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**Sartre and His Perception by Czech
Intellectuals in 1960s**

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Abstract

The relationships between the power blocs during the Cold war have been researched by scholars. The question of the influence of Western ideas and representatives on the political thought in Czechoslovakia is still discussed. Although major differences were happening due to the work of institutions, their functioning was not possible without specific personalities. The aim of this thesis is to show how Jean-Paul Sartre and his arrival to Prague in 1960s did influence Czech intellectuals. The issue is approached by the review of the biography of the French philosopher, highlighting crucial events that linked him more with the Czechoslovak society, and then analyzing the way the Czech intellectuals reacted to his ideas and statements. Sartre was chosen as an intellectual who was uniting both, the East and the West, and went through a change of views, after the occurrence of several international events with the direct intervention of the USSR. Realistic views of the Czech representatives are facing relatively optimistic ideas of Sartre on the reformation of the Marxist ideology and preservation of it as the ruling one.

Keywords

Československo, Sartre, politika, česko-francouzské vztahy, Studená válka

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Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague 31.08.2023

Irina Molodkina

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1. Introduction:

“I’m going to smile, and my smile will sink down into your pupils, and heaven knows what it will become”¹. These words are the famous quote of Jean-Paul Sartre from his well-known play *Huis clos* (1944, *No Exit*). These lines can be interpreted in a number of ways and used in many situations. Even if we speak about Sartre himself, we can note how his words and ideas were brought down to his supporters, readers and fans and, later, gave rise to something more massive than just lines. This specific work will deal with the way, how Sartre’s ideas influenced the Czech society and what did they plant into the ruling narratives of the society. It is generally agreed that the part of the reformist ideas of the 1960s and 1980s in the Czechoslovakia were inspired by existential ideas, especially created in France². And Jean-Paul Sartre was one of the most influential French philosophers, who’s contributions to the history of thought, specifically in the Marxist context, cannot be overestimated³.

It is generally known that the communist regimes in Central Europe were surviving different stages over time⁴. Those fragile socialist models, created by the guidance of Moscow, were not able to successfully survive any crisis. Numerous things could give a boost to create tensions in the states under oppression. In case of Czechoslovakia, some of the processes were more gradual than in other states of the Warsaw Pact⁵. For example, the de-Stalinization took more time and effort than in the neighboring Poland, for example. However, in

¹ Marek Kwiek (1998) “Between the Community and the Text (French Philosophy, Politics, and the Figure of the Intellectual - from Sartre to Foucault)”, *TRAMES*, Vol. 2(52/47), No. 2, pp. 165-185

² Bryant Chad (2000) “Czech Dissidents and History Writing from a Post-1989 Perspective”, *History and Memory*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp 30-41

³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, translated by John Matthews, Verso, New York, 1969

⁴ Bryant Chad (2000) “Czech Dissidents and History Writing from a Post-1989 Perspective”, *History and Memory*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp 30-41

⁵ Edward Taborsky, *Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960*, Princeton University Press, York, Pa, 1961

Czechoslovakia, there were outstanding representatives that were attempting to lead the country towards liberalization and democracy⁶. As Jaroslav Putík, Czech writer and publicist, ones pointed out one of the greatest ironies of life: the majority of the anti-Stalinist forces were consisting of people that used to be the former Stalinists⁷. It is true as much as the fact that there were other intellectuals, who were never sympathizing the totalitarian leader of the USSR.

This work will try to study the Czech thinkers, who were influenced by the Sartre's arrival to the Czechoslovakia in 1963, and find out there connections to Jean-Paul Sartre. The research question, that is intended to be answered, is: Who did Sartre and his activity influence the Czech intellectuals after 1963? The reason why this exact year is chosen can be explained: in 1963 Sartre came to Prague and took part in a number of discussions with Czech representatives, that provoked a series of articles, critics and other works⁸. The visit created an effect, that can be seen in a long-term perspective: the ideas of Sartre were used not only during 1960s but throughout the whole century. It is worth mentioning that the vast majority of Czech thinkers, that were commenting on Sartre, after 1969 were either acting as dissidents or immigrating in other countries. This fact is even more captivating if Sartre's words are recalled: we are all created in exile.

To answer the question, the analyses of texts will be used as a research method. A number of sources will be used: books, articles, reviews, etc. They will be from different periods: the

⁶ David W. Paul (1974), "The Repluralization of Czechoslovak Politics in the 1960s", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 721-740

⁷ Marci Shore (1998) "Engineering in the Age of Innocence: A Genealogy of Discourse Inside the Czechoslovak Writers' Union, 1949-67", *East European Politics and Societies*, No. 3, pp. 397-441

⁸ Prokop Toman (2005) "Příspěvek k Sartrovým slovům a mlčení v Čechách", *Acta Oeconomica Pragensia*, Vol. 13, No. 5, pp. 23-37

ones published in 1960s as well as the recent ones. The sources will be in three different languages, English, Czech and French, in order to create a broader picture and provide more details. This sphere of research has already existed before. I chose to follow it as I am sure that Sartre and his impact on the Czech thought was not fully studied. At the same time, it is crucial to the developments in Czechoslovakia that took place not only in the 1960s but also later. Arguably, some of the ideas are also relevant in the modern times. In the end, it is expected to highlight the connections between Jean-Paul Sartre and Czech representatives of the 20th century and point out that not only Sarterian ideas were used in Czechoslovakia⁹, but also that Sartre was inspired by certain Czech representatives. It is important to note that those ties are supposed to be found in several different periods not only during one exact year. The following philosophers were chosen due to the fact that they all met Jean-Paul Sartre personally and spoke French, so they were able to study Sarterian works in the original. Some of them had even personal contact with the French philosopher.

1.1 The State of the Art

It is commonly agreed that the debate on Jean-Paul Sartre, the journey that was started after the Second World War, in 1960s on the Czech scene was booming. One of the main reasons for that was the well-known line that Sartre drew between Marxism and existentialism. The long-reaching history of the Czech relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre started in 1946, when the Czech translation to *Les Chemins de la liberté: L'Âge de raison* appeared¹⁰.

