not used as a pretext for Soviet action.

On the same day that Rusk called in Dobrynin, Wilson and Michael Stewart discussed the situation in Czechoslovakia. Stewart told the Prime Minister that:

..he had been considering whether anything in the nature of a gentle warning should be said to the Russians. He agreed with the Prime Minister that the Americans seemed on the whole disposed not to do this. But he had decided that, on balance, it was desirable that something should be said, in a relatively low key and not at a very high level.<sup>50</sup>

He had therefore asked Peter Hayman, an Assistant under-secretary in the Foreign Office, to speak to the Soviet Ambassador on the lines that the Russians seemed to wish to reach some agreement with the Americans about future missile limitations; that this was a heartening development; but that various encouraging signs of improvement in East/West relations would all be drastically set back 'if the Russians

walked into Czechoslovakia'. Stewart reported that Hayman had put these points to Smirnovsky 'who had reacted at least as well as could be expected'.<sup>51</sup> This was a step by the British government without waiting for an American lead. It was followed later the same day by a further effort to co-ordinate policy and push the United States into some action, when the Foreign Office sent a full paper considering policy options to the British Ambassador in Washington.

It began by considering deterrent action:

The principal instrument open to us is diplomatic pressure in the context of détente, designed to get over to the Russians unambiguously the very serious effect which intervention would have on East-West relations. We have already spoken quietly to the Soviet Ambassador in London about this. This argument may not cut much ice with the Russians in comparison with what they regard as their over-riding ideological and strategic interests in Czechoslovakia. The fact remains that Western parliamentary and public opinion would not tolerate a continuation of East-West cooperation on the same scale as hitherto if intervention took place.<sup>52</sup>

This sounded confident that there was some leverage over the Soviet Union, but it was immediately qualified:

There are a number of difficulties in saying this to the Russians. There would be no use in making direct threats of political or economic counter-measures which we were not sure of following up afterwards. We also have to avoid appearing to initiate a campaign which the Russians could plausibly represent as part of a Western "plot" to detach Czechoslovakia from the Communist bloc. The timing of any diplomatic moves of this sort will therefore be important. Such moves should not be left too late, but they should not be so early as to raise tension unnecessarily.<sup>53</sup>

Various possible actions were then considered. Use of the 'hot line' was seen to have the advantage of confidentiality, so it would not appear to be part of a Western propaganda exercise, whereas public statements should be as few, brief and restrained as possible. Approaches through diplomatic channels might either complement the

use of the 'hot line' or be an alternative to it. The lobbying of third parties, particularly by approaching selected non-aligned countries, pointing out British concern and asking them to make the serious consequences clear to the Soviet Union, was a further possibility. Care would be needed so as to avoid this seeming to be a Western campaign, but it was felt that this approach could have some effect if Czechoslovak/Soviet tension grew quickly. On the other hand action at the UN was regarded as premature and more likely to be appropriate after intervention than before. Finally, it was noted that the Information Research Department was considering whether there were any possibilities for covert propaganda.

The second main heading was 'action to stiffen Czechoslovak morale'. This, it was argued, meant being ready to respond quickly to Czechoslovak requests for action or statements that they considered useful, for they were the best judges of what might help. However, Czechoslovakia could be told privately that the West would look with favour on the grant of private Western commercial credits. If the situation was long and drawn out, Britain could also consider introducing some selectivity into East/West contacts by showing particular friendliness to Czechoslovakia and, to a lesser degree, others such as Rumania that could be expected to support her. If the Soviet Union put an economic squeeze on Czechoslovakia, the West might need to consider ways of supplying essential raw materials (e.g. oil and wheat) and of absorbing more Czechoslovak exports. None of this was very concrete and the implication is that nothing had been done on the economic front since the matter had last been considered. The section on 'Possible reactions to Soviet intervention' was still less resolute. It began:

Our aim must be to see that the Soviet Union does not get away with its crime before world opinion. But we must not give the impression that we are not still interested in easing tension between East and West. To react to intervention by shutting the door altogether on East-West contacts would be dangerous. It would also be to play the Soviet Union's own game, and would greatly disappoint the majority of people in Eastern Europe, including Czechoslovakia itself. We may well want, however, to make some further distinction between Governmental contacts



which could be interpreted as whitewashing the Soviet Union and any other Communist government which took part in intervention, on the one hand; and on the other, contacts with intellectuals and others which we might well want to intensify.<sup>54</sup>

With regard to military action, it was recalled that the West had not been prepared to go to war to save the Hungarian Revolution and it could be assumed that Western Governments would adopt a similar attitude in this case.

In these circumstances military action would be useless and could be extremely dangerous. So would any statement which could be construed as a threat of such action. But it may be necessary, as a matter of common prudence, if military intervention actually takes place in Czechoslovakia, for NATO forces nearby to be placed at a higher state of readiness.<sup>55</sup>

The matter should be taken to the United Nations but this would best be done by a recognised Czechoslovak government; if not by another Communist government - perhaps Yugoslavia - or, if this was not possible, by a non-aligned country. What about the future of bilateral relations with the Soviet Union?

