

AUTHORITARIANISM IN CRISIS PORTUGAL, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, AND ‘1968’

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This article makes a comparative analysis of political developments in Portugal and Czechoslovakia during the 1960s and early 1970s, focusing on the historic year ‘1968’ and its preconditions. The two countries experienced authoritarian regimes that went through a crisis of both a systemic and a moral kind, reaching a climax in 1968. In Czechoslovakia the liberalization policy of Alexander Dubček and his reform-communist coalition triggered spontaneous political and cultural activities among the population, which became a threat to the system of one-party rule. The Warsaw Pact invasion in August 1968 put an end to this experiment and the illusion of reform communism. The analysis of the causes, contradictions, and failure of liberalization remains a challenging subject for contemporary historians. Comparing the Czechoslovak experience with the evolution of the right-wing dictatorship in Portugal during the same period, may help to deepen our understanding of the nature and limits of authoritarianism in Europe. In Portugal the protracted regime of António Salazar came to an end in the same year 1968 after a series of manifestations of political crisis in the 1960s had shown its weaknesses and the inevitability of reform. However, his successor Marcelo Caetano maintained the regime’s authoritarian core and only carried out some cosmetic changes to keep Portugal with its colonies afloat. The Portuguese had to wait until 1974 for the regime to collapse, a short period of time, however, compared with the twenty-one more years that the Czechs and Slovaks had to wait. The extent of political space for opposition activity and the nature of elite disunity are among the critical questions examined in this article, which makes a comparison of Portugal and Czechoslovakia a challenging endeavour.

Key terms: Authoritarian regimes. Portugal. Czechoslovakia. Political crisis. Democratization.

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The concept of ‘authoritarianism’ is probably the most appropriate one when looking for a term which is supposed to include, define, and compare both ‘left-wing’ and ‘right-wing’ dictatorships in Europe in the second half of the twentieth

century. The extent to which political, social or cultural space was granted to the citizens of authoritarian regimes varied from case to case, with ‘totalitarianism’ at one extreme and ‘authoritarianism light’ or anything along those lines at the other extreme. When authoritarian regimes entered a temporary or definitive phase of crisis, civil disaffection among their citizens might erupt into a newly created public space and pave the way for successful opposition movements. In 1968, and perhaps already at some earlier moments in the 1960s, such emerging movements were suppressed in both Czechoslovakia and Portugal. However, the fact that civil disaffection, political criticism, and signs of regime crisis had emerged at all, showed that the authoritarian regimes were unlikely to survive forever. It depended on the economic, social, and international conditions, authoritarian-elite stability or disunity, and the strengths and weaknesses of potential opposition figures or smaller groups whether or not authoritarianism would be able to extend its life much further. The communist regime in Czechoslovakia eventually lasted for a good forty-one years, the right-wing dictatorship in Portugal (1926–1974) even longer. With the help of analytical concepts such as ‘authoritarianism’, ‘regime crisis’, ‘political space’, and ‘civil disaffection’ we will address some research questions. How and why did crisis phenomena begin to undermine the authoritarian regimes of Portugal and Czechoslovakia? Who were the principal subjects, groups or institutions that began to voice criticism of particular features of the regimes? Which political-elite divisions and changing authoritarian strategies may be discerned, and how did developments play out over the course of the 1960s? How and why did the two regimes survive the crisis of 1968? The most significant political developments in Portugal will be discussed in the next section, to be followed by developments in Czechoslovakia. Thereafter some conclusions and additional comparative observations will be made that may be helpful in trying to improve our understanding of the changing character, the strengths and weaknesses, and the mutual differences and similarities of the two authoritarian regimes.

Portugal: the last phase of right-wing authoritarianism

António de Oliveira Salazar was an authoritarian political leader, economist, and Catholic intellectual, who shaped to a significant extent the modern history of Portugal between the 1920s and 1960s. He is to be taken seriously by historians and is an example of the great importance of the individual in the history of Europe. He helped to suppress Portuguese liberal democracy after the military coup d’état of 1926, and acted as prime minister from 1932 to 1968, an incredibly long period. He gradually increased his power during the 1930s when his regime became semi-fascist and openly anti-democratic, although Salazar him-

self always remained in the background.¹ After World War II, the Portuguese dictatorship had to show a more moderate face and to suggest that it tolerated at least a limited degree of criticism or political opposition. When Salazar became incapable of ruling the country in September 1968, the regime he had created was continued by the technocratic and pragmatic Marcelo Caetano until the ‘Carnation Revolution’ of April 1974 started the process of democratic transition. Salazar’s long period of authoritarian rule was almost unique in Europe and only matched by the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco (1939–1975); Stalin ruled for only 25 years or so. Salazar’s dictatorship was based on the ideology of a rather harsh and racist Portuguese nationalism, the conservative principles of traditional Catholicism, and a non-parliamentary form of pseudo-democracy and functional economic and social representation known as ‘corporatism.’² He also created a political party, the National Union, the only party tolerated in Portugal. Only members of the National Union could sit in the National Assembly, but this quasi-parliamentary body had no real power. In Salazar’s ‘New State’ (Estado Novo) the security police PIDE played an important role, and freedom of the press or other forms of free political expression or oppositional activity were scarcely permitted. Only in the 1960s did a greater measure of political expression begin to surface among some groups of Portuguese citizens, including protests against the authoritarian state itself and against Portugal’s disastrous colonial wars in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau.

Although Portugal managed to carry out in the 1950s and 1960s a certain measure of economic modernization, it always remained insufficient to eliminate the old problems of rural poverty and mass emigration. The regime tried to reduce the level of emigration by introducing restrictive administrative measures, but this only caused a rise in illegal emigration. After World War II the pace of emigration, including illegal emigration, was increasing all the time. Between 1946 and 1973 two million people left Portugal, almost half of them between 1966 and 1973. Most of the nearly one million Portuguese who left the country during the years 1966–1973 went to France and other West-European countries to work as unskilled labourers. By 1967 their remittances to their families had

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- 1 The Czech historian Jan Klíma describes him as ‘the silent dictator’; see KLÍMA, Jan. *Salazar. Tichý diktátor. (Salazar. The quiet dictator)*. Prague: Aleš Skřivan ml, 2005. ISBN 8086493156. See for other useful works on Salazar and his authoritarian regime KAY, Hugh. *Salazar and Modern Portugal*. New York: Hawthorn. Books, 1970. ISBN 0413267008; DE FIGUEIREDO, Antonio. *Portugal: Fifty Years of Dictatorship*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975. 261 p. ISBN 0140218939; DE MENESES, Filipe Ribeiro. *Salazar: A Political Biography*. New York: Enigma Books, 2009. 644 p. ISBN 9781929631902.
 - 2 See WIARDA, Howard J. *Corporatism and Development: The Portuguese Experience (Amherst)*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977.

overtaken the Portuguese colonial economies as sources of foreign exchange. Despite these benefits, the regime, and Salazar personally, experienced the mass emigration and selling of human capital on such a large scale as a defeat and a loss of face.³ Yet Salazar does not seem to have been much concerned about the backwardness of Portugal or the poverty of the people, seeing it instead as a guarantee of stability. In Portugal in 1960 per capita annual income was just \$160, compared with \$219 in Turkey. Infant mortality was the highest in Europe and 32 percent of the population was illiterate.⁴ There were three abortive military coup attempts between 1947 and 1962, initiated by low-paid and reform-minded junior army officers who were angry about the stagnation of the country. Other events which damaged the image of Salazar were the opposition to his regime by a prominent Portuguese army general, Humberto Delgado, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and perhaps even more so the criticism of the Bishop of Oporto. Delgado was eventually murdered under mysterious circumstances in 1965, while the Bishop of Oporto, who had addressed Salazar in a long letter in July 1958 to demand more social and political freedom, was silenced in a more subtle way by exiling him to Italy.⁵ Salazar could not understand why the Catholic Church in Portugal, which had been protected by him since he came to power, should want to express any criticism of his rule or tolerate 'progressive' elements within its ranks. How much and what kind of opposition was there among the mass of Portuguese people against the authoritarian state? J.W. Lennon, the Irish ambassador in Lisbon, wrote in March 1961 that in his opinion, 'the average Portuguese while not entirely satisfied with the regime is prepared to tolerate it. Many remember the pre-Salazar chaos of 1910–1926 and all have been indoctrinated with the view that a change would mean a return to the conditions then prevailing.'⁶ His successor as Irish ambassador, Count O'Kelly de Gallagh, an admirer of the regime, was not so sure however. In 1962 he experienced the May Day demonstrations in Lisbon, which the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) had attempted to use as a show of force. This caused some unease for him personally, and also in wider conservative and official political circles. However, probably most serious, especially in the eyes of Salazar, was the growing rift between his regime and the Catholic Church, in which more progressive and democratic tendencies were emerging both in the Vatican and in Portugal.

3 MENESES, ref. 1, p. 563-564; BIRMINGHAM, David. *A Concise History of Portugal*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 176-178. ISBN 0521536863.

4 JUDT, Tony. *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*. London: The Penguin Press, 2005, p. 511. ISBN 1594200653.