The popularity of Sartre was influencing the work of the *Institute Français* in Prague, that was created in 1920 and since then was playing an important role in the Czech-French relationship in culture and politics. Sophie Cœuré was stating that in 1945 France launched a

⁹ Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre Against Stalinism*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2004

¹⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Cesty k svobodě*. 1. díl, ELK, Praha, 1946

strategy that was in a way mirroring the Soviet one: the French were trying to boost campaigns in order to re-store countries with heavy references to the French culture¹¹. However, it is important to note that those strategies were not targeted directly to the post-war era and not even the early years of Cold War¹². So, it is not possible to say that the Czech-French relationship was facing the prosperous stage. Due to the official orientation to the East, the exchange between the two states was seized, the period, pausing the majority of exchange started in 1948, right after the publication of the first Czech adaptations of Sartre. During that period, the translations and publication of French books, articles and other writings were stopped. The cultural link between the countries was almost lost. The lack of sources and proper functioning achieves led to the emergence of a number of prejudices in historiography¹³. At the same time, in 1948 a number of Czech representatives, such as Ivo Fleischmann and Pavel Tigrid) fled to France¹⁴. They were helping the dissidents, that were living in Czechoslovakia.

In 1951 the work of the Institute was disrupted. The only French authors that were still present in Czechoslovakia were the ones that were strongly connected to communism. One of them was Jean-Paul Sartre. He started gaining popularity in Czechoslovakia in 1952. However, regardless of that, his short visit to Prague in 1954 was left without proper attention and very little record of that exist. For that a couple of reasons exist: 1) he was stopping in Prague only due to his long travel from Moscow to Paris, 2) he did not participate

¹¹ Sophie Cœuré (2017) “Cultural Looting and Restitution at the Dawn of the Cold War: The French Recovery Missions in Eastern Europe”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.52, No. 3, pp. 588-606

¹² Sophie Cœuré (2017) “Cultural Looting and Restitution at the Dawn of the Cold War: The French Recovery Missions in Eastern Europe”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.52, No. 3, pp. 588-606

¹³ Sophie Cœuré (2017) “Cultural Looting and Restitution at the Dawn of the Cold War: The French Recovery Missions in Eastern Europe”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.52, No. 3, pp. 588-606

¹⁴ Ladislav Cabada and Šárka Waisová, *Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic in World Politics*. Lexington Books, 2011

in any kind of intellectual activity with the Czech population. Nevertheless, even that small step resulted in an evoking interest, coming from the Czech community. Václav Černý stated the rising interest of the Czech intellectuals to existentialism and highlighted Sartre as one of the key figures¹⁵.

Sonja Großmann was studying how the 'Friends of the USSR' were interrupting the functioning of the diplomatic services between Western Societies and the East¹⁶. The situation in France was remarkable for the relatively notable population of the French Communist Party, that was making it easier for the ones loyal to the USSR's ideas to promote interests of the Soviets. She was interested in the competition for the cultural exchange.

Václav Šmidrkal¹⁷ that were researching French-Czech relationship, paying special attention to the East-West exchange during the Cold War, noted that the French presence in Czechoslovakia was visible, especially on the early stages of the Communist state. He was showing how the image of 'real France' was used in the discourse of Czechoslovak politics. The two French models of society, the one going up and another one going downhill, were exploited to explain the concepts of Marxism-Leninism. Šmidrkal collected studies, that appeared overtime to demonstrate the evolution of the various stages of the French-Czech relationship.

Sartre was one of the people that was trying to recover the relationship between the states. He was one of the few people that was allowed to come to Czechoslovakia in the Cold War era due to his relatively sympathetic attitudes towards Marxism. Ladislav Cabada and Šárka

¹⁵ Václav Černý, *Paměti 1945-1972*. Atlantis, Brno, 1992

¹⁶ Simo Mikkonen and Pia Koivunen, *Beyond the Divide: Entangled Histories of Cold War Europe*, Berghahn Books, Oxford, England, 2015

¹⁷ Simo Mikkonen and Pia Koivunen, *Beyond the Divide: Entangled Histories of Cold War Europe*, Berghahn Books, Oxford, England, 2015

Waisová were working on the development of the Czechoslovak state and how different Western states affected Czechoslovakia during the Cold war. As they found out, the major presence of France was in Germany, where they had the Groupe français du conseil de contrôle (GFCC – French Group Control Council), that was based in Berlin and was supposed to forge connections to with another bloc¹⁸. The changes occurred when the link between Central European states and Soviets weakened, due to the pick of Stalinist terror. In Czechoslovakia the agreements with France were restored in 1955 with certain amendments¹⁹. The exchange between France and Czechoslovakia was restoring due to: 1) interest of France to be involved in Central Europe and 2) tradition of Czech-French relationship²⁰.

In 1960s, a number of writings on Sartre appeared. For example, an article, presented by two Czech authors²¹ analyzed the relationship between Sartre's existential philosophy and Marxism. They stated that Sartre was the justification of the fact that progress would lead to Marxism. The first official announcement of Sartre was made in *Rudé právo* on 24th November 1963. It was noted that the 'progressive French philosopher'²² came to Czechoslovakia due to the primer of his play in the Czech National Theatre. Another highly noted remark was the visit of Sartre in 1968 that was again connected to the theatre²³. A new stage in the French-Czech relationship occurred with the creation of the Fifth French

¹⁸ Sophie Cœuré (2017) "Cultural Looting and Restitution at the Dawn of the Cold War: The French Recovery Missions in Eastern Europe", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.52, No. 3, pp. 588-606

¹⁹ Sophie Cœuré (2017) "Cultural Looting and Restitution at the Dawn of the Cold War: The French Recovery Missions in Eastern Europe", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.52, No. 3, pp. 588-606

²⁰ Ladislav Cabada and Šárka Waisová, *Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic in World Politics*. Lexington Books, 2011

²¹ Karel Mácha a Ladislav Hrzal (1962) "Existencialismus a Jean Paul Sartre", *Tvorba*, Vol. 27, No. 37, pp. 878-879

²² (1963) "Besedy s J.P. Sartrem", *Rudé právo*

²³ (1968-1969) "Sartre v Praze", *Divadelní noviny*, Vol. 12, No. 7

Republic, when France was aiming to reduce the influence of the strategies of the Western bloc in their own agendas. De Gaul was building a link with the USSR thus, the Soviets were less cautious of the actions that France was implementing in Czechoslovakia.