The breaking off of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union would achieve nothing, would be contrary to our own principles on relations, and could seriously damage our interests. There might well be advantage in a drastic cutting down on ministerial and other visiting. However, it would be right to concentrate on cutting down on political contacts in the first instance. We might want to consider more carefully those in the technological, cultural and other fields which do promote a knowledge of the West, the interruption of which might be welcome to the Russians.<sup>56</sup>

This led to a more general consideration of East-West relations:

There is no doubt that public opinion in all Western countries would react very strongly to intervention in Czechoslovakia and there would be a demand for at least some kind of slowing down of "détente". It would, however, be wrong to allow

Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia to impede progress on measures which are obviously to our advantage. These include disarmament measures and the discussions on the limitation of missiles. On European problems it would be necessary to make clear that the intervention cast such a grave doubt on Soviet sincerity that progress towards a European settlement must be slowed down. Nevertheless, it is very important that the West should continue to make clear its own interest in retaining contact with the East and working for a settlement. Positive Western measures...should continue.<sup>57</sup>

Nor was action on economic relations recommended:

There might be some demands in the West for a cutting down of East-West trade, but it is not usually practicable, or in our view desirable, to cut trade for political ends, and the development of economic relations with the East is a trend which we consider serves Western interests, politically as well as economically. Some selective actions or gestures in this field might be possible.<sup>58</sup>

Having considered, and rejected, most forms of intervention, it was concluded that the best protection for Czechoslovakia was the widest publicity for Soviet pressure tactics. Western Governments should not appear to be openly promoting anti-Soviet propaganda, but should help 'to ensure that the facts are objectively and accurately disseminated.'<sup>59</sup>

This was a convoluted document. Recognising that a Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia would be disastrous, it held that this should be made clear to Moscow. However, it simultaneously wanted to ensure that such an eventuality did not lead to a real breakdown in East-West relations or adversely affect British interests. Yet the paper was at least attempting to devise a strategy and Washington was still reluctant to go even this far. On 27 July Sir Patrick Dean was finally able to report fully on the US reply to the suggestions made five days previously by the British government. The President was still against any direct messages to the Soviet leadership, including through the 'hot line', which was a contingency to be held in reserve. No further diplomatic warnings were planned and nor did the Americans see any need to activate third country

intervention, which could be counter-productive, especially given the well publicised attitudes adopted by the Roumanians, Yugoslavs and West European Communist Parties. They were also satisfied with the strong criticism expressed in Sweden, Tunisia and other non-aligned countries. They claimed not to have considered covert propaganda operations and would be glad to hear something of British ideas on this, but were doubtful whether any special effort would be necessary, given the strongly antagonistic reaction evident in most of the Third World. The US did not plan to do anything in relation to private Western commercial credits, given the legislative difficulties, but were hoping to be able to make a helpful gesture over Czechoslovak gold in the near future. They were also making a study of Czechoslovak trading patterns and possible requirements in the event of a Soviet economic squeeze. Overall, the US position was to do nothing to attempt to deter an invasion, although Dean thought they might react more sharply than the British had suggested if the invasion actually took place.<sup>60</sup>

With the US rejection of any serious co-ordination of policy over the Czechoslovak crisis, the British oscillated between emulating American passivity and attempting to do something more. Thus although a meeting on 30 July between the Foreign Office Departments and the Board of Trade concluded that no major decision was necessary or desirable at present,<sup>61</sup> that day Michael Stewart took an opportunity to warn the Soviet ambassador, Smirnovsky, about the consequences of an invasion.

Smirnovsky had called on Michael Stewart to make a proposal on the use of outer space. Stewart summarised the relevant part of the discussion as follows:

Before he left I asked him to stay on as I wished to discuss Czechoslovakia. I said that my view had been made unmistakably clear in my speech in the House of Commons 18 July. I had drawn attention then to the patient work which had gone into improving understanding between HMG and other Western Governments on the one hand and the Soviet Government and other East European governments on the other. I instanced the Anglo-Soviet consular convention and the recent progress in the disarmament field to illustrate the real chance of progress which now existed. I repeated what I had said in my speech that

it was not for us to interfere in Czechoslovak affairs - not for us, nor for anyone else. In the light of events since my speech I wished to repeat my serious concern that events in Eastern Europe should not develop in such a way as to damage the prospects for continued improvement in East/West relations. I added that the British government had been at pains not to express any view which might be misunderstood or increase tension in Eastern Europe. Public opinion in this country however had been almost unanimous in its comments on recent developments. These comments had been to the effect that the affairs of Czechoslovakia were a matter for the Czechoslovak people alone. Mr Smirnovsky should be in no doubt that this was the view of the British people. I asked the ambassador to report what I had said as a firm expression of the British government's view.<sup>62</sup>

In reply Smirnovsky initially claimed that the Federal Republic was interfering in Czechoslovak affairs, but Stewart dismissed this. His account continued:

Mr Smirnovsky said that he trusted that what I had said did not mean that I was giving the Soviet government a warning. The Soviet government would not accept a warning. I replied by referring once more to my speech of 18 July. As I said then, it was the firm intention of HMG to seek better understanding between our two countries. I felt it right to speak as I had done since, if events went badly over Czechoslovakia, the opportunities for increasing understanding between us would be frozen. We wished to do nothing to hamper better understanding. Mr Smirnovsky said that he for his part hoped that no one would do anything to hamper the efforts of the Soviet government to improving understanding. The document he had handed me earlier about outer space was an example of the Soviet government's efforts in this direction. There were already obstacles in the way of this. In Vietnam a war was in progress. In Czechoslovakia only talks were taking place.