5 See for the criticism expressed by the Bishop of Oporto and the ensuing conflict between him and the Salazar regime, MENESES, ref. 1, p. 438-447.

6 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 566.

Although outsiders often exaggerated the conservative Catholicism of the Portuguese, the criticism of some of the major bishops was a notable and, for many, an unexpected phenomenon. The Bishop of Oporto had been a problematic critical voice in recent years, and in the early 1960s the Bishop of Beira, in Mozambique, appeared to become another one. He was a reform-minded man and wanted to see Portugal live up to its ‘spiritual mission’ in Africa in a more serious, humanitarian, and positive Christian way. In 1964 tension erupted between Salazar and the Pope, Paul VI (1963–1978), himself. Paul VI was critical about the lack of political freedom and democracy in Portugal as well as about Portuguese colonialism and the sour Portuguese attitude to India. Goa, the Portuguese territory in India, had been lost in 1961, and when the Pope wanted to attend a Eucharistic Congress in Bombay in 1964 an infuriated Salazar wrote to him:⁷

‘In Rome, perhaps, they ignore the difficulties faced and the greatness of the work carried out by this regime in order to allow the Catholic Church to enjoy the possibility of expansion, since I became, in some measure, responsible for the course of public life. In the Vatican much is thought about Christian Democracy, and about liberalism, and progressivism is permitted. May God not allow me to see the result of such doctrines and attitudes applied in Portugal. Since the advent of liberalism [in Portugal] Catholics have endured a lot, and even more since the founding of the Republic, with its Jacobinism. If the Church desires its return, then it is because it no longer wants saints, preferring instead to have martyrs.’

In October 1965 the Portuguese foreign minister, Franco Nogueira, expressed his horror at the Pope’s praise for the United Nations in New York, where Paul VI had gone to deliver a speech. The Pope described the United Nations as ‘*the ideal of which humanity has dreamt through its pilgrimage across time*’, and as part of ‘*God’s design*’. Representatives of African countries were delighted and regarded the Pope’s critical reference to colonialism as an attack on Portugal.⁸ Two months earlier, in August 1965, a remarkable Catholic pamphlet had circulated in Portugal, being posted also to parish priests in rural areas and claiming to be the voice of a ‘*Christian Movement for Democratic Action*’. Its author was Joaquim Pires de Lima, a progressive priest. The pamphlet stated:⁹

‘The Portuguese situation is anti-Christian. The national economy’s structures rest on a plutocracy and on the formation of capital at the expense of a low standard of life for the working classes... There is no longer emigration but rather a mass exodus. The Portuguese have no present and do not believe in the

7 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 571.

8 See *ibid.*, p. 573.

9 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 574.

future... We demand the right to dialogue. The presence of Catholic thought in Portuguese life is justified by eight centuries of history.'

Such conclusions were reached by Catholic intellectuals who were in tune with events in the outside world and who were increasingly influential in the Catholic Action movement. This old-established movement had a tradition of cultural conservatism, but also of social reform-mindedness. The use of terms like 'Catholic thought' and 'dialogue' expressed a desire for social and political reforms and a more open and democratic debate. Younger Catholic intellectuals wanted a 'dialogue' even with Marxists and social reforms of a more radical nature.¹⁰ The new Catholic intellectuals were acting independently, but their ideological guidance was coming from abroad, not least from the Vatican itself, which had entered a more progressive phase in its history during the pontificate of Paul VI's predecessor Pope John XXIII (1958–1963). In April 1963 John's encyclical *Pacem in terris* affirmed that the laws which govern men had been inscribed by God 'in man's nature'. This meant that, to share in God's authority and partake of the resulting legitimacy, governments must respect the rights of men. The encyclical expressed a democratic principle: '*The fact that authority comes from God does not mean that men have no power to choose those who are to rule the State or to decide upon the type of government they want...*' Men had, as a bare minimum, a right to be informed of the affairs of their state. In March 1967 Pope Paul VI issued another encyclical, *Populorum progressio*, which went even further in that it criticized colonial attitudes and policies. It declared that it was '*quite natural for nations with a long-standing cultural tradition to be proud of their traditional heritage. But this commendable attitude should be further ennobled by love, a love for the whole family of man. Haughty pride in one's own nation disunites nations and poses obstacles to their true welfare*'.¹¹ Portuguese Catholics found it hard to square this sentiment with their government's explanation of the colonial wars in Africa. Such disaffection as there was in Portugal at this time was reinforced by the domestic problem of poverty. This was probably the greatest source of discontent with the regime not only among lower-class but also among middle-class people, more so even than the lack of democracy or the terrible colonial wars. However, the latter two problems became more critical in the late 1960s.

In 1967 Paul VI visited Portugal to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Fátima apparitions, a major event for the country. At first Cardinal-Patriarch Manuel

10 LIVERMORE, H.V. *A new history of Portugal*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 356. ISBN 9780521213202.

11 Quoted in MENESES, ref. 1, p. 574. The premature death in 1963 of John XXIII, the Pope who had initiated the reforms of the second Vatican Council, was greeted with relief by the Portuguese church hierarchy; see BIRMINGHAM, ref. 3, p. 181.

Cerejeira, the highest ecclesiastical office-bearer in Portugal, was pessimistic about the Pope accepting the invitation from the Portuguese Church, given his bad relationship with Salazar. Salazar hoped to exploit the Pope's visit as proof of the Vatican's support for the Portuguese regime. The Pope and Salazar met only briefly on 23 May 1967 on the margins of the event, which drew as many as 1.5 million people to Fátima. The gulf between the two men was too wide to allow for any bridging, and in Portugal itself Church-State relations were to suffer another blow the following year. In Lisbon a well-known priest, José da Felicidade Alves, had begun to express his concern about the Portuguese colonial wars to his parishioners. After theological studies in Paris, Friar Alves became even more outspoken and around Easter 1968 he distributed a document which criticized the war, the actions of the security police PIDE, and censorship. It also called for a social and political revolution in Portugal. The radicalized priest returned to Paris for further studies, but his text began to circulate in Portugal and by January 1969 there were already seven editions. Alves was dismissed by Cardinal Cerejeira.¹² The hierarchy of the Portuguese Church tried to keep the situation under control and to avoid conflict with Salazar. But in addition to the Church there were also other circles in Portuguese society where opposition and unrest were brewing.

In the early 1960s Portuguese university campuses became an ideological battleground in which the government seemed to be in retreat. In 1962 there were riotous student actions which the regime desperately tried to suppress, and on May Day of that year there were strikes, demonstrations, and violent confrontations on the streets of Lisbon comprising both workers and students. Many were arrested and imprisoned, including some 1,200 students. According to the British newspaper *The Observer* of 21 May 1962, the regime was facing the most serious threat for years in the shape of two separate attacks: student unrest and worker actions. Students desired above all academic freedom and wanted the police to be kept out of the university. Marcelo Caetano, who became Salazar's successor as prime minister in September 1968, was at this time Rector of the University of Lisbon and actually resigned his position because of the presence of the police on the university grounds. Traditionally the police did not enter the precincts of the university, but this unwritten rule had been breached. Caetano wrote an article in the monarchist-Catholic newspaper *A Voz*, criticizing the restrictions imposed on the autonomy of universities by new laws introduced by the government. He even resigned from the executive board of the National Union, the official ruling party. Even if this was not the result of fundamental political differences with Salazar but more a question of mutual irritations within

12 MENESES, ref. 1, p. 575.

the power elite, it was an expression of elite disunity. The academic authorities were jealous of their status, prestige, and independence and felt humiliated by the presence of police officers at the university. They ignored Salazar's plea to accept the government's repressive university policy. In the more conservative University of Coimbra 300 arrests were made as well. The protesting university students were from different political backgrounds: their numbers included Leftists, Catholics, and even some from the radical Right. Wider political issues were not explicitly articulated, but rather the independence of the university, which was seen as an island where free speech should be allowed. But even this was politically significant, because it challenged and contradicted the principles of the authoritarian state and might ignite protests among other sections of the population. Indeed, the defence of the privileged status of university student was not accepted by the regime, which felt it could not risk making any such concessions, especially in a situation in which it was engaged in an escalating war in the African colonies. But the repression was imperfect. The opposition radical newspaper *República* continued to appear in Lisbon despite difficulties with the censorship. Those on the Left who were not allowed to enter the teaching profession or the university often qualified as lawyers, swelling the considerable number of opposition figures in the legal profession, especially in Lisbon. Examples were the lawyers Álvaro Cunhal, a leader of the Communist Party, and Mário Soares, a radical socialist.¹³

Restoring order to the universities was one thing, dealing with an old enemy like the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) another. Cunhal had escaped from Peniche prison in 1960 and the following year was reconfirmed as secretary-general of the party. Cunhal's escape revitalized the PCP but also led to the destruction of its more liberal wing. Under Cunhal's leadership the party stood out for its loyalty to Moscow and, after the late 1960s, its rejection of 'Euro-communism' supported by the more reform-minded Italian, Spanish, and most other West European communist parties. Indeed, this orthodox attitude did not change after the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968, although some Portuguese communists who had experienced Dubček's liberalization policy and the subsequent Warsaw Pact invasion in their Czechoslovak exile, disagreed or even left the party.¹⁴ Mário Soares, who later became the leader of the Portu-