Generally, due to a debatable reaction of the Communist Party to Sartre and his works, Sartre was mostly recalled in relation to theater and literary world, not as one of the most influential philosophers of the times. In order to function properly, socialism is required to be built by independent people. This famous idea of Sartre, for obvious reasons, was not that popular in the Party.

At the same time, Sartre was the one trying to draw attention of the Western countries to Czechoslovakia. After the Prague Spring of 1968, Sartre was the one presenting the following ideas: Western states were the ones to collect evidence of the events that happened in Czechoslovakia and to control the prevention of future revolutions that could lead to the establishment of the 'same socialism'²⁴. The French-Czech relationship was progressing: in 1975, Czechoslovak Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal came to Paris²⁵. Since then, everything was relatively stable till the 1990s. Maud Bracke was writing how France and French society reacted to the developments in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s²⁶. He compared the French 'left' and 'right', that both in the end concluded that the developments in Czechoslovakia were reformists.

²⁴ Rozhovor s Jean Paul Sartrem. (Jean-Paul Sartre and the editor of the Czechoslovak Television (Československá televize), 1968))

²⁵ Ladislav Cabada and Šárka Waisová, *Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic in World Politics*. Lexington Books, 2011

²⁶ Maud Bracke (2008) "French Responses to the Prague Spring: Connections, (Mis)perception and Appropriation", *Dramatic Milestones in Czech and Slovak History*, pp. 1735-1747

In mid-1980s, there was registered an increase of attention of French activists in the tensions in Czechoslovakia²⁷. Ladislav Cabada and Šárka Waisová collected evidence that debates between the Czech opposition and the French intellectuals were taking place more regularly. To show some support and respect, a number of rather symbolic meetings took place: in 1988 signatories of Charter 77 were introduced to Roland Dumas, who was the Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time, and later that year they had a chance to speak with François Mitterrand, the French President (1981-1995)²⁸.

Sartre was a channel for Czechoslovakia. As a person who travelled across both power blocs in before the start of the Cold War and during it, Sartre was able to present Czechoslovakia and France the perspectives of both countries and take part in the cultural dialog. He was the one advocating for the reformation, based on the mutual respect of the cultures. Sartre was one of the most remarkable activists, that was trying to build not only the Czech-French relationship but a bond between the West and the East. He was finding imperfections on both sides and was suggesting reformation for the all the participants.

1.2 Structure

The thesis is divided into two large parts: the first one is focusing on Sartre while the second deals with the Czech representatives. However, it is including several small sub-parts, that are covering introduction, methodology, research question and expected outcomes, connection parts and conclusion. The work is ended with the list of references.

²⁷ Ladislav Cabada and Šárka Waisová, *Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic in World Politics*. Lexington Books, 2011

²⁸ Ladislav Cabada and Šárka Waisová, *Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic in World Politics*. Lexington Books, 2011

In the first part, several topics are covered: Sartre's biography, stating most remarkable stages of Sartre's life and describing some of his writings; relationship of Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, stating how each of the writers affected the literary world and describing their "intellectual passion"²⁹, political ideas of Sartre, following the transition of a relatively "apolitical intellectual"³⁰ to one of the leading political activists of France of the period.

The next part is a connecting between the two main sections, linking them together. This part covers the general summary of the Czechoslovakia in the period of Sartre's arrival and some of the major events, such as the World Peace Conference in Moscow and the rehabilitation of Kafka³¹.

The last part uncovers the ideas of the Czech representatives: Jan Patočka, Karel Kosík, František Kautman and Milan Kundera. The writers are picked up with the regard that all of them were well-acquainted with Sartre, wrote articles on him or even personally met him in Czechoslovakia.

1.3 Literature Overview

The work will be based on different types of written sources, depending on the part. For the first sections of the work secondary sources will be mainly used. To provide the general background of the period books, articles and reviews will be used. Mostly remarkable are

²⁹ Hazel Rowley (2006) "Sartre and Beauvoir: an Intellectual Passion", *Journal of Romance Studies*, Vo. 6, No. 1, 2, pp. 105-113

³⁰ François Bondy (1967) "Jean-Paul Sartre and Politics", *Journal of Contemporary History, Literature and Society* (April, 1967), Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 25-48

³¹ Jo Bogaerts (2018) "Challenging the Absurd? Sartre's Article on Kafka and the Fantastic", *Sartre Studies International*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 15-33

*Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960*³², *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel*³³, and *Between Prague Spring and the French May: Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960-1980*³⁴.

Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960 is describing in details the way the regime functioned in the state. The book demonstrates the system, its feature and flaws, and the economic management and the issues that were caused by that. More importantly, the book shows the real attitude of people to the regime, that people did not like but ‘they merely learned how to live under it³⁵’. The writing states a notable paradox that was relevant for Czechoslovakia: a low percentage of believers the Marxist ideology and a high membership in the official Party.

The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel presents an elaborated overview of the ideas and narratives that were appearing in the Czech society. Although the pick point of the book is Charter 77, it examines relatively neatly the basis for the discourse, the foundation of which was started by Patočka. The writing is using different perspective of various philosophers, that were utilised by the representatives mentioned in the thesis. One more remarkable feature is the fact that the international processes are included in the writing. Although, some chapters are focus more on extremely philosophical concepts.