This was perhaps as far as Stewart could be expected to go without some indication that the US government was also prepared to warn the Soviet Union of the consequences of an invasion. There

were also signs of some dissatisfaction with the low key response from certain officials within the Foreign Office. E.J.W.Barnes, the Head of Department of Western Organisations and Co-ordination, complained that not enough was being done to ensure full NATO involvement in the event of Soviet intervention. He was clearly unhappy with the way in which the British - and still more the Americans - appeared to want to handle the situation themselves, or through Anglo-American discussions rather than with fuller consultation in NATO. He also urged more studying of Czechoslovak trade patterns: 'unless we have this full background we shall not even be able to make use of opportunities which arise, still less create them'.<sup>63</sup>

But although his intervention led to a new meeting of Whitehall departments to consider the possibility of help in the trade and financial fields, and to a stronger telegram to Washington on the need for consultations within NATO, there could be no change in policy without more decisive political leadership from the US, and there was no sign of this. The behaviour that really demands an explanation is therefore that of the US government. Why was American policy so passive as the tension mounted? It was argued earlier that the era of détente was an important conditioning factor for the US response, but this general climate was greatly reinforced by the specific circumstances of 1968 and the final stages of Johnson's Presidency.

On 30 January 1968 the North Vietnamese had launched the so-called 'Tet Offensive', attacking Saigon and other cities in South Vietnam. This had been a humiliation for the Americans and in March a review of policy had reached the conclusion that current US strategy could promise no early end to the conflict. The result, in late March, had been a decision by Johnson to attempt a two-pronged strategy of sending yet more troops to Vietnam and, simultaneously, ceasing bombing the more heavily populated areas in the North. But, having also announced his decision not to stand for re-election, his supreme international priority was to achieve a negotiated cessation to the war before he retired and he hoped that this could be advanced by reaching a satisfactory accommodation on a series of issues with the Soviet Union. Important talks had taken place in Glassboro the previous year, and Johnson now wanted to build on this progress. The opening of the Paris Peace Conference on Vietnam on 10 May and the signature of the

non-proliferation treaty at the beginning of July appeared to justify this optimism and he now sought an arms limitation agreement as a means of bringing about further progress in US-Soviet relations. US passivity over the crisis in Czechoslovakia was part of this wider agenda.

This was evident in a meeting between Johnson, Rusk and the Defence Secretary, Clark Clifford, on 29 July 1968, when a Soviet invasion appeared menacing. The question was how to respond to the Soviet desire for a high level meeting on strategic arms limitation. Johnson, desperately keen for a general agreement, wanted a meeting before the Presidential election in November, while Rusk and Clifford were deeply worried about this taking place before the resolution of the situation in Czechoslovakia. Johnson accepted their advice that the meeting could be delayed for a month or six weeks and that it did not necessarily need to be a direct encounter between himself and Kosygin.

However, his wish for a personal meeting with Kosygin was evident, as Clifford and Rusk acknowledged when Johnson left the room briefly. All agreed with Rusk that even if Kosygin accepted a meeting 'if things really start in Czechoslovakia we'd just ourselves pull back', but they all hoped that the situation there would be resolved in a week or two. However, the implication - at least from Clifford - was that the 'resolution' did not necessarily need to be recognition of Dubček's right to carry out Czechoslovak policy without Soviet interference. As he put it:

I think in maybe a week, it could be a week, Czechoslovakia would be resolved one way or another. It could be two weeks, or three weeks, but I think it's going to be resolved that this thing has gotten so acute now, so inflammatory, that I think they're going to lance this abscess one way or another and I think it will be out of the way.<sup>64</sup>

Johnson was prepared to wait a little longer:

I think there is no reason why we have to act until the Czechoslovakia situation is cleared. As I indicated, that's number one. I don't know how. If it's two weeks, that's another matter. I would expect maybe it wouldn't be that long. I don't know. I can't tell. But I don't think it's essential.<sup>65</sup>

The implication of the whole discussion was that Johnson was desperately keen to meet Kosygin in the very near future and that Czechoslovakia was seen as a hurdle to be surmounted by the Soviet Union, with the US having no particular interest in the details of the settlement. In other words, as long as the Soviet Union could ‘sort out’ the situation without precipitating a major international crisis, the US leadership did not wish the situation in Czechoslovakia to prevent a high level meeting from taking place.

Given this perspective on the situation at the highest level of leadership, the reasons for the reluctance of the US government to do anything to help the ‘Prague Spring’ or to co-ordinate its policy with NATO allies are obvious. Furthermore, it is also clear why Walt Rostow’s advice was so unwelcome, for although he was making the perfectly valid prediction that a Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia would damage détente, he was backing this up with Cold War arguments. That is, he was suggesting that the failure of the Soviet Union to discipline Czechoslovakia would weaken Communism throughout the bloc and that this was a key US goal. However, in the summer of 1968 the Johnson Presidency was not trying to undermine the Soviet sphere in Eastern Europe: it was trying to do a deal on nuclear weapons and Vietnam which would recognise the post-war status quo.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, by the 20 August the US government thought that it was about to succeed in this strategy, for the previous day it had been agreed that Johnson would visit the Soviet Union for high level talks with the leadership.<sup>67</sup>

This meant that there were no further warnings to the Soviet Union or significant contingency planning before the invasion. And it led to the supreme irony that, when Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador, came to inform Johnson that the invasion had begun, the President was so euphoric about his imminent trip to Moscow that he did not understand what Dobrynin had said.<sup>68</sup>

### **Conclusions: Ethics, Realism and Realpolitik**

This article aimed to address four questions that will now be answered in turn:

- 1) Was Crossman’s analogy with the Munich Agreement appropriate?
- 2) How much co-ordination and agreement was there between the American and British governments and to what extent was the US

government responsible for British passivity?