13 FIGUEIREDO, ref. 1, p. 221; MENESES, ref. 1, p. 576; LIVERMORE, ref. 10, pp. 356-357.

14 SZOBI, Pavel. 'From Enemies to Allies? Portugal's Carnation Revolution and Czechoslovakia, 1968–1989'. In *Contemporary European History*, 2017, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 674–676. ISSN 0960-777. See for the PCP also MACLEOD, Alex. Portrait of a Model Ally: The Portuguese Communist Party and the International Communist Movement, 1968–1983. In *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 1984, Vol. 17, No. 1. ISSN 0039-3592; for the contrast with the

guese socialists, had left the PCP by 1965 and founded with some others a new left-wing party, Portuguese Socialist Action. The PIDE managed to contain the communists and other political opposition groups reasonably well. Salazar and his government were probably more worried about the students' revolt in France in May 1968. The Portuguese dictator, who admired de Gaulle greatly and had come to rely on France's international support during his presidency, was shocked by the speed with which the internal political crisis in France occurred and by de Gaulle's inability to contain it. On 9 June 1968 Salazar said to his foreign minister Franco Nogueira, that de Gaulle was *'following a difficult path – that of concessions. He will no longer be de Gaulle. We must admit that his decline has begun'*.¹⁵ Salazar was resolved to meet any such outbreak of dangerous opposition with force. In this effort he demonstrated both his anxiety and his pettiness. In early June 1968 he expelled a Belgian dance choreographer Maurice Béjart from Portugal after his troupe had put on a ballet performance in Lisbon. The performance took place just after the murder of Robert Kennedy, and in the final scene the dancers shouted *'make love not war'*, while one of the voices was denouncing war and other injustices. At a council of ministers a few days later, an exasperated Salazar declared that *'here things must be different. There can be no crisis of authority: when the first symptom manifests itself, we must solve the case radically, whatever the cost, be it with students or workers'*.¹⁶ He urged better sharing of information among government services and Portuguese institutions with international contacts in order to keep out foreigners with dangerous views and avoid embarrassing situations.

Although Salazar was in many ways intolerant and narrow-minded, he also had less repulsive features, especially his austerity and incorruptibility. This became even more notable as his political efficiency declined during the course of the 1960s, because it showed the contrast between himself and his entourage. Salazar's declining grip on details was one reason why there emerged more space for some spontaneous and oppositional political expression, despite the lawless behaviour of the PIDE. Corruption was a growing problem influencing the Portuguese state and society as Salazar entered his old age and inevitable decline. *The Observer* wrote of him on 21 January 1962 that, *'himself incorruptible, he has sometimes helped to corrupt his subordinates by allowing them to secure*

Euro-communist Spanish party and its tense relationship with the Soviet Union BRACKE, Maud. *Which Socialism, Whose Détente? West European Communism and the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968*. Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2007. 414 pp. ISBN 9789637326943

15 *Memoirs of Franco Nogueira, Um político confessa-se*. Oporto: Civilização, 1986, p. 300, quoted in MENESES, ref. 1, p. 577 n97.

16 Ref. 15, p. 301, quoted *ibid*.

rich material rewards – and by making it plain that he despises their greed'. Salazar had hoped to lead by example, but most powerful men around him saw his austere life as just an eccentricity. He never acted to investigate accusations against ministers and others for enriching themselves at the public's expense, preferring instead to let them suffer from rumours about their dismissal, then to dismiss them. Corruption in time of war in Africa became even more damaging in the eyes of public opinion, yet nothing was done. In 1963 and 1967 British newspapers reported several serious cases of economic and moral corruption, including the notorious case of an organized prostitution ring involving teen-age call-girls, the so-called ballet rose sex scandal. On 11 December 1967 the *Daily Telegraph* reported: *'Portugal's 76-year-old dictator is accused in the reports of personally suppressing the prosecution of at least one Minister and other "establishment" figures charged with corruption for fear of the consequences to his regime if the scandal became public knowledge.*' Mário Soares, who had tried to exploit the limited political space as an opposition leader in the 1965 National Assembly elections, was accused of providing this information to the foreign press and arrested. He was deported to the island of São Tomé by order of Salazar, where he would stay for nearly a year. When the Minister of Justice, Antunes Varela, wanted to prosecute the ringleaders of the sex scandal, he was forced to resign. The regime and Salazar became the laughing stock of Europe, but a communiqué of the National Union distributed to the movement's cadres in January 1968 declared: *'Against calumny we advance the truth.*' It was increasingly difficult for the government to decisively influence public opinion, because the official political organizations and press organs were in a bad state. Salazar and his loyal inner circle became more isolated and the issue of succession ever more pressing.¹⁷

During the 1960s an increasingly diverse constellation of political figures and interest groups had emerged around Salazar, including some talented and ambitious government ministers, different Catholic organizations, monarchists, and others. This made it difficult to predict who might eventually become the successor of the ageing dictator. Interesting is the rivalry between the conservative Catholic organization Opus Dei, whose power was on the increase, and the more progressive Jesuits, who were not willing to let this happen. Opus Dei tried to attract Marcelo Caetano, still an influential university professor, into its orbit, but failed in this endeavour on account of his bad relationship with other prominent Portuguese figures who were members of the organization. The relationship between Opus Dei and the Jesuits was so bad – the PIDE reported that they were *'sworn enemies*' – that the Apostolic Nuncio in Lisbon had to inter-

17 MENESES, ref. 1, pp. 588-590; FIGUEIREDO, ref. 1, p. 224.

vene to keep the peace. By the summer of 1968 Salazar seemed to be losing his mind given his irrational outbursts, with the American ambassador in Lisbon, W. Tapley Bennett, wondering in a report to Washington if he was ‘senile’.¹⁸ On 6 September 1968 Salazar fell from a deck-chair and developed a cerebral stroke. Later that month the titular president of Portugal, Admiral Thomaz, called upon Caetano to become acting prime minister. Salazar, physically and mentally incapable, was not informed; he finally died in July 1970. Like Salazar four decades earlier, Caetano was invited to step into the government as an intellectual saviour who could resolve the tensions within the power elite. In 1959 Caetano had resigned from the government after disagreements with Salazar, returning to academic life in the University of Lisbon. In his youth he had been more to the right than Salazar was, but later he became more pragmatic and embraced what was ironically described by some as ‘liberal fascism’ or ‘forward-looking traditionalism’.¹⁹

When the succession crisis came up in 1968, it proved, against the expectations, not to be a crisis at all, because Caetano was backed by most of the key figures in the regime. His disengagement from the regime during the 1960s actually worked in his favour, with the bulk of the middle class, including the more critical elements, being prepared to accept his leadership. Caetano was sufficiently identified with the regime to provide continuity and seen as sufficiently flexible to allow evolution. He reminded the Portuguese that they were used to the rule of ‘a man of genius’, but must now accustom themselves to government by lesser men.²⁰ Caetano, paraphrasing de Gaulle, stated that he was ‘*neither left nor right – but for the country*’. While a hard-liner like foreign minister Nogueira eventually resigned and several others were dismissed, some government ministers adopted a more liberal posture, speaking of a ‘political spring’. In December 1968 the restriction on votes for women was removed, and in the spring of 1969 an effort was made to bring in candidates with liberal views for the National Assembly elections in October. Among the opposition politicians there were communists, socialists, and Catholic progressives, but in the end they were all marginalized in what was a questionable electoral process. Of the more liberal candidates for the National Union only a dozen were elected. Caetano brought some younger members of Catholic Action into his cabinet, and the Bishop of Oporto, who had been prevented from re-entering Portugal after a visit to Rome in 1958, was allowed to return, as was Mário Soares. In a speech

18 MENESES, ref. 1, p. 596.

19 FIGUEIREDO, ref. 1, p. 220.

20 LIVERMORE, ref. 10, p. 358.

to the newly elected National Assembly in November 1969, Caetano reaffirmed his desire for national reconciliation, but the elections had been a sham as in the days of Salazar. In 1971 the group of tolerated liberals in the National Assembly went into opposition against Caetano when he rejected a relaxation of the censorship. His regime did not go further than implementing some cosmetic changes, causing people to cynically observe that if the Portuguese had not achieved a parliamentary democracy they had at least moved on to the stage of *'Fascism with a human face'*.²¹ A number of opposition 'publishing co-operatives' were at first allowed to operate, but in 1972 they were suppressed. During the elections for the National Assembly in 1973 some opposition meetings were allowed and could briefly function as a school of democracy. But they could not change the reality of the authoritarian regime and the opposition protested that a number of their lists had been disallowed.²²

It is questionable whether Portugal experienced a liberalization under Caetano, even if some people dubbed his policies a 'spring' as in Czechoslovakia under Dubček. Pavel Szobi calls Caetano an example of the technocratic second generation of the authoritarian elite, who were willing to let others share power with the state apparatus as long as it would help the country modernize and remain stable.²³ But Salazar was a technocrat of sorts with pragmatic features as well, despite his semi-fascist authoritarianism. Salazar started out as a financial expert and 'technocratic dictator', became more ideologically focused in the 1930s, reverted to a more pragmatic and moderate stance after the war, and all along remained a paternalist and nationalist autocrat, a conservative intellectual, and indeed a technocrat who understood the need for the occasional reform.²⁴ He was both a conscious technocrat and a dictator who neglected his people, while his mode of repression has been described as 'controlled repression'.²⁵ Reform and repression were not necessarily in contradiction, both being selective and focused on a combination of regime continuity and pragmatic adjustment. This held true for Caetano's policies too, and for both men authoritarianism seems to have meant keeping control while experimenting with shifts in policy, including

21 FIGUEIREDO, ref. 1, p. 225. Was this reaction inspired by the Prague Spring and its suppression?

22 See for the succession of Caetano and developments until the revolution of April 1974 Meneses, Salazar, pp. 590-602; FIGUEIREDO, ref. 1, pp. 217-28; LIVERMORE, ref. 10, p. 357-371.