³² Edward Taborsky, *Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960*, Princeton University Press, York, Pa, 1961

³³ Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel*, edited by Jonathan Harris, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000

³⁴ *Between Prague Spring and the French May: Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960-1980*, edited by Martin Klimke, Jacco Pekelder, and Joachim Scharloth, Berghahn Books, 2011 (Chapter: “Early Voices of Dissent, Czechoslovak Student Opposition at the Beginning of the 1960s” by Zdeněk Nebřenský)

³⁵ Ivo Duchacek (1962) “Communism in Czechoslovakia 1948-1960 by Edward Taborsky”, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 558-559

Between Prague Spring and the French May: Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960-1980 offers a good perspective on Europe as a whole, drawing parallels between different states and finding linkage. It allows to see how unrest in one state was influencing another and what were the common tendencies. That shows that Czechoslovakia and France had the foundation that made it possible to argue about their political and social exchange. The greatest side is that the chapter on Czechoslovakia was not only discussing the events of 1968, it was tracing back to the reasons that occurred in the first half of 1960s. The book was not fully focused on Czech-French relationship, which is a disadvantage.

The biography, political thoughts and personal life of Jean-Paul Sartre will be based on secondary sources as well, books, articles and reviews. Here, the core ideas are based on two books: *Jean-Paul Sartre, Between Existentialism and Marxism*³⁶ and *Sartre. Une écriture critique*³⁷.

The later parts with the attitudes and perspectives of Czech intellectuals and thinkers will be created with the help of primary sources.

For the specific case of Karel Kosík letter exchange with J.P. Sartre will be reviewed as a personal source³⁸. This source was presented not only to show the Czech-French connection, but the French-Czech one. It was meant to present a Czech writer that actually had not only met Sartre but also had a rather personal relationship with the French intellectual. The fact

³⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, translated by John Matthews, Verso, New York, 1969

³⁷ Jacques Deguy, *Sartre. Une écriture critique*, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, Paris, 2010

³⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul (1975), "The Kosik-Sartre Exchange", *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*, No. 25

that Sartre focused more on condemning the actions of the state rather than analysis of Kosík's ideas can be seen a downside of the source.

Jan Patočka in his article reacted to the Sartre's visit to the Faculty of Philosophy of Charles University and gave his own perspective on the main ideas of Sartre³⁹. This article was picked as it directly reflected on the Sartre's visit in 1963. Patočka reviewed Sartre's ideas, presented during the meeting with the Czech intelligentsia. The article was published in 1964, so, it was a relatively quick reaction. While some can argue that the content of the article was quite theoretical, I would love to state that it was linking the theory with the political debate of the time and providing base for interpretations of Socialist ideas. As for the speech of 1968, it was a proof that the arrival of Sartre was influential because even after a couple of years, the ideas of the French philosopher were recalled and still were meaningful. They still were contributing to the further analysis of the issue of freedom and the place of a person in relationship with the state⁴⁰.

Kautman explored the new political attitudes of Sartre, that were relevant to the French writer in the 1960s⁴¹. Kautman His writing is remarkable for the attempt to trace back in history and unite several eras, trying to draw parallels with the past and the present, thus, notifying the public about implications that may occur. Kautman, as well as Sartre did, was interested in the Czech heritage, especially in connection to Kafka, and in Marxism. One of the disturbing factors can be that Kautman was including religion in his perspectives while for Sartre that was not the main topic of his interest.

³⁹ Jan Patočka (1964) "Jean Paul Sartre návštěvou ve Filosofickém ústavě ČSAV", *Filosofický časopis*, No. 12, Vol. 2, pp. 195-200

⁴⁰ Jiří Růžička and Jan Mervart (2022) "Marxism and Existentialism in the State Socialist Czechoslovakia", *Studies in East European Thought*

⁴¹ František Kautman, (1966) "Sartre a my", *Filosofický časopis*. No. 14, Vol. 5, pp. 603-617

In case of Milan Kundera, it is widely accepted that his writings and novels consist of a number of existential ideas. The lines can be drawn between, for example, Sartre's *Nausea* and Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*⁴². Kundera's works are interesting in regard to the point that Kundera was a representative that shifted from a Stalinist to the other end of the spectrum. Sartre's evolution can be regarded in a similar way⁴³. In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Kundera directly used Sartre's ideas on existence. It lacked direct references to the Czechoslovak society but the allusions were relatively clear.

The majority of the mentioned sources are in English. However, the *Filosofský časopis* and *Sociologický časopis* are in Czech. For biography of Sartre and ideas of Jan Patočka, articles in French are studied.

1.4 Methodology

Due to the fact that all the sources used were written, the only type of analysis used is the textual. The majority of the collected data was picked by archival research. For that a certain amount of work was done in the libraries of Charles University and the French Institute in Prague (*Institut Français*). The whole work is based on different types of the historical research. To choose the most suitable method and apply it properly, a couple of books were studied: *Basic Research Methods for Librarians*⁴⁴ and *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*⁴⁵.

⁴² Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Faber & Faber, United Kingdom, 2020.

⁴³ Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre Against Stalinism*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2004

⁴⁴ Bruce Lawrence and Howard Lune, *Basic Research Methods for Librarians*, Ninth Edition, Books a La Carte, Pearson, Boston, 2016

⁴⁵ Lynn Connaway and Ronald Powell, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Fifth Edition, Santa Barbara, California, 2010

The parts covering the biography of Sartre and the Czech writers, mentioned in the work, are constructed with the use of the descriptive research. The education, upbringing, occupations and challenges, coming from the environment that the intellectuals had to face, helped to understand better the reasons why their writings were produced and the meanings that were hidden in them. The only small exception is the section with the Sartre-de Beauvoir relationship, that is finalized with several elements of a comparison of the couple.

The chapter on the political views of Sartre is based on the descriptive methods with a mixture of analytical ones, creating a linkage between the biography and his ideas, revealing how life and the external events shaped the decisions and perspectives with time.

In order to answer the research question, it is needed to explore the background of the period. The chapter on Czechoslovakia is starting with a small glance to the prior years. It was a concise remark, 1) not to start the more detailed part from nothing and 2) to provide minor hints that will make the description of the processes more comprehensive. To make it more precise, I decided to focus mainly on the socio-political characteristics of the period, as I find them more relevant for my work since the mentioned authors are initiated more with political and social activism than with any other kind of occupation. The chapter is based mainly on the social and political aspects, although there is a slight glance on the economic reform, that became a base for further political changes, occurred in the 1960s, for example, the Prague Spring.