3) Was there a spheres of influence deal between the US and Soviet governments?

4) What were the fundamental drives behind British and American policies?

The analogy with the Munich settlement was understandable but, ultimately, superficial. In September 1938 Nazi Germany was a racist, aggressive and expansionist power that had not yet gained control of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain's acquiescence in Hitler's demands therefore changed the power balance in Europe. In 1968 the Soviet Union was a bureaucratic dictatorship that had incorporated Czechoslovakia within its sphere twenty years earlier. The suppression of the Prague Spring was morally indefensible, but it did not add to Soviet power. For this reason, throughout the crisis it was taken for granted both in Washington and London that, in the event of a Soviet-led invasion, the West would not respond militarily. This did not mean that no attention was paid as to the possibility of such a response. Contingency planning meant that Western military capabilities were certainly considered and the Pentagon even assessed the situation on the eve of the intervention. However, the judgment at that stage simply confirmed the underlying assumption that had been present since May, for it was argued that a military confrontation could lead to a third world war.<sup>69</sup>

Whether or not this was so, it was generally accepted that, as the West had not responded militarily at the time of the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956, it would not do so if a similar invasion eventually took place in Czechoslovakia. No doubt the sense of impotence conveyed by Crossman's diary stemmed from this decision for, once the Soviet Union decided to use military power as a last resort, it is unlikely that the invasion could have been prevented by peaceful means. However, the decision by the West not to consider a military response should surely not be criticised for, however unjustified the Soviet intervention, the West should not have risked world war over the issue. It might be argued that the Soviet Union could have been kept guessing about the Western reaction in the event of an invasion. However, if the US was not prepared to fight a war over Czechoslovakia it would have been extremely dangerous to have threatened to do so



or to have led the Soviet Union to believe that it might do so - for example, by military mobilisation or manoeuvres - for this could have led to an unwanted escalation into war. Even with Washington's low key stance, the Soviet Union seems not to have been absolutely sure of the reaction that its action would provoke, which is presumably why it staged a missile alert to deter a Western intervention.

The attempt to answer the first question has immediately led into the second, for it is evident that Britain's own reaction to the Czechoslovak crisis would be conditioned by that of the United States. But there was comparatively little co-ordination of policies because the American administration wanted to maintain complete autonomy over its own policy and refused to co-ordinate a strategy with its allies. Although the British government generally shared the American inclination to follow a cautious policy, it did attempt to prod the US into warning the Soviet leadership of the negative consequences of an invasion and to undertake some serious contingency planning. However, it was effectively rebuffed by Washington and Richard Crossman was clearly justified in believing that one key reason for British passivity was US 'leadership' in this stance. This then raises the third question: was there a US-Soviet sphere of influence deal or even an intimation by Johnson that an invasion of Czechoslovakia would be a matter of indifference to the US?

The issue of spheres of influence was discussed by Harold Wilson and Michael Stewart in the aftermath of the invasion, with Wilson tending to believe the rumours that some kind of deal had been agreed and Stewart accepting the US denials. However, as Stewart effectively told Wilson, the general assumption of spheres of influence was inherent in the notion that NATO would not fight to defend a country that was not a member of the alliance.<sup>70</sup> The British and American governments ruled out a military response because they accepted the de facto inclusion of Czechoslovakia within the Soviet bloc.

Again, this differs from the situation in 1938. Chamberlain was arguably attempting to do a deal to create a spheres of influence agreement, while Western non-intervention in 1968 represented the recognition of an existing de facto agreement. However, it seems highly unlikely that Johnson had actually given a 'go-ahead' to the Soviet

Union to invade Czechoslovakia, even if Brezhnev claimed this at the meeting Mylnár reported. This is not solely because no document has been unearthed and the officials involved have denied that there any such statement was made, but for three more compelling reasons.

First, there is no evidence that either the US or British governments anticipated the military intervention. Certainly, there were officials, who were providing a shrewd analysis of the situation. For example, on 2 August, just after the meeting at Cierna, the US ambassador in Moscow, sent a lengthy appraisal of Czechoslovak-Soviet relations showing an acute awareness of the narrowing of the options for the Soviet leadership.<sup>71</sup> However, this seems to have made no impact in Washington. Of course, this is not conclusive because a message to Brezhnev could have been sent by Johnson himself.

But, secondly, the shock with which the news of the invasion was received in the National Security Council and by Johnson himself (after someone had managed to explain to him what had happened!) suggests that there was no prior knowledge. It is surely more likely that the 'message' that had been conveyed to the Soviet Union by US behaviour - rather than in words - was that there would be no military response to an invasion. If Brezhnev had claimed more than this it was probably to cower the leaders of Czechoslovakia into submission in the belief that they would receive no help from anyone.

And the third, and most decisive, reason for doubting that the US gave any 'go-ahead' to the Soviet Union was that the American leadership certainly did not want the invasion to take place because, as will be argued below, it thwarted Johnson's whole strategy. This will become evident if the final question about the main drives behind British and American policies is now considered.