23 SZOBI, ref. 14, p. 671. Szobi refers to Caetano's own interpretation of the 'reforms' in his memoirs; CAETANO, Marcelo. *Depoimento*. Rio de Janeiro 1977.

24 See BIRMINGHAM, ref. 3, pp. 132, 164.

25 GALLAGHER, Tom. Controlled repression in Salazar's Portugal. In *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1979, Vol. 14, No. 3. ISSN 00220094.

expanding and contracting political liberalization. The contrasts between them were smaller than the similarities were. This was a major difference from the situation in Czechoslovakia, where a liberalizing regime was succeeded by a retrogressive neo-authoritarian one.

Czechoslovakia: crisis, reform, and restoration of communist authoritarianism

How did Czechoslovakia evolve into a regime crisis and a period of liberalization and reform policy, before experiencing a neo-authoritarian restoration? The move away from Stalinism came late in Czechoslovakia, because almost all communist leaders were co-responsible for the terror of the early 1950s. As late as 1961 Antonín Novotný, first party secretary since 1953 and president since 1957, dismissed as ‘irresponsible’ the petitions for a review of the purge trials of 1949–1954. When a review board was finally appointed in August 1962 to inquire into the Slánský and other political show trials, this happened under pressure from Khrushchev. It sat during 1962–1963 and the purpose behind it was to acknowledge the regime’s recent criminal past without loosening control. Several surviving victims had been quietly released in the late 1950s, but without exoneration or rehabilitation. Some were later rehabilitated, often by the same figures who had condemned them ten years before because the old party leadership remained largely intact. It was also typical that the statues of Stalin in Prague and Bratislava were only removed in October 1962, much later than in other East European countries. When in 1963 the rehabilitation of Slánský and other trial victims was officially to be announced, it even had some international implications. The Italian communist leader Palmiro Togliatti secretly wrote to Novotný asking him to delay the news until after the forthcoming Italian elections. Togliatti understood that not only the Czechs and Slovaks but also many Italians would be disgusted at their communist leaders’ earlier collaboration in covering up judicial murder. What made the situation in Czechoslovakia special was also that the consequences of the communist revolution had been felt more intensely there than in other East European countries. Czechoslovakia was not only an economically more developed country than most of the others (or indeed than Portugal) but in many ways a middle-class society with a well-educated population. The victims of the Stalinist terror in Czechoslovakia had often been intellectuals, many of them Jews. Those social classes which did not belong to the ‘working class’ as defined by the communists had suffered downward social mobility. The percentage of working-class children in higher education rose from under 10 percent in 1938 to 40 percent in 1963, but the level of higher education declined. According to the new centralistic Constitution of 1960, Cze-

choslovakia had advanced to 'full socialism' with class antagonisms overcome, but by the early 1960s the country suffered from economic stagnation and even regression. The party congress in December 1962 therefore decided to start some decentralizing reforms in order to revive the economy and correct the poor planning. By 1965 some local initiative was permitted, factories were allowed to purchase their own raw materials, and they could even retain their profits for sharing among their workers or for re-investment. However, proposals by Ota Šik and other reform economists such as using factory profits as incentives for the workers were not popular with party hardliners, and were only endorsed in 1966.²⁶

The combination of public rehabilitations, acknowledgement of Stalin's faults, and the prospect of further reforms opened the way to a more serious questioning of the party's stranglehold on society and public life. Although the economic reforms were not always popular among the workers, they certainly were among writers, teachers, artists, and intellectuals who were hoping for a loosening of the party regime and were beginning to produce critical publications and engage in new activities. In 1963 a writers' conference in Liblice was devoted to Franz Kafka, in communist Czechoslovakia a rather taboo subject. Kafka had anticipated in some of his works the nightmare of bureaucratic rule, and discussing them was one factor leading to a liberalization of public debate. This debate also included the fate of those murdered by Stalinism; political myths such as the story of massive anti-Nazi resistance during World War II; and forbidden subjects like the nomenklatura's lust for power and the growing disillusionment with communism. At the Slovak Writers' Congress in April 1963, Ladislav Novomeský, a rehabilitated Slovak writer, admiringly referred to his 'comrade and friend' Vladimír Clementis, one of the victims of the Slánský trial.²⁷ After the fall of Khrushchev in 1964, the increasingly liberal climate in Czechoslovakia conti-

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- 26 GOLAN, Galia. *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement: Communism in Crisis, 1962–1968*. Cambridge: University Press, 1971, pp. 4-8. ISBN 0521085691; ROTHSCHILD, Joseph – WINGFIELD, Nancy M. *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II*. 3rd ed. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 166-167. ISBN 0195119924; PHILLIPS, Roderick. *Society, State, and Nation in Twentieth-Century Europe*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1996, p. 413. ISBN 0131038214; JUDT, ref. 4, pp. 436-437. Works like those by Judt, Phillips, and Rothschild and Wingfield look at Czechoslovak developments from a comparative and European perspective, which is helpful in understanding them. For Portugal such comparative observations are more difficult to find in the literature.
- 27 LONDÁKOVÁ, Elena. 'Ladislav Novomeský v slovenskom kultúrnom kontexte po roku 1945'. (Ladislav Novomeský in the Slovak cultural context after 1945). In PEKNÍK, Miroslav – PETROVIČOVÁ, Eleonóra (eds.). *Laco Novomeský. Kultúrny politik, politik v kultúre*. Bratislava: Ústav politických vied SAV; VEDA, vydavateľstvo SAV, 2006, pp. 62-63. ISBN 8022409022.

nued to unfold, allowing space for critical essays, novels, films, and stage-plays. At the Fourth Czechoslovak Writers' Congress in 1967, Milan Kundera, Ludvík Vaculík, Pavel Kohout, and Václav Havel attacked the communist leadership for the 'material and moral devastation' it had wrought. They called for a return to the cultural heritage of Czechoslovakia and for the country to take up again its 'normal' place in a free Europe. This was language with a radicalizing potential, and a challenge to the one-party state. Student unrest in Prague in October 1967 over the rigid structure of party youth organizations and bad housing conditions met with a violent police reaction. The old Novotný leadership wanted to clamp down on the intellectual opposition, but were probably held back by two considerations. One was the need to pursue at least some of the economic reforms, which implied a degree of dissenting opinion; in economically liberalizing Hungary such a policy had proved successful. The other consideration was the emerging difficulties in Slovakia, where the call for greater autonomy became louder.

The Slovaks had benefited more from communist economic policy than the Czechs, since urbanization, industrialization, and even agrarian collectivization had brought material improvements to the poor Slovak population. However, by the early 1960s the stagnation of the economy hit the new heavy industry of central Slovakia harder than any other industry and Slovak workers in the more unsophisticated industrial branches felt adversely affected by some of the economic reforms. In the political field the Slovaks resented the insufficient rehabilitation of the victims of the purges, because some Slovaks had not been included. Furthermore, the Constitution of 1960 reduced even further such limited autonomy as had previously existed in Slovakia. When the economic regression became apparent in 1962, the Slovak communists, who had long been subjected to centralizing pressures and humiliation by their disdainful Czech comrades, decided to exploit the problems of their greatest tormentor, Novotný. In their campaign to disgrace Novotný they used the weapon of critical writers and philosophers, who were given access to Slovak party publications in which they articulated a mixture of Slovak-national, humanistic, and Marxist grievances. In response, Novotný tried to activate the latent anti-intellectualism of the workers – with some success, but insufficient to stop his critics. In April 1963 Novotný could not prevent his critic Alexander Dubček becoming first secretary of the Slovak Communist Party, although he was present at the meeting where this decision was made. After this defeat he stormed out of the meeting and never again attended a plenum of the Slovak Central Committee. Later that month came the Slovak communists' rehabilitation of the Slovak victims of the 1949–1954 purges, deliberately done in advance of Prague's decision on the recommendations of the review board. In May 1964 the Slovaks extracted a formal restoration of some of the Slovak autonomous institutions that had been closed by Novotný's