The parts, where certain articles, letters and books of the Czech representatives are analyzed, are created with the help of qualitative research in order to identify the perspectives of the authors. While going through the personal sources, I attempted to locate and generalize the

key concepts, presented by the writers, and later to objectively frame them into relatively structured ideas.

2. Sartre

2.1 Life

Jean-Paul Sartre (21.06.1905-15.04.1980) was a French philosopher, novelist, social historian, critic, playwright and political activist. The life of a well-known representative of existentialism started in France, Paris. The boy was a child of a navy officer, who died when Jean-Paul Sartre was at a young age. After that tragedy the child was raised by Charles Schweitzer, his grandfather on the mother's bloodline. It was who Charles Schweitzer invited his grandchild to the world of literature⁴⁶.

Sartre attended reputable schools and had a chance to obtain a good education. In science and knowledge, the future philosopher was seeking shelter from the exaggerated attention of his peers, that were often addressing his eye defect. He was interested in philosophy, logic, psychology, sociology, etc. In 1929, Sartre finished École Normale Supérieure, where as a student he met Simone de Beauvoir, with whom they went through life side-by-side⁴⁷. Their mutual influence of Sartre and Beauvoir is seen in their works⁴⁸.

The 1930s were marked by the wave of Neo-Hegelian narratives and, especially, Hegelian *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Sartre spent roughly 14 years as teacher, 1931-1945, in a number of French cities. That period of working in lyceums were remarkable for a couple of reasons. In 1938, the notable *Nausea (La Nausée)* and some critics, *Nausea* is seen as one of the most successful writings of the philosopher.

⁴⁶ Arnaud Tomès (2023) « L'illusion Biographiques. Vie et vérité chez Sartre », Les Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg, Vol. 53, pp. 117-135

⁴⁷ Hazel Rowley (2006) "Sartre and Beauvoir: an Intellectual Passion", Journal of Romance Studies, Vo. 6, No. 1, 2, pp. 105-113

⁴⁸ Ceylan Coşkuner (2015) "The Impacts of Jean Paul Sartre on Simone De Beauvoir", Journal of General Philosophy, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 72-77

Shortly after the publication of *Nausea*, Sartre was recruited to the French Army in 1939. In World War II he operated mainly as a scientist, monitoring the weather and other atmospheric phenomena. A year later, in 1940, he was taken prisoner by the Germans and was able to return to freedom in April 1941. In detention he continued his scientific and creative activities: Sartre wrote his first theatre play (*Barionà, fils du tonnerre*, in English: *Bariona, or, the Son of Thunder*) and read Martin Heidegger's works. One of them, *Sein und Zeit* (in English: *Being and Time*) profoundly affected Sartre⁴⁹.

Back in France, Sartre and his surrounding formed *Socialisme et Liberté* (*Socialism and Liberty*). Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Toussaint Desanti and Dominique Desanti and others participated in the organization⁵⁰. Sartre could not agree on the methods and agenda of the establishment with other representatives and soon *Socialisme et Liberté* disintegrated. The philosopher returned to the science and produced *L'Être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (*Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*) 1943, *Les Mouches* (*The Flies*) 1943, *Huis clos* (*No Exit*) 1944, (*Paris Under Occupation*).

Another important stage of Sartre's life is minorities, especially the French Jews. He wrote an essay *Réflexions sur la question juive*, (*Reflexions on the Jewish Question*) 1946, which consisted of several parts, the first was *Portrait de l'antisémit* (*The Portrait of the Antisemite*) 1945. In those works, Sartre explored the notion of 'hate' and the situation, in which French Jews found themselves after returning from the concentration camps. Another minority, that caught the attention of the philosopher, was black people that resulted in addressing the issue

⁴⁹ Marek Kwiek (1998) "Between the Community and the Text (French Philosophy, Politics, and the Figure of the Intellectual - from Sartre to Foucault)", *TRAMES*, Vol. 2(52/47), No. 2, pp. 165-185

⁵⁰ Arnaud Tomès (2023) « L'illusion Biographiques. Vie et vérité chez Sartre », *Les Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg*, Vol. 53, pp. 117-135

of colonialism, racisms and injustice⁵¹. Those traces can be seen in *L'Être et le néant (Being and Nothingness)* of 1943, mentioned above.

1945-1962 was a breaking period. The philosopher himself characterized this stage as a rationality moving towards the irrationality⁵². Sartre quitted working as a teacher and focused his attention on, mainly, political activism and literature⁵³. For example, *Le Chemins de la Liberté (The Roads to Freedom)* was written during 1945-1949. Those series were a reflection on the World War II and the French occupation. Jean-Paul Sartre with Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty set up a Journal *Les Temps Modernes (Modern Times)*: the first issue came out in 1945⁵⁴.

During the same year, the philosopher was working on a new piece, that later became a novel of 4 parts: *Les Chemins de la liberté (1945, The Roads to Freedom)*, *L'Âge de raison (1945, The Age of Reason)*, *Le Sursis (1945, The Reprieve)*, and *La Mort dans l'âme (1949, Iron in the Soul, or Troubled Sleep)*. He turned his attention to the question of individual freedom that, in his perception, was linked with social responsibility. 1940s and 1950s were a period, when a huge number of plays were produced: *Les mouches (1943, The Flies)*, *Huis clos (1944, No Exit)*, *La putain respectueuse (1946, The Respectful Prostitute)*, *Les mains sales (1948, Dirty Hands)*, *Le diable et le bon dieu (1951, The Devil and the Good Lord)*, and others. What united all the plays is the way how the author was aiming to focus on the human

⁵¹ Karel Mácha a Ladislav Hrzal (1962) "Existencialismus a Jean Paul Sartre", *Tvorba*, Vol. 27, No. 37, pp. 878-879

⁵² Dick Howard (1984-1985) "Praxis Before Politics: The Problem of Sartre", Thesis Eleven, No. 10/11, pp. 189-194

⁵³ Ceylan Coşkuner (2015) "The Impacts of Jean Paul Sartre on Simone De Beauvoir", *Journal of General Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 72-77

⁵⁴ Hazel Rowley (2006) "Sartre and Beauvoir: an Intellectual Passion", *Journal of Romance Studies*, Vo. 6, No. 1, 2, pp. 105-113

being and its place in reality, plainly, sometimes with notes of depression⁵⁵. Moreover, specifically *Les mains sales* (1948, *Dirty Hands*) were tended to be interpreted as a decrease of the communist power.