The relationship with the Soviet Union was naturally far more important for both the British and American governments than that with Czechoslovakia, but this operated in different ways. There were two schools of thought within the British policy-making establishment about the Soviet Union. One, which was expressed by George Brown, the then Foreign Secretary in February 1968, was very dubious about the extent to which relations with the Soviet Union could be improved and placed more faith in cultivating better relations with the East European satellites.<sup>72</sup> This (the East European strategy) emphasised

the fact that the Communist system was less deeply entrenched in many of the East European countries than in the Soviet Union itself, and that better economic and political relations with them might eventually loosen their ties with Moscow. This was in harmony with the initial tacit support for the 'Prague Spring'.

However, the British government was also seeking better relations with the Soviet Union, both for bilateral relations - including economic and technological developments - and to improve the international security environment. This second school of thought (the Soviet strategy) ascribed much greater importance to Moscow than to the satellites and, on this assumption, the development of good relationships in Eastern Europe could be viewed as provocative in Moscow. Crossman was evidently convinced that only the Soviet strategy existed in 1968 but, in fact, the two tendencies co-existed within the government.<sup>73</sup> For even the East European strategy dictated caution in relation to the Dubček regime, in the belief that the best hope was for a gradual improvement in relations with the East European regimes as a whole rather than through a sudden change of policy towards Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, this was also in harmony with the Soviet strategy, for a gradual improvement in relations with all the East European states would be much less provocative to the Soviet Union, particularly if complemented by a simultaneous Anglo-Soviet rapprochement.

Finally, the government was always anxious to ensure that Britain was not singled out by the Soviet Union as the most aggressive of the Western powers and would therefore seek to ensure that its position was not seriously out of line with that of the USA. All this accounted for its anxiety not to antagonise the Soviet Union by making positive statements in support of the 'Prague Spring'.

Yet the British government was also acutely aware of the fact that a Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia would inevitably adversely affect détente. It was for this reason that it sought a more co-ordinated strategy with the United States and, when Washington was unresponsive, warned the Soviet Union itself. Michael Stewart's intervention was hardly dramatic but at least he made some effort to deter the leadership in Moscow. Moreover, after the invasion, he tried to carry through the threat by demonstrating to the Soviet Union that relations had

indeed deteriorated as a result of that action.<sup>74</sup> Thus when the new Ambassador in Moscow complained that he could do nothing there because relations were so bad as a result of the British government's attitude to the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Michael Stewart told him:

..I am not ready to restore the full range of visits that had been organised before the invasion of Czechoslovakia. These were more important than those arranged by our other NATO allies. Inevitably many of them carried implications of goodwill which I consider to be inappropriate, and indeed inexpedient, at the present time.<sup>75</sup>

However, since the British government also wanted to ensure that it did not suffer commercially or politically by taking a stronger line than any other Western power, Stewart was unable to carry this through for very long. By May 1969 it was thus concluded that there was a risk that excessively energetic attempts by the West to establish closer relations with Eastern Europe might seem to the Soviet Union to threaten its vital interests, and that the most important longer term aim was to restore full relations with Moscow.<sup>76</sup> Later the same month Tony Benn visited the Soviet Union to resume the technological co-operation agreement of January 1968 and on 3 June Anthony Crosland signed a long-term Trade Agreement in Moscow. This is not to suggest that Anglo-Soviet relations were now harmonious, but the continuing tensions had little to do with Czechoslovakia.

Crossman was therefore wrong in equating British policy in 1968 with that of Neville Chamberlain and also wrong in thinking that the sole British concern was with maintaining or improving relations with the Soviet Union. However, his guilt feelings about the stance of the Labour government before the invasion seem appropriate: it was not following 'an ethical foreign policy', for the ultimate determinants of its strategy were a wish for stability, a belief that Moscow was more important than Prague, and an unwillingness to expose itself to Soviet retribution unless there was a lead from the United States.

If British policy towards Czechoslovakia was based on 'realism', that of the United States was closer to that of *realpolitik*. The US government had no particular sympathy for the 'Prague Spring' and its relations with the Dubček government remained quite cool, with little

mutual understanding. Johnson's overriding goal was to secure a US-Soviet deal based on a recognition by each state of the other's perceived interests, and he no doubt saw the possibility of an invitation to Moscow as the 'crowning act of his career'.<sup>77</sup> The Administration was not prepared to warn the Soviet Union about the negative consequences of an invasion of Czechoslovakia because it believed that the breakdown of talks would be more damaging to the US than to the Soviet Union.<sup>78</sup> As Johnson's overwhelming desire was to reach agreement on arms control and to achieve peace in Vietnam through Soviet mediation, the Administration would not risk jeopardising the dialogue with Moscow by saying anything about Czechoslovakia.

And, as already argued, it is very probable that in August 1968 Johnson would have accepted a hard-line coup against the Dubček regime as part of the wider agreement he was seeking. However, this did not mean that the US could tolerate an invasion, for domestic opinion would make it impossible for Johnson to go to Moscow while Soviet troops were suppressing the Prague Spring and, in the event, his trip had to be cancelled.