‘Socialist’ Constitution of 1960, although not yet in terms of their real powers. By the end of 1966 the Slovak party had removed from its Presidium and Secretariat all the centralistic figures whom the Prague party leaders had imposed on it over the previous two decades. In 1967 Dubček, the leader of the Slovak party, criticized the low share of investment being directed towards Slovakia, an example of inequality between the Czech lands and Slovakia. Another increasingly influential and critical Slovak communist was Gustáv Husák, who had been in prison for nine years on the accusation of ‘bourgeois nationalism’. After his release in 1960 he began to build a following amongst students in Bratislava, increasing his popularity through his articles in *Kultúrny život*, the Slovak writers’ weekly.²⁸

Another significant example of the growing criticism of prevailing conditions in Czechoslovakia was the pressure by the legal profession to restore the rule of law in its original sense, which meant independence of courts and judges, protection of the rights of citizens and defendants, and no presumptions of guilt by probability, class background, or other unlawful considerations. Between 1963 and 1966 some laws and decrees were adopted which were officially meant to correct the ‘distortions of socialist legality’ rampant since 1948. The effectiveness of these juridical rectifications depended on further political and societal reforms. In 1967 Novotný should have started to implement the more drastic economic and administrative reforms recommended by the party experts. Their proposals for further decentralization and increased local autonomy were welcomed in Bratislava, even though a reform such as profit-related wage incentives did not appeal to the unskilled workers in Slovakia’s inefficient industrial plants. Novotný had been overwhelmed by doubts and now resisted any loosening of central party control. He tried to exploit the anxieties of the industrial workers, many of whom felt threatened by consequences of the reforms such as wage dif-

28 JUDT, ref. 4, pp. 437-439; ROTHSCHILD – WINGFIELD, ref. 26, pp. 167-168; WILLIAMS, Kieran. *The Prague Spring and its aftermath: Czechoslovak politics, 1968–1970*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 48. ISBN 9780521588034; PHILLIPS, ref. 26, p. 413; LONDÁK, Miroslav – SIKORA, Stanislav – LONDÁKOVÁ, Elena. *Predjarie. Politický, ekonomický a kultúrny vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960 – 1967. (Before spring. Political, economic and cultural development in Slovakia, 1960–1967)*. Bratislava: Veda, 2002. 392 p. ISBN 8022407070 for Slovak developments; for the rise of Husák in the 1960s ŠTEFANSKÝ, Michal. ‘Pokusy Gustáva Husáka o návrat do politiky’. (Gustáv Husák’s attempts to return to politics). In MICHÁLEK, Slavomír – LONDÁK, Miroslav (eds.). *Gustáv Husák. Moc politiky, politik moci*. Bratislava: Veda, 2013, pp. 513-526. ISBN 9788022413121; ZEMKO, Milan. Od stranického reformátora k normalizátorovi. K publicistike Gustáva Husáka v rokoch 1963 – 1968. (From party reformer to normalizer. On Gustáv Husák’s public writing, 1963–1968). In *ibid.*, pp. 527-542; PLEVZA, Viliam. *Vzostupy a pády. Gustáv Husák prehovoril. (Rises and falls. Gustáv Husák speaks)*. Bratislava: Tatrapress, 1991, pp. 45, 62-79. ISBN 8085260158

ferentiation, quality-work expectations, and plant closures in inefficient sectors. Novotný's attempted sabotage of the reform proposals further alienated both reform-minded and Slovak opinion. Slovak communists began to talk of the need for federalization of the state, and of the difficulties of collaborating with the apparatchiks in Prague. Echoing old complaints of social groups such as Slovak building workers and Slovak teachers, they felt slighted by the dominant Czechs and pointed to the purges of so-called 'bourgeois-nationalist' Slovak communists in the 1950s and even to pre-war indignities. The national problem was a critical factor in Czechoslovakia and one reason why Novotný could not do what Gomułka and his minister of the interior Moczar had done in Poland – dividing the workers and intellectuals by using anti-Semitic demagoguery.²⁹ The winter of 1967–1968 was the crucial moment when the reform policy would either have to be pressed more vigorously, or be rolled back. In late December 1967 Novotný contemplated a military coup, but the army's Political Directorate suppressed it. On 5 January 1968 the Central Committee ousted Novotný from the party leadership (from the presidency only on 22 March) and elected Dubček first secretary. As leader of the Slovak Party for the past five years, he appeared to many to be both a credible and a reassuring candidate. He was a veteran though relatively young apparatchik who believed in the system but supported reforms, who was a friend of the liberal intellectuals, and who, as a Slovak patriot, might appease Slovak resentments. In February 1968 Dubček and the party leadership gave their approval to the stalled economic reform programme, which also included the agrarian sector. Dubček's more relaxed attitude appealed to the young, and his declaration of loyalty to the party, socialism, and the Warsaw Pact initially reassured the Soviet leaders as well.³⁰

Dubček wanted political reforms to renovate Czechoslovakia's socialist system, and economic reforms to revitalize its economy. He wanted to gain public confidence by making the reforms a reality for the people, which implied making governmental and social institutions more independent of the party. At the same time, he wanted to maintain the dominant position and control by the party, preventing liberalization from spilling over the limits set by Soviet hegemony. Since these objectives were complex and contradictory, it is unclear to what extent

29 See for the situation in Poland in 1967–1968, JUDT, ref. 4, pp. 433-436; ROTHSCHILD – WINGFIELD, ref. 26, pp. 191-195; LONGWORTH, Philip. *The Making of Eastern Europe. From Prehistory to Postcommunism*. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 1997, p. 55. ISBN 0312174454, where the observation is made that in contrast to Czechoslovakia, students and intellectual dissidents in Poland in 1967–1968 were isolated from the people and party reformers. This had been different in 1956, however, and would also be different in the 1970s.

30 JUDT, ref. 4, pp. 439-440; ROTHSCHILD – WINGFIELD, ref. 26, pp. 168-169; PHILLIPS, ref. 26, p. 413.

Dubček really knew where he wanted to go.³¹ He allowed a vast public debate the long-term consequences of which were unpredictable. A stream of dismissals and resignations, and even several suicides, ensued in the ranks of Novotný's old guard as one institution after another was taken over by the reformers. Dubček and his reformist allies became engulfed by a spontaneous liberalization movement, which initially remained within the channels of official policy but by the middle of 1968 began to get out of control. At first Dubček's ambiguity – 'socialism' vs. democratization – worked in his favour, as various political factions, interest groups, and cultural associations which had sprouted up on all sides, offered him their support. There developed within a short span of time an active public opinion and a sense of mass participation in all kinds of public activities – in other words, an expanding social, political, and cultural space of freely acting citizens, the hallmark of a civic society. Public opinion surveys were organized, making it possible to establish the views of Czechoslovak citizens.³² Public rallies in Prague in the weeks following Dubček's election demanded greater press freedom and a genuine inquiry into the Stalinist purges and the responsibility of the old Novotný guard. Carried on this wave of popular enthusiasm and expectations, Dubček allowed a relaxation of censorship, which was tacitly ended in early March and formally abolished in June. He initiated a purge of Novotný supporters from the party and the army, with Novotný himself being replaced as president by General Ludvík Svoboda. The Slovaks actually wanted Husák or Novomeský as new president, and the Czechs had other candidates too. In April Husák became deputy prime minister with responsibility for constitutional reform, including federalization of Czechoslovakia.³³ This was not unimportant

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- 31 For different views of Slovak historians on these questions, see for example LALUHA, Ivan. K charakteru reformného hnutia v 60. rokoch. Osobnosť Alexandra Dubčeka. (*On the character of the 1960s reform movement. The personality of Alexander Dubček*). In LALUHA, Ivan – PETROVIČOVÁ, Eleonóra – PEKNÍK, Miroslav (eds.). *Alexander Dubček. Politik, štátnik, humanista*. Bratislava: Ústav politických vied SAV, 2009, pp. 100-113. ISBN 9788022410991; SIKORA, Stanislav. Politické pôsobenie Alexandra Dubčeka v rokoch 1963 – 1968. (Alexander Dubček's political activities, 1963–1968). In *ibid.*, pp. 114-131; SIKORA, Stanislav. O jednom významnom dokumente. (About an important document). In *ibid.*, pp. 132-147. For the effort to liberalize public administration and its reversal after 1968, ŽATKULIAK, Jozef. Úsilie o liberalizáciu verejnej správy 1967 – 1968. Politická "pacifikácia" národných výborov 1969 – 1970. (The effort to liberalize the public administration, 1967–1968. The political "pacification" of local councils, 1969–1970). In *ibid.*, pp. 162-179.
- 32 PIEKALKIEWICZ, Jaroslaw. *Public Opinion Polling in Czechoslovakia, 1968–1969: Results and Analysis of Surveys Conducted during the Dubcek Era*. New York: Syracuse University Research Corp., 1972. 246 p.
- 33 WILLIAMS, ref. 28, pp. 74-75; KAPLAN, Karel. *Mocní a bezmocní. (The powerful and the powerless)*. Toronto: Sixty-Eight Publishers, 1989, p. 95. ISBN 0887812090; SIKORA, Stanislav. Politický vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1968 – 1971. (Political development in

with a view to his later role as a ‘normalizer’, who as a popular Slovak also had the potential to pacify Slovakia.