In 1954, Sartre came to the USSR, the USA, Africa, Scandinavia and Cuba. In Cuba, had a discussion with Fidel Castro and Ernesto Guevara. In 1959 Sartre announced his opinion on the Algerian War of Independence, stating that France is guilty in organization of concentration camps in Algeria and conducting violence on the local population. He took part in the future of the Manifesto of the 121 (*Manifeste des 121*)⁵⁶, which was a document, signed by 121 activists, for example, Maurice Pons and Simone de Beauvoir. The Manifesto was an announcement, addressing the government of France to officially classify the Algerian War as the war for independence and ban the French representatives in Algeria from utilizing force and torture. Another similar case was the Vietnam War. The philosopher was condemning the US engagement in the conflict, that Sartre found to be genocidal, and was hoping to officially recognize the state's guilt in war crime and violence⁵⁷. For Sartre, the American involvement in Vietnam was not the elimination of communism, it was the imperialist attacks to contain radical freedom. He united with Bertrand Russell and set up the tribunal, also known as the Russell Tribunal or the International War Crimes Tribunal. Sartre also visited Czechoslovakia in 1954. His stay in Prague that time was rather symbolical than serious that resulted in discussions. Sartre stopped there while he was returning to Paris from Moscow. In the USSR, Sartre presented his idea on a literary conference, where he was

⁵⁵ Karel Mácha a Ladislav Hrzal (1962) "Existencialismus a Jean Paul Sartre", *Tvorba*, Vol. 27, No. 37, pp. 878-879

⁵⁶ Dick Howard (1984-1985) "Praxis Before Politics: The Problem of Sartre", *Thesis Eleven*, No. 10/11, pp. 189-194

⁵⁷ François Bondy (1967) "Jean-Paul Sartre and Politics", *Journal of Contemporary History, Literature and Society* (April, 1967), Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 25-48

attempting to establish the East-West union of writers. That idea was harshly shut down by Khrushchev, who was questioning the moral aspects of the Western societies⁵⁸.

The 1960s and the beginning of 1970s was dedicated to the work on *L'Idiot de la famille* (1971-1972, *The Family Idiot*). This biography of Gustave Flaubert was hoping to combine the progressive-regressive method, the Marx's class model and Freud's analysis of mind by examination of Flaubert's early years and his connections to the family. In 1964, Sartre received the Nobel Prize in Literature but the philosopher decided to turn down the award. He was the first person who ever did that, based on his own will⁵⁹. The reason behind that act was simple. As Sartre pointed out himself, he did not like the idea to be associated with Western Culture, the most well-known example of which was the Nobel Prize.

The World Congress for General Disarmament and Peace took place in Moscow from 9 to 14 July 1962⁶⁰. Sartre also took part in the Congress and announced his position of the cultural disarmament and demilitarization of literary world, the necessity of cooperation of the East and the West⁶¹, and centered the attention on Kafka and possible interpretation of his works with the use of Marxist categories.

In 1968, Sartre was the one engaging in the May demonstrations in Paris and was later arrested for that. In 1970s, Sartre's health weakened. In 1973, he lost the majority of his eyesight. The philosopher continued working on writing on ethics: *Cahiers pour une*

⁵⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, translated by John Matthews, Verso, New York, 1969

⁵⁹ Arnaud Tomès (2023) « L'illusion Biographiques. Vie et vérité chez Sartre », *Les Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg*, Vol. 53, pp. 117-135

⁶⁰ François Bondy (1967) "Jean-Paul Sartre and Politics", *Journal of Contemporary History, Literature and Society* (April, 1967), Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 25-48

⁶¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, translated by John Matthews, Verso, New York, 1969

morale (1983, Notebooks for an Ethics)⁶². However, he lost the majority of his operating capacity. Sartre died in Paris due to health reasons in April, 1980.

2.1.1 Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir

Simone de Beauvoir, French writer, feminist and political activist, played a huge role in Sartre's life. She was mainly interested in novels, memoirs and essays⁶³. Her most remarkable works were: *Une mort très douce* (1964, *A Very Easy Death*), *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949, *Sexuality, Existentialist Feminism and the Second Sex*) and *Les Inséparables* (1954).

The relationship of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir is a point that cannot be eliminated while studying either of the both intellectuals. Some scholars tend to believe that it was majorly Sartre, who was producing ideas, and that de Beauvoir was not capable of presenting something that was not partially formed by her partner⁶⁴. It is proved by the fact that, usually, Sartre is recalled as a self-sufficient writer while de Beauvoir always in reference to her partner. That is not supposed to be that way. It is more accurate to state that both of the intellectuals mutually influenced each other to a great extent but, at the same time, they were able to operate separately and produce solid personal opinions. De Beauvoir pointed a couple of important judgements herself. At first, it is obvious that Sartre did affect her in the shield of philosophy as she did not do philosophy, she only criticized and debated it. She could not influence him to that extent. At the same time, Sartre was not able to engage in the literary world of de Beauvoir as she was producing her own ideas that she formed

⁶² Karel Mácha a Ladislav Hrzal (1962) "Existencialismus a Jean Paul Sartre", *Tvorba*, Vol. 27, No. 37, pp. 878-879

⁶³ Ceylan Coşkuner (2015) "The Impacts of Jean Paul Sartre on Simone De Beauvoir", *Journal of General Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 72-77

⁶⁴ Hazel Rowley (2006) "Sartre and Beauvoir: an Intellectual Passion", *Journal of Romance Studies*, Vo. 6, No. 1, 2, pp. 105-113

herself. What is more, she may have inspired Sartre, when he was producing *Les Mots (The Words)*.