There are some cruel ironies in all this. The US had not devised a coherent policy on the Czechoslovak crisis, and had thwarted any attempts by the British to devise a serious contingency strategy, but it was the American policy establishment and, particularly the Right, that eventually benefited from the Soviet action. De Gaulle's independent foreign policy was undermined and the NATO alliance was renewed without opposition in 1969. Furthermore, in Autumn 1968 the US was able to occupy the moral high ground by condemning the immorality of the Soviet invasion in Czechoslovakia while Richard Nixon, the Republican Presidential candidate, deliberately sabotaged Johnson's peace initiative in Vietnam. Meanwhile, the Soviet action in August 1968 not only eliminated the possibility of 'socialism with a human face' in Czechoslovakia, but also caused prolonged dismay, confusion and division amongst the Left in Europe.

## Notes

1 Jaromír Navrátil et al (eds.) *The Prague Spring 1968 - A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998. See also Mark Kramer, 'New Sources on the 1968 Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no.2 (Fall

1992) and no.3 (Fall 1993), and Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and its aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics 1968-1970*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

2 Kieran Williams is deeply critical of Dubcek in *The Prague Spring* and in 'New Sources on Soviet Decision Making during the 1968 Czechoslovak Crisis' in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No.3, May 1996

3 Parliamentary Debates House of Commons, Vol.769, cols. 1273-1432, 26 August 1968.

4 Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, Vol. 3. Secretary of State for Social Services (Hamilton/Cape 1977), 18 July 1968, p.143. The minutes of the Cabinet meeting were as follows:

"It appeared that the Russians had not yet decided whether or not they would try to coerce Czechoslovakia if their policy of political pressure and sabre-rattling failed to achieve its purpose. But it was clear that the new leaders in Czechoslovakia would need to proceed cautiously if they wished to make progress with their policy of liberalisation. There would be obvious dangers if any member of the Government were publicly to express sympathy with the Czechoslovak leader; and any Government statements would need to be very carefully considered. One of the lessons which could be drawn from the implied threat that armed force might be used against Czechoslovakia was the importance of maintaining the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

In discussion there was general agreement that although the situation in Czechoslovakia was dangerous, there was no action we could usefully take.

The Czechoslovak Government had not asked for help, nor, as far as we knew, sought to contact any Western Powers. Any attempt to intervene on their behalf with the Soviet Union would be counter-productive. The violent tone which characterised the [Warsaw] letter was not unusual in Communist communications. The Soviet Union was clearly hoping to intimidate the present Czechoslovak government or to promote its overthrow. Only if these tactics failed might they feel obliged to resort to armed force. In that event there could be no question of intervention by the Western Powers; and the case would probably be taken to the United Nations." *Cabinet Conclusions* (68) 36, 18 July 1968, Public Record Office. [All subsequent references to official British documents are from the Public Record Office unless otherwise stated].

5 *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, vol. 3, Entry for 4 August 1968., pp.171-2. However, he also reinforced the government's effective reassurance to the Soviet Union, reporting his own speech as follows: "I said we were supporting communists in Czechoslovakia who were trying to liberalize the regime and that we weren't going to intervene from the West whatever the Red Army did. The interrupters shouted quite effectively, asking why, if we objected to the Russian intervention in Czechoslovakia, we didn't object to the Americans in Vietnam." *Ibid.*, p.170.

6 Zdenek Mlynář, *Night Frost in Prague: The End of Humane Socialism*, London: Hurst & Co. 1980, p.241 (Mlynář's book was originally published in German in 1978 as *Nachtfrost: Erfahrungen auf dem Weg vom realen zum menschlichen Sozialismus*, Cologne:Europäische Verlagsanstalt)

7 'Confronting Liberalization and Military Invasion: America and the Johnson

Administration Respond to the 1968 Prague Summer', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 40 (1992). This article also provides references for the rumours of a deal.

**8** FCO 28, vol. 88, Sir William Barker to George Brown, 18 January 1968

**9** Sir W.Barker to P.Hayman, 7 March 1968 in FCO 28, vol. 89. He had already expressed doubts about Dubček a fortnight before. Barker to Hayman, 19 February 1968, in FCO 28, vol. 89.

**10** *Foreign Relations of the United States 1964-1968* Volume XVII, Eastern Europe, Washington: Department of State. (Subsequently cited as FRUS XVII) document 55, 13 February 1968. (These documents are available on [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_xvii/f.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_xvii/f.html))

**11** FCO 28, vol. 88, minutes by P.Hayman, 10 January 1968 and Lord Hood, 12 January 1968.

**12** P.Hayman (Assistant Under-Secretary) to Sir W Barker, 4 April 1968, FCO 28, vol. 90

**13** Sir W.Barker to P.Hayman, 7 March 1968 in FCO 28, vol. 89

**14** Sir W.Barker to P.Hayman, 28 March 1968, FCO 28, vol. 90

**15** One official drew attention to the high level of analysis by Victor Zorza in *The Guardian*, followed by Dessa Trevison and Richard Davy of *The Times* and then *The Financial Times*. *The Daily Telegraph* was regarded as erratic with the Sunday papers as very uninspired and the popular press tending to sensationalise (as had the Czech information media).

**16** D.Morphet to J.Cormack, 5 April 1968 in FCO 28, vol. 90.

**17** FRUS XVII, Document 59, 27 April 1968.

**18** Barker to Hayman, 28 March 1968, FCO 28, vol. 90

**19** Kubricht, 'Confronting Liberalization', p.201

**20** Ibid., p.206. Kubricht also notes that the Johnson administration rejected the view that economic and cultural policies were weapons which could be used to separate East European satellites from the Soviet Union. 'Confronting Liberalization', p.200-1.