In early April the Central Committee finally adopted an ‘Action Programme’, which had long been prepared and discussed. It called for a reduced role for the state on the path to socialism, more freedom for industry and agriculture, ‘democratization’ of the economic and political system, a relationship of equality between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union and withdrawal of all Soviet military advisers, an equal status and autonomy for Slovakia within Czechoslovakia, and rehabilitation of all past victims of the purges. It anticipated a wide range of civil liberties (but not freedom of association or for other political parties), a strengthening of parliament and the courts, and, interestingly, recognition of the State of Israel. The Programme envisaged that the Communist Party should maintain its leading role while being more sensitive to the needs of specific interest groups, and spoke of ‘*a unique experiment in democratic communism*’. Only after a transition period of ten years, the party would allow the formation of other political parties and the holding of multi-party elections. The publication of the Action Programme may have encouraged the idea that the new reforms and freedoms could be integrated into the ‘socialist’ project. The enthusiasm among the population for ‘socialism with a human face’ was genuine and it may be wrong to suppose that the people wanted to re-introduce ‘capitalism’. The idea that a ‘third way’ was possible, a democratic socialism compatible with representative institutions and individual freedoms, had captured the imagination of Czechoslovak intellectuals, reform communists, and the wider population. This was understandable against the background of the relatively broad support that the Communist Party had enjoyed in Czechoslovakia. In December 1967, party members constituted 16.9 percent of the Czechoslovak population, a higher proportion than in any other communist state. It was widely believed that the distinction between the old Stalinism and the renewed socialist idealism of 1968 was based on real possibilities.³⁴ In his preface to a third report on the Czechoslovak

Slovakia, 1968–1971). In LONDÁK, Miroslav – SIKORA, Stanislav – LONDÁKOVÁ, Elena. *Od predjaria k normalizácii. Slovensko v Československu na rozhraní 60. a 70. rokov 20. storočia*. Bratislava: Bratislava, 2016, pp. 35-44. ISBN 9788022415316 for Slovakia; LONDÁKOVÁ, Elena. *Kultúra v zovretí politiky*. (Culture subjected to politics). In *ibid.*, pp. 260-295 for Slovak cultural developments in 1968; ŽATKULIAK, Jozef. *Činnosť tzv. Husákovej vládnej komisie a proces prípravy federalizácie Československa*. (The activity of the so-called Husák government commission and the process of preparing the federalization of Czechoslovakia). In MICHÁLEK – LONDÁK (eds.). *Gustáv Husák*, ref. 28, pp. 559-582; MACHÁČEK, Michal. *Gustáv Husák*. Prague: Vyšehrad, 2017, pp. 378-387. ISBN 9788074293887 who calls Husák the ‘*spiritual and real father of the federation*’.

34 JUDT, ref. 4, pp. 440-441; ROTHSCHILD – WINGFIELD, ref. 26, pp. 169-170; PHILLIPS, ref. 26, p. 414.

political trials, commissioned in 1968 by Dubček but suppressed after his fall, Jiří Pelikán asserted that *'the Communist Party had won tremendous popularity and prestige, the people had spontaneously declared themselves for socialism'*.³⁵ Even if this was an exaggeration, the state of public opinion nourished both idealism and illusions.

While many people may have believed that socialism could be saved from the Stalinist past and the party could make this happen, the reform communists themselves hoped that they could manage this without losing control. A new government headed by Prime Minister Oldřich Černík was installed on 18 April as, presumably, a meaningful parallel institution alongside the party. Parliament had become more involved in governing too, and even rejected some of the legislation submitted to it. Changes to the electoral law made in 1967 had already allowed the possibility of rival candidates. Encouraged by public demonstrations of support, including in the traditional May Day celebrations, the government relaxed virtually all formal controls on public expressions of opinion. On 26 June two official announcements were made: censorship of press and media was formally abolished, and Czechoslovakia was to become a federal state comprising a Czech and a Slovak Socialist republic. Through the middle of 1968 the country experienced a ferment of reform activities and initiatives, some of it going further than what the party envisaged. Indeed, some of the moderate reformers began to talk of a 'rightist threat' and 'counter-revolutionary' activities. Unions of farmers (a quarter-million strong), veterans, and artisans were formed. Councils were set up in factories to look after workers' interests during the transition to the new, more decentralized and democratized economy. The government made some concessions on political associations, although it refused to allow the re-establishment of the Social Democratic Party, which had been absorbed by the Communist Party in 1948. Concessions were made to the churches as well, allowing them to offer religious education and re-establish youth organizations. The churches were among a host of marginalized social and cultural institutions in communist Czechoslovakia, especially the Catholic Church, the largest denomination in the country and traditionally strong in Slovakia. During the liberalization process young people showed a growing interest in religion which even the clergy found amazing. In June 1968 a Catholic seminarian in Bratislava told the author and researcher Paul Neuburg: *'We knew some of them believed, but their campaigning for freedom of worship, the numbers that come to Mass,*

35 PELIKÁN, Jiří (ed.). *The Czechoslovak Political Trials. The Suppressed Report of the Dubček Government's Commission of Inquiry, 1968*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971, p. 17. ISBN 0804707693; see PELIKÁN, Jiří. *Socialist Opposition in Eastern Europe: The Czechoslovak Example*. New York, 1976 for another example of optimism about a 'socialist' alternative to authoritarian communism.

*the letters of support they write to the Catholic paper, have all been surprises to us.*³⁶ Religious freedom and freedom of expression were short-lived phenomena in Czechoslovakia and largely disappeared after August 1968. Federalization of the state was the only reform that survived, becoming law on 28 October 1968.

In June the dynamics generated by liberalization led to increasingly radical demands and expectations, which was logical but also fraught with danger. Why wait ten years for free and open elections; why retain state control and ownership of the media now that censorship had been abolished? On 27 June *Literární listy* and other publications carried a manifesto issued by the writer Ludvík Vaculík, *Two Thousand Words*, addressed to ‘workers, farmers, officials, artists, scholars, scientists and technicians’. It called for the re-establishment of political parties, the formation of citizens’ committees to defend and advance the cause of reform, and other steps to take the initiative for further change out of the party’s control. The people needed to press the communist reformers to move forward, but also had to act themselves. Vaculík warned that the battle was not yet won, because the reactionaries in the party would fight to preserve their privileges and there was talk of ‘foreign forces intervening in our development’ (Moscow had already expressed its reservations in April). This was too much for Dubček, who disavowed the manifesto as provocative and rejected Vaculík’s idea that the communists should abandon their monopoly of power. A shift towards ‘bourgeois pluralism’ was not acceptable to the convinced communist Dubček, in whose eyes the party was the only appropriate vehicle for change if the vital elements of a socialist system were to be preserved. He believed that the party was supported by the people, but even if they did not immediately act upon Vaculík’s manifesto, it achieved much popularity. The party’s credibility might increasingly rest upon its willingness to pursue changes ultimately driving it from its monopoly of power. As Tony Judt observes: ‘*The fault line between a Communist state and an open society was now fully exposed.*’³⁷

The radicalization went on, including within a section of the party leadership. By August 1968 the reform process seemed to have become unstoppable, even though not only the conservative but also the moderate party wing around Dubček himself began to have their doubts about the outcome. New laws were promulgated which introduced a level of democracy within the party and the political system that was unprecedented. Party and state offices were to be separated, a limit was placed on the number of terms an office-holder could serve,

36 NEUBURG, Paul. *The Hero’s Children: The post-war generation in Eastern Europe*. London: Constable, 1972, p. 109. ISBN 0094582408

37 JUDT, ref. 4, pp. 441-442 (p. 442 for the quotation); WILLIAMS, ref. 28, Chapter 4; ROTHSCHILD – WINGFIELD, ref. 26, pp. 170-171; PHILLIPS, ref. 26, pp. 413-414.

and secret ballots were introduced. The leading role of the party was re-affirmed once again, but its hesitant and contradictory policies had begun to deprive it of influence. The scale and speed of the changes had produced alarm among conservative communists, who saw their system sliding away. Communist leaders in Moscow and Eastern Europe were anxious about the effects of the reforms on their own citizens, some of whom travelled to Czechoslovakia to become infected with the new ideas while others escaped to the West using Czechoslovakia's lax travel policies. Dubček's belief that he could keep Moscow at bay was probably his greatest illusion. He tried to convince the Soviet leaders that they had nothing to fear from the events in Czechoslovakia, but in fact everything to gain from the popularity of the reformist Czechoslovak Communist Party and the faith in a rejuvenated socialist project. The Czechoslovak reformers believed that the Hungarian mistake of 1956 had solely been Hungary's departure from the Warsaw Pact. That the Hungarian crisis was related to the loss of the Communist Party's monopoly of power had perhaps not fully become part of their perception. The Polish leader Gomułka was angered by public criticism in Prague of Poland's wave of almost official anti-Semitism, and various Eastern bloc leaders had other complaints. Dubček insisted that free speech did not undermine control by the party or their resolve to keep their obligations to the Warsaw Pact. However, that the uncensored Czechoslovak press was publishing work of Soviet dissidents and Russian students visiting Prague could hear opinions that were banned at home, was seen by Moscow as very serious. By July, following the appearance of the *Two Thousand Words* manifesto, Moscow had come to the conclusion that the Czechoslovak events were spinning out of control. On 3 July Brezhnev warned: *'we cannot remain indifferent to the fate of Socialism in another country'*. On 11 July Pravda compared the situation in Czechoslovakia with that in Hungary in 1956, although there was no violent turmoil in Czechoslovakia at all. A meeting in Warsaw on 14 July of East European leaders except the Czechoslovaks, warned them in an official letter of the risk of counter-revolution. It stated that *'the situation in Czechoslovakia jeopardizes the common vital interests of other socialist countries'*, and demanded that the country re-impose censorship, curb its intellectuals, and reverse its liberalizing reforms. Dubček refused to comply, and when he and Brezhnev met two weeks later he tried to convince Brezhnev again that the Czechoslovak party was not jeopardizing its position but strengthening its public support. Dubček was told by his reformist colleagues not to waver and that *'the nation and the party will sit in judgement'*. At a Warsaw Pact meeting in Bratislava on 3 August Brezhnev presented the doctrine that would be named after him: *'Each communist party is free to apply the principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialism in its own country, but it is not free to deviate from these principles if it is to remain a communist party... The*