Their relationship started back in 1929. Simone de Beauvoir was open that one of the most crucial things that ever happened to her was the moment she met Sartre. As she was stating herself, he was the type that she had been picturing since her early years, he was her companion she was to share ideas and beliefs⁶⁵. The foundation for their connection was communication. Sartre was the person that de Beauvoir was able to compete on the intellectual level. Their union was, basically, an intellectual passion, as some scholars refer to it. For more than 50 years, during which their relationship lasted, it was hard for other intellectuals to describe that relationship. As the couple was stating, one of the challenges of their times was to get to know the freedom, which was designed for every individual by the fact that the God is not present anymore. As an individual, a person is the one who had the liability for the decisions and the implications of them. For them, it was important to dedicate time to self-realization and self-development. To some extent, the majority of the pressure was lying on Simone de Beauvoir. After two global wars, there was a certain kind of expectations that women were supposed to make up for the lost populations. For Simone de Beauvoir, that was unacceptable due to her active feminist position, that was too modern for her era⁶⁶. She was the one to break the generally accepted models of the human behavior. She was escorting Sartre in his travels and was his dedicated companion. At the same time, it is known that she had other love interest, except for Sartre, that were not a secret, but, at the same time, were not in the center of attention.

⁶⁵ Hazel Rowley (2006) "Sartre and Beauvoir: an Intellectual Passion", *Journal of Romance Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2, pp. 105-113

⁶⁶ Ceylan Coşkuner (2015) "The Impacts of Jean Paul Sartre on Simone De Beauvoir", *Journal of General Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 72-77

Their open relationship was, for the greater part, Sartre's decision. However, both of them gained from it: it boosted the literary activities of the intellectuals. Simone de Beauvoir searched for inspiration for writings in her own personal life⁶⁷. All the emotions, majorly negative ones which made her suffer, that she experienced with Sartre laid the foundation for the essays and novels⁶⁸. Simone de Beauvoir helped Sartre. She was quite proficient in English and she was the one to translate the American press to her partner. She was also contributing to his writing. For example, during the period of crisis, Simone de Beauvoir was reading and correcting *Nausea (La Nausée)*, giving Sartre motivation to continue the process. Sartre, in his turn, was convincing his partner to speak up on the topics that were not popular at those times: masculinity in *Le Deuxième Sexe* and death in *Une mort très douce*.

2.2 Ideas

It is not a point for debate that with time opinions and affections change and develop. It is worth noting that during early years Sartre was relatively not interested in politics⁶⁹. He got more engaged in the second half of the Second World War. Starting as just a liberal scientist, Sartre was referring to himself as a 'specific anarchist' during his later years⁷⁰. In 1943, the philosopher became part of a resistance group, where he operated with other writers. Sartre was condemning any sort of cooperating with the Nazis and any other kind of assistance, as well as a silent obedience and passive by-standing. For him, the ideas of resistance were really appealing but, at the same time, he never had enough of strength to fight in this kind of organizations. It is interesting that in his works, Sartre was naming Germans as the "Others".

⁶⁷ Hazel Rowley (2006) "Sartre and Beauvoir: an Intellectual Passion", *Journal of Romance Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2, pp. 105-113

⁶⁸ Dick Howard (1984-1985) "Praxis Before Politics: The Problem of Sartre", *Thesis Eleven*, No. 10/11, pp. 189-194

⁶⁹ François Bondy (1967) "Jean-Paul Sartre and Politics", *Journal of Contemporary History, Literature and Society* (April, 1967), Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 25-48

⁷⁰ Dick Howard (1984-1985) "Praxis Before Politics: The Problem of Sartre", *Thesis Eleven*, No. 10/11, pp. 189-194

In the first stages of his activities, Sartre was quite sympathetic towards the USSR. He considered himself Marxist that, he believed, was the ideology of those times, but he never was a member of the the French Communist Party (PCF, Parti communiste français)⁷¹. The first links to the Marxist ideas could be traced in Sartre's *Les Carnets de la Drôle de Guerre: Novembre 1939 – Mars 1940* (*War Diaries: Notebooks from a Phoney War, November 1939 – March 1940*). Here tried to move away from his pre-war views and perceptions⁷². In late 1940s, Sartre acknowledged that the world got divided into two power blocks: the communist and capitalist poles⁷³. He was against that harsh split and was advocating for the unification of cultures, forging more connections between the blocs and basing the center in Prague.

He was sure that in the Eastern bloc the aspect of morality was better developed and guarded. Due to it, Sartre was known to defend the USSR in numerous political debates and sometimes was called 'ultra-Bolshevik'⁷⁴. One of the people that called him that way was Maurice Merleau-Ponty, French philosopher and activist⁷⁵. They were influencing each other, but, at the same time, both going different paths: Merleau-Ponty was drifting away from Marxism, while Sartre was getting more involved in. He even was travelling with the communists during 1952-1956⁷⁶. Sartre visited Moscow in 1954⁷⁷. The fact that the writer came after the death of Stalin is easily understandable: during the Stalinist times he was considered to be the representative of meaningless bourgeois philosophy, as they used to call existentialism then.

⁷¹ Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre Against Stalinism*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2004

⁷² Jacques Deguy, *Sartre. Une écriture critique*, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, Paris, 2010

⁷³ Dick Howard (1984-1985) "Praxis Before Politics: The Problem of Sartre", *Thesis Eleven*, No. 10/11, pp. 189-194

⁷⁴ François Bondy (1967) "Jean-Paul Sartre and Politics", *Journal of Contemporary History, Literature and Society* (April, 1967), Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 25-48

⁷⁵ Taylor Carman, *Merleau-Ponty*, Routledge, New York, 2020

⁷⁶ Taylor Carman, *Merleau-Ponty*, Routledge, New York, 2020

⁷⁷ Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre Against Stalinism*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2004

Sartre was not welcomed in the USSR in the best way possible. But it is worth saying that after the philosopher's writing on the treatment of Soviet writes in the USSR, the intellectual public in Moscow started to feel more positive about the French activist.