**21** 'Czechoslovak and Soviet Troop Movements', Minute by H.F.T Smith, 10 May 1968 in FCO 28, vol. 109.

**22** Copy in FCO 28, vol. 109.

**23** Thus, for example, when the correspondent of the Czechoslovak press agency tried to involve the UN in the crisis, the Dubcek government disavowed this initiative. Its mission issued a press release arguing that these questions: "...created an impression that there exists an attempt to involve the United Nations in matters concerning the relations of the Czechoslovak socialist republic to the neighbouring socialist states".

It added that the:

"The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Czechoslovak socialist republic considers the above mentioned move by the correspondent of the Czechoslovak press agency as regrettable and not corresponding to the interests and to the policy of the Czechoslovak government." UK Mission to New York to FCO, 24 July 1968, FCO 28, vol.99

**24** See, for example, Michael Stewart to Ben Whitaker, 26 July 1968 in FCO 28, vol.101. The US administration followed a similar line with both its anti-

Communist and liberal critics. Kubricht, pp.200-1.

**25** FCO to the Parliamentary Clerk to the Speaker, 30 May 1968, FCO 28, vol. 108

**26** In a lunch for Ota Šik, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the major influence over the economic reform programme, Michael Stewart ventured to say that the 'profound and important changes in Czechoslovakia have aroused the sympathy and deep interest of everyone in this country' and that even those who had not been fortunate enough to visit the country recently had 'been able to form some idea of the renaissance of that sprit of enquiry, and of originality which is so typical of Czechoslovakia'. Draft for Michael Stewart's speech by H.F.T.Smith, 25 June 1968. FCO28, vol.111

**27** FRUS XVII, document 60, 10 May 1968

**28** Ibid. Note by Katzenbach, 11 May 1968 and undated note by Rusk.

**29** FRUS XVII, document. 61, 10 May 1968

**30** Minute by H.F.T.Smith, 14 May 1968, FCO 28, vol. 109

**31** FRUS XVII, document 52, 10 November 1967

**32** FRUS, XVII, document 58, 26 April 1968.

**33** Department of State, Administrative History, Vol. 1, Chapter 3, Section F - Eastern Europe, quoted in Kubricht, 'Confronting Liberalization', p.199

**34** 'Conversations with Sir P.Dean: Eastern Europe': Briefing Note for the Permanent Under-Secretary by H.F.T.Smith, 14 June 1968 in FCO 28, vol. 110.

**35** Minute by P.H.Gore-Booth, 17 June 1968, FCO 28, vol. 110. .

**36** FRUS XVII, document 64, editorial note.

**37** FRUS XVII, document 66. 12 July 1968.

**38** Parliamentary Debates House of Commons, Vol.768, col.1683, 18 July 1968.

There was very little emphasis on the Czechoslovak crisis in the whole debate.

**39** C.S.R.Giffard to P.Hayman, 18 July 1968, FCO 28, vol. 99.

**40** Ibid.

**41** Of course, they were already aware that the American attitude to the crisis was similar to their own, although the messages that were being put out by the US government were not entirely consistent. Thus the *New York Times* reported that the US had warned the Soviet Union privately that armed intervention in Czechoslovakia could have repercussions on US/Soviet relations, but Dean Rusk had denied this story when questioned by the press. However, Dean, the British Ambassador in Washington, thought it quite likely that the State Department had itself inspired the story as indirect way of warning the Soviet Union. Sir P. Dean to FCO, 18 July 1968, FCO 28, vol. 99.

**42** Telegram from the FCO to Sir P. Dean, 19 July 1968, FCO 28, vol.99.

**43** The non-proliferation treaty was signed in on 1st July by Britain, the Soviet Union and the USA, with 56 other states signing it on the same day.

**44** Ibid.

**45** FRUS XVII document 67, 20 July 1968. In an informal memorandum of 20 July, attached to the text, Rostow commented: 'My feeling is that the time for possible deterrence is very short - a matter of four or five days'.Ibid. Rostow might have been influenced by some of the anti-Communist and East European groups in Congress, for the previous day Congressman Paul Findley had written to him in very similar terms. Findley to Walt Rostow, White House



Central Files, Subject File, Box 27, CO 57, quoted in Kubricht, 'Confronting Liberalization', p.206.

**46** Sir P.Dean to FCO, 19 July 1968, FCO 28, vol. 99.

**47** FRUS XVII, document 68 22 July 1968.; Ibid., document 69, 22 July 1968.

**48** Soviet Government Diplomatic Note to the Czechoslovak Government, 20 July 1968 in Navrátil, Prague 68, document 60.

**49** FRUS XVII document 70, 22 July 1968.

**50** Michael Palliser to Donald Maitland, PREM 13 1993, 22 July 1968

**51** Ibid.

**52** FCO to Sir P. Dean, 22 July 1968, FCO 28, vol. 99

**53** Ibid.

**54** Ibid.

**55** Ibid.

**56** Ibid.

**57** Ibid.

**58** Ibid.

**59** Draft of telegram to Sir P.Dean, 19 July 1968 in FCO 28, vol. 99. One very telling paragraph in the draft was omitted from the final version of the telegram: 'After any intervention the gloves would be off for intensive propagand treatment of the subject, with particular attention to making the story widely known in the third world.'