*weakening of any of the links in the world system of socialism directly affects all the socialist countries, and they cannot look indifferently upon this.*³⁸

Yet one week later a draft was published in Prague of new party statutes, to be confirmed at an Extraordinary Party Congress on 9 September. They required the election of party officials by secret ballot and permitted minorities to maintain and defend their political views, a move away from Leninist *'democratic centralism'*.³⁹ This possibly played a part in the Soviet decision to intervene in Czechoslovakia, even if such a step was already being prepared. Open criticism of the Soviet Union in Czechoslovak publications had become part of the problem as well, which must have made Dubček realize that he was losing control. In a telephone conversation with Brezhnev on 13 August, Dubček explained that he was trying to suppress popular criticisms of the Soviet Union, but *'this issue cannot just be solved by a directive from above'*. He did not know that on 3 August five of his colleagues on the party's Presidium had secretly handed the Russians a letter describing an imminent threat to the socialist system and requesting military intervention. At a secret meeting in Hungary two weeks earlier, Vasil Biľak, one of Dubček's opponents, was told by the Ukrainian party leader Petro Shelest that Moscow would like to have a *'letter of invitation'*. The ensuing letter, hardly a spontaneous one, referred explicitly to the party's *'loss of control'*, the *'risks to socialism'*, and the likelihood of a *'counter-revolutionary coup'*. It requested *'intervention and all-round assistance'*, but also that their statement be treated *'with the utmost secrecy'*. The Kremlin seems to have expected that a sharp intervention could prompt the conservatives in the Czechoslovak Central Committee, almost half of its members, to rise up against the liberalization and the new party statutes. This would draw the workers away from the intelligentsia and, through promises of federalization, the more nationalistic Slovaks from Dubček's reformers. The Soviet decision to invade was not formally taken until 18 August, but intervention was probably seen to be inevitable by July at the latest. The Soviet leaders feared that the Czechoslovak Party Congress on 9 September might see a further acceleration of reformist and democratic policy and were truly frightened of its impact upon other communist states. When on 21 August 1968 500,000 Warsaw Pact (overwhelmingly Soviet) troops marched into Czechoslovakia, they met with massive non-violent resistance – which also encompassed workers who had hitherto been wary of the reform movement – street protests, and a few more violent acts of resistance which resulted in some 200 fatal casualties.

38 JUDT, ref. 4, pp. 442-443; ROTHSCCHILD – WINGFIELD, ref. 26, pp. 171-173; PHILLIPS, ref. 26, p. 414.

39 REMINGTON, Robin A. (ed.). *Winter in Prague: Documents on Czechoslovak Communism in Crisis*. Cambridge: MA, 1969, Document 43. ISBN 0262680149.

The unfriendly reception seems to have surprised the Soviet leadership, who had been led to expect by, presumably, a combination of wishful thinking and unreliable information that their tanks would encounter widespread support. Dubček and some of the other Czechoslovak leaders were arrested, flown to Moscow, threatened, and obliged to sign a paper renouncing parts of their programme and agreeing to the Soviet occupation. But when shortly afterwards the Kremlin was forced to accept that the reformers had the support of the Czech and Slovak people, it decided to conclude an ‘agreement’ with them. Dubček remained in office for the time being, a censorship law was passed, and the Czechoslovak government allowed Soviet troops to be stationed temporarily in the country.⁴⁰

However, the repression of the reform programme began immediately and became euphemistically known as ‘normalization’, although it was nothing less than an interrupted revolution.⁴¹ The party congress was cancelled, censorship was re-introduced, and the Action Programme was mentioned no more. Brezhnev chose to let Dubček stay in office a few months longer to see how events unfolded. He also decided to push the federalization of Czechoslovakia with the aim of splitting the Slovaks – whose chief demand of autonomy was to be conceded – from the Czechs, who were more focused on defending democratic reforms than on federal reconstruction. In the industrial towns of Bohemia and Moravia a network of workers’ councils briefly emerged on the model of those in Hungary in 1956.⁴² At their peak in January 1969 they claimed to represent one in six of the national workforce, but they were weak in Slovakia. That month saw the suicide of Jan Palach, whose funeral on 25 January became an occasion for national mourning. In April 1969 demonstrators took to the streets following Czechoslovakia’s victory over the Soviet Union in a crucial ice hockey game. The Kremlin exploited the occasion to remove Dubček and replace him with Gustáv Husák, who as a Slovak and former victim of Stalinism was the ideal figure to carry out the job of ‘normalization’. The ensuing repression was less brutal than in the past, but effective. There were no public trials or executions but in the course of the next two years the Czechoslovak Communist Party was purged of all its ‘unreliable’ elements, with 90 percent of those expelled being

40 JUDT, ref. 4, pp. 443-444; ROTHSCILD – WINGFIELD, ref. 26, pp. 171-173; PHILLIPS, ref. 26, pp. 414-415.

41 SKILLING, H. Gordon. *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. 924 p. ISBN 0691052344.

42 FIŠERA, Vladimír (ed.). *Workers' Councils in Czechoslovakia, 1968–1969. Documents and Essays*. London: Allison And Busby, 1978. ISBN 0850312574. The evidence on the role of the working class is contradictory: wariness of the reform movement existed alongside an opposition movement of workers’ councils. Of course, there were different localities and different groups of workers, and attitudes may have shifted over time.

Czechs. People who had been active or prominent during the liberalization period were ‘interviewed’ and asked to sign statements renouncing their actions and rejecting the reforms. Most signed; those who refused lost their jobs and, along with their relatives and children, became social pariahs. The largest group of victims were those who had played a visible cultural or intellectual role, including journalists, writers, and student leaders. The Czechoslovak Security Police even seems to have established a special unit to monitor the country’s Jews, possibly triggered in part by the fact that František Kriegel, the only one in the group of leaders brought to Moscow in August 1968 who refused to sign the document renouncing their actions, was also the only Jew.⁴³ The post-liberal message of the normalization regime was that in 1968 the country had passed through a psychosis of abnormality and false prophets had exploited the hysteria.⁴⁴ Now the nation had to be directed back to the correct path, which was to be achieved by the carrot of reasonable material conditions and the stick of omnipresent surveillance. The people were being humiliated and made complicit in their own defeat, which helped to break resistance. By 1972 the ‘restoration of order’ had become a reality,⁴⁵ with playwrights forced to do cleaning jobs, university lecturers stacking bricks, troublesome students expelled, the police files full of useful ‘confessions’, reform communists cowed, and 80,000 Czechs and Slovaks in exile.⁴⁶

There were some protests against the occupation of Czechoslovakia in other East bloc countries, for example a small demonstration in Moscow’s Red Square on 25 August 1968 including Pavel Litvinov (grandson of Stalin’s foreign minister) and Larissa Daniel (wife of the imprisoned Russian novelist). In April 1969 in the Latvian capital Riga, a Jewish student, Ilia Rips, followed Jan Palach in setting herself on fire. In Poland the repression in Czechoslovakia stimulated student protests, but also strengthened the hands of the authorities in stamping them out. Among East European army units engaged in the invasion of Czechoslovakia there were some problems too. They had been led to believe that they were defending the country against West German or American invaders, and

43 JUDT, ref. 4, p. 445 n15.

44 This ‘psychological language’ is interesting. In January 1970, in a speech on ‘consolidation’, Husák spoke of ensuring ‘a quiet life for people’ and the advantages of predictability as opposed to the uncertainty of the reform period; see WILLIAMS, ref. 28, pp. 40-41. See for Husák’s statements in the early years of normalization KMEŤ, Norbert. *Politický vývin Československa v 70. letech 20. století (prejavy a state G. Husáka)*. (The political development of Czechoslovakia in the 1970s, speeches and articles by G. Husák). In MICHÁLEK – LONDÁK (eds.). *Gustáv Husák*, ref. 28, pp. 610-636.

