

monplaces of ten (and fifty) years ago.⁶ The signs of genuine new thought and genuine attempts to re-create a democratic (or even a “social-democratic”) consensus on a free and individual basis, “uncollectivised”, are hard to find.

But enough of mid-winter Nordic gloom and doom. My personal belief is that the signs of authentic renewal are there and are growing. There is a diffuse impatience with bureaucratic arrogance and ideologised radicalism which only needs articulation. (Indeed seems to have found it in Norway, not only in the recent elections, but in the debate growing up around *Kontinent Skandinavia*, an anti-totalitarian quarterly edited by Tore Stubberud.) Even in Sweden, the land where public dissent is rarely expressed and usually sublimated,

⁶ One notable exception is Henrik Stangerup, whose vivid novel *The Man Who Would Be Guilty* (Marion Boyars, 1981) can be read as an ironic—and, alas, prophetic—commentary to the Scandinavian *malaise* I have been describing.

there is a dissident movement for “humanistic education” including such unlikely supporters as Jan Myrdal (the Maoist son of Gunnar Myrdal). In Denmark, where political ideologies are never taken too seriously, a rough realisation that “enough is enough” is spreading: the public sector must be cut; a new compromise or social contract must be found among the various social and political interests; cultural and educational standards must not be levelled and down-graded (especially in a country that relies on the intelligence and inventiveness of its inhabitants in lieu of any natural resources).

Scandinavia seems to be waiting for Fortinbras . . . its ideals spent and forgotten, old certainties gone. There is no comfort in the past, and the modern ideologies have become (in Orwell’s phrase) “smelly little orthodoxies.” Will Fortinbras arrive—will the people accept an historic submission to totalitarian domination from without, from within? I continue to doubt it. Sometimes I have difficulty finding reasons for my doubts.

Mrs Kirby

A Protestant lived in our house.
We rented the place downstairs,
She had a room on top.
I knew she was different

Because people said she was a Protestant
As if she had measles
Or came from the North Pole.
Once when we giggled in church

The woman behind said
That I was as bad as a Protestant.
On Christmas Day when I was six
A game of rings

And a huge bar of Bournville chocolate—
I remember that because it tasted
Different from a sixpenny Cadbury’s—
Were slipped under our door.

My mother said that they came from Mrs Kirby.
At last I knew what a Protestant was
Though I had always thought
That Father Christmas was one of us.

Tim Cunningham

LETTERS

Prague & Warsaw

THERE IS MUCH to be said in favour of Ota Filip's comparison between the Prague Spring of 1968 and the Polish Summer of 1980/81. (ENCOUNTER, November). Quoting Goethe I am inclined to exclaim "*Wie anders wirkt dies Zeichen auf mich ein!*" (How different is my impression . . .) Right from the beginning, all laudable endeavours in Czechoslovakia to build a better future were hampered by the fact that the men in power, the leading Reform-Communists, were both unable and unwilling to make a clean break with a shameful past. Even the "Action Programme" of April 1968, the most liberal document ever to be published by a Communist Party, insisted, though in a watered-down form, on the "leading role" of that party.

But Filip paints a wrong picture by minimising the Prague Spring as a mere "struggle for power between young Party members against the decrepit old Stalinists." There were two factors which alone made the changes of 1968—with all their limitations—possible. The first one—and it is amazing that Filip who is a writer and not a politician is silent about it—was the magnificent fight of the Czech writers against the Stalinist leadership, culminating in their defiant Congress of June 1967 and vividly described in Dušan Hamsík's *Writers against Rulers* (London, 1971). Some of them had been Communists before; but some of them, like Kundera and Havel, had never even formally joined the party. It seems unjust to me not to mention this fact.

Furthermore, Filip is wrong in stating that all that happened in the trade-union field was that the existing "trade-union organisation" was "allowed to introduce some small first measures of democratisation within the factories, but the leadership . . . remained safely in the hands of tough old Party loyalists." The story is unknown in the West because nobody cared to describe a rather involved development; but the facts are that the allegedly inactive Czech workers (Slovakia is a case for itself) purged in the first months of 1968 the so-called "Unified trade-union movement" (not deserving that name before 1968 and after 1969), threw out the discredited leadership and insisted on a resolute change of direction. Long after the Soviet occupation, the thus purified organisation arranged a congress in March 1969, adopting a programme which included the demand for the right to strike. True, they had no Lech Walesa in their ranks. Some of the new leaders had a more or less dubious past, but by no means all of them. They all were forced to disappear from the scene again, when "normalisation" was introduced. Since then, the Czech workers are inactive to a degree which drives the leading dissidents to desperation.

The attempt of some courageous old Czech Social Democrats in 1968 to rebuild their party, suppressed in 1948, brought them (although they had only a P.O. box as address) within two weeks 200,000 applications for membership from all parts of the country. This greatly embarrassed the Dubček leadership, which neither dared to say No to the Social Democrats nor to give them the

green light. I have not heard so far of any attempt to renew in Poland the glorious tradition of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), brutally suppressed by Gomulka in 1948.

J. W. BRUEGEL

London

"Candu"

IN THE ARTICLE by Mr Norman Moss "Has Non-Proliferation a Chance?" (ENCOUNTER November) he makes reference to Canada as a supplier of uranium, but not as a supplier of nuclear technology. This is the more curious in that the Canadian technology used in the CANDU reactor has specific application to two of the points he notes as problems.

Unlike most reactors, the CANDU does not require enriched uranium as fuel. It uses natural uranium, which is fairly plentiful in nature, and can even be extracted from seawater if necessary. Thus, it frees the reactor-owner from the strictures of such countries as the United States and the USSR, which are the major sources of enriched uranium. Further, the waste from the CANDU reactor cannot as easily be used for making nuclear weapons as the waste from American light-water reactors. However, the Science Council of Canada (of which I was the former secretary) drew attention some two years ago to the fact that it seems likely that CANDU waste can be recycled with thorium. Should this turn out to be feasible on an industrial scale, it would to some extent make breeder reactors less attractive.

LESLIE MILLIN

Vancouver

I DID NOT give space to Canada's role as supplier of nuclear technology in my brief survey because, apart from the gift of a reactor to India, it has not been important. Perhaps it should have been: a House of Commons Select Committee said the CEGB should have looked more closely at the CANDU reactor.

It is true that the CANDU produces less plutonium than light-water reactors, but it is more dangerous on a weapons proliferation point of view in other respects. As Mr Millin says, the user is less susceptible to pressure from the suppliers of enrichment services and therefore more free to use the reactor for any purpose he wants. (He is not entirely independent of outside suppliers unless he has a domestic uranium mine, however; nobody has extracted usable quantities of uranium from seawater.) The fact that fuel rods can be removed while it is operating complicates inspection.

NORMAN MOSS

London

The Irish Debate

EDWARD PEARCE (ENCOUNTER, August) says that world opinion is blinkered to the excellence of the "astonishing" British Army in Northern Ireland and suggests that the world should give the British forces "a prize for peace."

He says that the IRA is "a fascist organisation" with-