**60** Sir P.Dean to FCO, 27 July 1968, FCO 28, vol. 99. He anticipated a more restrictive attitude to visits and scientific exchanges and reported that the State Department foresaw that the US/Soviet dialogue on disarmament, arms control measures and bilateral issues would be at least temporarily suspended. He also expected the US to impose further restrictions on East-West trade, which they would want other Western powers to adopt too. Dean also reported that, with regard to military action, the State Department 'are in general agreement, but they do not seem to have given much thought to the possibility of placing NATO forces on some form of alert status. They seem more concerned to avoid manoeuvres or other military manifestations which could de-stabilise the situation on the frontiers'. Ibid.

**61** Memorandum by P.Hayman, 30 July 1968, FCO 28, vol. 99

**62** Stewart to the Embassy in Moscow, 30 July 1968, PREM 13 1993

**63** Minute by E.J.W.Barnes, 2 August 1968, FCO 28, vol. 99. He also minuted: 'In general, I had hoped that our attitude would be that we should do our best to influence the situation favourably, in concert with our allies, subject always of course to the need for discretion vis- a-vis both Russia and Czechoslovak itself. After all, it was Mr Neville Chamberlain who said that Czechoslovakia was a small country far away of whom we know very little'.

**64** FRUS XVII document 75, 29 July 1968

**65** Ibid.

**66** It is notable that on 24 July, when a top secret meeting was held between Johnson and all the most senior foreign policy advisers, the general consensus appeared to be that the Czech crisis was nearly over, and even Walt Rostow seemed to have come round to the view that the US should do nothing to embarrass Prague, including by the introduction of 'most favoured nation'

legislation. FRUS XVII, document 72, 24 July 1968.

**67** An indication of this is provided in a memorandum of a conversation between Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador and Eugene V. Rostow, Under Secretary for Political Affairs on 'Czechoslovakia and Arms Limitation' on 19 August. It reads: 'Rostow commented that the Soviet decisions at Cierna [The Soviet-Czechoslovak meeting of 29 July to 1 August] seemed wise to us, and potentially very important. Dobrynin said these were matters of great difficulty for his government. Rostow said we understood that, and had tried, as the Secretary had made clear to him, not to make the problem more complex. Dobrynin said that that was appreciated.' The discussion then moved to disarmament and détente. FRUS XVII document 79.

**68** Summary of Meeting with the President, Dobrynin and Walt Rostow, 20 August 1968 in FRUS XVII, Document 80.

**69** At a Cabinet meeting on 22 August, Rusk reported that a decision had been made on the Monday (the day before the invasion) that if there were military intervention, there would be world war. FRUS XVII, Document 84. And on 4 September Johnson told the National Security Council that, 'when the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia, they took measures to insure they would not be blocked'. *Navrátíl*, Prague 68, document 125. This was a reference to the Soviet missile alert.

**70** Michael Palliser to Donald Maitland, 6 September 1968, PREM 13 2638

**71** FRUS XVII document 76, 2 August 1968

**72** See, for example, the letter from P. Hayman to Sir G. Harrison (Moscow, 27 February 1968) in *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, Series III, Vol. I, *Britain and the Soviet Union, 1968-1972* (HMSO), 1997, in pp.25-28. One official (Mr Maitland) summed up George Brown's view in a way which could have been helpful to Czechoslovakia: 'The time had come for Ministers who did not have specific business to do with the Russians to lay off visiting the Soviet Union'. Maitland also reported the following conclusion not reflected in the letter to Harrison: 'We might, as a counterpart to reducing the level of our contacts with the Soviet Union, pay more attention to East European countries. There was evidence in these countries of a desire to break free. Moreover the Soviet Union's relationship with these countries was not too easy and the Russians clearly had to consider their own position carefully. In the longer term developing our relations with the smaller countries of Eastern Europe might facilitate a solution of the German problem'. Minute of 23 February, *ibid.* p.27.

**73** The documents in *Britain and the Soviet Union, 1968-1972* provide considerable evidence of the oscillation between the different tendencies within British foreign policy.

**74** Yet Britain's relative weakness in relation to the Soviet Union, and the consequent reduction of policy discussions to trivia, was apparent when Michael Stewart tried to stop Wilson sending Christmas cards to the states that had invaded Czechoslovakia since this implied personal regard and was incompatible with agreed policy. Wilson thought that this was a petty gesture which would create the maximum annoyance without any gain. The difference between them had to be resolved in the Cabinet, where Wilson prevailed. See PREM 13 2308 and CAB 68 (52), 17 December 1968.

**75** Michael Stewart to Sir D. Wilson, 7 January 1969 in *Britain and the Soviet Union, 1968-72*, p.114.

**76** 'The longer term prospects for East-West relations after the Czechoslovak crisis' in Michael Stewart to Sir D. Wilson, 15 May 1969 in *Ibid.*, pp.138-58.

**77** Pearson-Anderson column in White House Central Files, Subject File, EX-ND 19/CO57, Box 200, Czechoslovakian Crisis, quoted in Kubricht, 'Confronting Liberalization' pp.202-3.

**78** William E.Griffith, 'US Policy and the Invasion of Czechoslovakia' in I. William Zartman (ed.) *Czechoslovakia: Intervention and Impact*, New York: 1970, cited in Kubricht, *Confronting Liberalization*, pp. 202-3.1