45 ŠIMEČKA, Milan. *Obnovení Pořádku*. Bratislava, 1984 – in samizdat); ŠIMEČKA, Milan. *The Restoration of Order: The Normalization of Czechoslovakia, 1969–1976*. London: Verso, 1984. 167 p. ISBN 9780860910817

46 JUDT, ref. 4, pp. 444-446.

some of them were withdrawn because their reliability was in question, especially, it seems, that of Hungarian units in Slovakia. The attitude of many Czechs and Slovaks to the Russians changed, from a rather pro-Russian one to a stance of sullen acquiescence. Never again would it be possible to maintain that communism rested on popular consent, on the laws and lessons of History, or indeed on the legitimacy of reform efforts. Zdeněk Mlynář, one of the party's leading reformers, recalled ten years later how on 21 August 1968 Red Army soldiers burst into a meeting of Czechoslovak party leaders and lined up behind each one of them: '*... at such a moment one's concept of socialism moves to last place. But at the same time you know that it has a direct connection of some sort with the automatic weapon pointing at your back.*' At least as painful was that many who had been among the loudest enthusiasts for Dubček were a few months later among the most enthusiastic purgers and 'normalizers'. Mlynář observed that '*it was only after the Prague Spring of 1968 that one began to see who was who*'.⁴⁷ The Czechoslovak tragedy was deeply symbolic, marking a turning point in the history of communism.⁴⁸ Communist authoritarian collectivism could not be reformed or be made compatible with democratic pluralism. Perhaps it is true that the soul of communism died in Czechoslovakia in August 1968.

Some conclusions

When we compare the Czechoslovak regime crisis of 1968 with the problems of the authoritarian regime in Portugal, we see that the aspect of internal elite disunity was more important in Czechoslovakia. In the 1960s the Czechoslovak Communist party contained several political factions of shifting strength and influence. The party's reformers were divided between moderates and radicals,

47 MLYNÁŘ, Zdeněk. *Night Frost in Prague: The End of Humane Socialism*. New York: Karz Publishers, 1980. ISBN 0918294088, quoted in JUDT, ref. 4, p. 447. For another critical evaluation of the liberalization period, see PEHE, Jiří (ed.). *The Prague Spring: A Mixed Legacy*. New York: Freedom House, 1988. 236 p. ISBN 0932088287. For reflections on the significance of 1968 in Slovakia, see LONDÁK, Miroslav – LONDÁKOVÁ, Elena. Slovakia within Czechoslovakia from 1945 to 1989. In LONDÁK, Miroslav – MICHÁLEK, Slavomír – WEISS, Peter (eds.). *Slovakia: A European Story*. Bratislava: Veda, 2016, pp. 52-61. ISBN 9788022415224; LONDÁK, Miroslav – SIKORA, Stanislav (eds.). *Rok 1968 a jeho miesto v našich dejinách. (The year 1968 and its place in our history)*. Bratislava: Veda, 2009. 575 p. ISBN 9788022410953; SIKORA, Stanislav. Charakteristika "socializmu s ľudskou tvárou". (The characteristics of "Socialism with a human face"). In LONDÁK, Miroslav (ed.). *Rok 1968. Eto vaše delo*. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2008. 191 p. ISBN 9788096978274

48 As Lonnie Johnson observes, 1968 was a turning point in a number of respects, including the abandonment of Marxism by Eastern European dissidents and the final rupture between the Soviet Union and most Western European communist parties; see JOHNSON, Lonnie R. *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbours, Friends*. 3rd ed. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 252. ISBN 9780195386646

and there was also a conservative wing which opposed many of the reforms from the outset. A part of the moderate reformers and even some of the initially most enthusiastic ones began to have growing doubts about the reform project after the middle of 1968. This was partly because the trend of political developments in Czechoslovakia seemed to be spinning out of control, and partly because it became increasingly clear that Moscow wanted the reform process to stop. The ‘external’ factor of the power of the Soviet Union within the context of the Cold War division of Europe was obviously a crucial reason why the liberalization policy was bound to fail. The growing voice of non-communist opposition forces in Czechoslovakia made the situation even more complex. Alongside the party reformers there emerged increasingly active groups of students, artists and intellectuals, but also Catholics, autonomously acting groups of workers, and alternative political organizations including the social democrats. Some of these had already existed in embryonic form, and were now using the expanding political and social space provided by the radicalizing reform process. The emergence of all sorts of publications, civic activities, and competing political and cultural initiatives was proof of the great potential of Czechoslovak democracy. One very important aspect of this was the articulation of the Slovak national issue, which cried out for a just solution.

We have seen that in Portugal in the 1960s similar groups to those in Czechoslovakia began to play an oppositional role: independent Leftists and workers, critical Catholics, and students and intellectuals (including lawyers). This was of great significance because in Portugal there was less elite disunity than in Czechoslovakia. There were some examples of internal friction and crisis phenomena within the ruling oligarchy, but these did not assume the same proportions as the political elite crisis in Czechoslovakia did. Particularly important in Portugal was the role of progressive Catholics, and if it were argued that the Catholic Church was itself a part of the ruling elite this Catholic opposition might of course be defined as an example of internal elite crisis – especially in the case of bishops. But the Church was too hierarchical and all-embracing to be reduced to any specific group, with increasingly critical Catholic intellectuals and parish pastors occupying a rather different position in society than High Church officials. As in Czechoslovakia, university students and certain groups of intellectuals constituted another category of opposition elements, which is not surprising given the historic role of intellectual groups in Europe. The role of Leftist and worker organizations is not easy to define, because there were different political groups with the Portuguese communists representing a political orientation that was not shared by socialists or progressive Catholics. As in Czechoslovakia, ‘external’ factors played a part in the Portuguese situation also, especially the policy of the Vatican, NATO, and the African colonial crisis. But the context and

dynamics were different because the Vatican and progressive organizations in various NATO countries criticized the authoritarian regime and its colonial wars, while the wars themselves played a crucial part in undoing the regime.

The political dynamics of Portugal and Czechoslovakia were also different in other respects. Although both authoritarian regimes survived the crisis of '1968', Portugal belonged to a category of nations which benefited from the wave of democratization in the 1970s. The difference between Salazar and Caetano was possibly smaller than the difference between Novotný and the genuine reformer Dubček, or indeed between Dubček and the 'normalizer' Husák. But despite Czechoslovakia's desire for freedom, the ability of monolithic Soviet communism to survive for another two decades proved decisive for her fate. Therefore, the Czechs and Slovaks had to wait until 1989, a year of deepening crisis in Eastern Europe and this time also in the Soviet Union itself, for 'their' authoritarian regime to collapse.

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AUTORITARISMUS IN DER KRISE PORTUGAL, DIE TSCHECHOSLOWAKEI UND ,1968‘

ZUZANA POLÁČKOVÁ – PIETER C VAN DUIN

Dieses Artikel macht eine vergleichende Analyse der politischen Entwicklungen in Portugal und der Tschechoslowakei während den 1960er und frühen 1970er Jahren, mit dem Fokus auf dem historischen Jahr ,1968‘ und seinen Vorbedingungen. Beide Länder hatten autoritäre Regime die in einer Krise geraten sind, eine Krise einer systemischen und auch moralischen Art die in 1968 einen Höhepunkt erreicht hat. In der Tschechoslowakei hat die Liberalisierungspolitik von Alexander Dubček und seiner Reformkommunistischen Koalition spontane politische und kulturelle Aktivitäten in der Bevölkerung ausgelöst, die eine Bedrohung dargestellt haben für das Einparteiensystem. Die Invasion der Armeen des Warschau-Paktes in August 1968 hat dieses Experiment und auch die Illusionen des Reformkommunismus beendet. Die Analyse der Ursachen, Widersprüchen und des Scheitern der Liberalisierung ist noch immer eine Herausforderung für Zeithistoriker. Eine Vergleichung der Tschechoslowakischen Erfahrung mit der Entwicklung der Rechtsdiktatur in Portugal in den selben Jahren könnte unsere Einsicht in dem Charakter und auch in den Grenzen des Autoritarismus in Europa vertiefen. In Portugal ist das langdauernde Regime von António Salazar in

demselben Jahr 1968 zu Ende gekommen, nachdem eine Reihe von politischen Krisen-Erscheinungen in den 1960er Jahren seine Schwäche und die Unvermeidlichkeit einer Reform gezeigt hatten. Sein Nachfolger Marcelo Caetano hat aber den autoritären Kern des Regimes behalten und nur einige kosmetische Änderungen durchgeführt mit dem Ziel um Portugal mit seinen Kolonien noch einige Zeit in der alten Weise weiterleben zu lassen. Die Portugiesen mussten warten bis in 1974 das autoritäre Regime endlich zusammengebrochen ist – was natürlich nur eine kurze Periode war im Vergleich mit den 21 Jahren zwischen 1968 und 1989 in der Tschechoslowakei. Unter den Hauptfragen die in diesem Artikel gestellt werden sind die Art und Umfang des politischen Raumes für oppositionellen Aktivitäten und die Art der Konflikte innerhalb den politischen Eliten. Diese Fragen machen eine Vergleichung zwischen Portugal und der Tschechoslowakei zu einer herausfordernden Aufgabe.

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