Sartre's perception of the USSR changed after the Hungarian revolution of 1956. He was split between two sides⁷⁸. The harmony of people from different fractions that joined the protests was clearly showing the attitudes of the public. The sever response of Moscow did not add to the positive summary of the events, the political activist saw clearly the imperfections of the communist regime⁷⁹. At the same time, Sartre was dissatisfied with the fact that Hungarian activists lost the dedications to the principles of socialism. He published an article "*Le Fantôme de Staline*" (1957, *The Ghost of Stalin*⁸⁰), where he criticized the intervention. However, Sartre stated that he would continue the discussions with certain philosophers from the socialist states.

For this reason, Sartre sympathized with the Polish leader Władysław Gomułka. Sartre saw him as the politician, who defended the Polish independence against the Soviet intervention, but did not reject the socialist model. Sartre even published two issues (1957 and 1958) of *Les Temps Modernes* (*Modern Times*), where he expressed his opinion on Gomułka. Sartre himself was the advocate of the 1956 Polish October.

Another important point was his reaction to the Khrushchev's famous speech "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences". In Sartre's perspective, the public was not prepared to

⁷⁸ François Bondy (1967) "Jean-Paul Sartre and Politics", *Journal of Contemporary History, Literature and Society* (April, 1967), Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 25-48

⁷⁹ Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre Against Stalinism*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2004

⁸⁰ François Bondy (1967) "Jean-Paul Sartre and Politics", *Journal of Contemporary History, Literature and Society* (April, 1967), Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 25-48

heart out that shocking report. The suddenly opened information was a threat to stability and did not result in structural and well-planned reform. The philosopher did not try to minimize the crimes of Stalin, contrary to that, he tried to uncover the resistance against Stalin, carried out by people, fighting for freedom. Those acts of resistance were seen by him (like in the years of the Second World War) as something unique, creating more loyal ties between people and that was possible only during war. Before that global conflict, it was not possible to feel freedom fully⁸¹.

In *Critique de la raison dialectique (1960, Critique of Dialectical Reason)*, we can see what is called “Sarterian socialism”⁸². Sartre remained loyal to Marxism and still considered it the ideology of the modernity. Or, to be more precise, the author considers himself to be a Neo-Marxist, as it allows him not to be associated with French or Italian Marxists of the times, with whom he did not feel any common grounds⁸³. The reason for that is that those European models betrayed the concept of self-defined human⁸⁴. He also pointed out that the Soviet model is not able to survive or flourish. In the USSR and its satellites, oppressive bureaucracy was monitored by the means of production. In his existentialist perception, the task of Marxism is to defend the individual freedom, that should not be disturbed by State or Party⁸⁵. In the end, ideology should be deleted and replaced with radical humanism.

The philosopher condemned the USSR for the involvement in Czechoslovakia. The desires to establish a political and economic systems, similar to the ones in the USSR and supervised by

⁸¹ Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre Against Stalinism*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2004

⁸² Dick Howard (1984-1985) “Praxis Before Politics: The Problem of Sartre”, *Thesis Eleven*, No. 10/11, pp. 189-194

⁸³ Jiří Růžička and Jan Mervart (2022) “Marxism and Existentialism in the State Socialist Czechoslovakia”, *Studies in East European Thought*

⁸⁴ Jacques Deguy, *Sartre. Une écriture critique*, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, Paris, 2010

⁸⁵ Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre Against Stalinism*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2004

Moscow, seem to be hideous, in the Sartrean perception as eliminated the interests of the local population and de-personalize the state. The attempt to set up a Russian Socialist model in Czechoslovakia is interpreted as a failed dream⁸⁶. Sartre argues that Moscow, by forcing to re-create their own model in Czechoslovakia, broke the main principle of the Marx's narratives: the need to re-adapt to the existing historical circumstances⁸⁷. In the case of Czechoslovakia, the USSR's strategy was turn into something anti-Marxist⁸⁸. Sartre was sure that the post-war Czechoslovakia was a new socialist model, that was different to the ones, offered by the Soviets and the Chinese. However, later the state was turned into a new copy of the Soviet system.

The philosopher sees intellectuals as a product of class society as well as the product of history, counting individual history and race one. Individuals are shaped by environment; they cannot be created without it. The intellectual is to be involved in the modern society, but, at the same time, is supposed to preserve the individual freedom.

2.3 Arrival to Prague

In Czechoslovakia it was the period of booming transformation, that by some scholars is dated 1948-1968: 1948-1953 were the years of totalitarianism; 1963-1967 are considered to be moderate authoritarianism⁸⁹. It was more than changes, boosted by the exchange between the East and the West. It was a long-running period of de-Stalinization, that was supposed to

⁸⁶ Ivo Duchacek (1962) "Communism in Czechoslovakia 1948-1960 by Edward Taborsky", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 558-559

⁸⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, translated by John Matthews, Verso, New York, 1969

⁸⁸ Bryant Chad (2000) "Czech Dissidents and History Writing from a Post-1989 Perspective", *History and Memory*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp 30-41

⁸⁹ Ivo Duchacek (1962) "Communism in Czechoslovakia 1948-1960 by Edward Taborsky", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 558-559

transform a Stalinist system⁹⁰. Czechoslovakia was the country, that had one of the most remarkable and well-developed traditions of democracy, humanism and freedom. In that state, with such strong ties to liberty, the statue of Stalin was standing until October of 1962⁹¹.

The 1950s are not famous for the changes in social structures. It was more about creating more social inequalities in the society. With the death of Stalin, the general enthusiasm to work and produce more was gradually decreasing. 1960s were marked by the re-appearing political pluralism⁹². In Czechoslovakia the process was emerging in two stages: the elite reawakening in early 1960s and the non-elite mobilization in the end of 1960s, closer to 1968. During the era, certain agreements, regarding the role of intelligentsia in Czechoslovakia were formed with the USSR. In July of 1960, Alexander Shelepin, KGB Chairman, was having debates with Rudolf Barák, Czechoslovak communist. The agreements were creating more opportunities for Czechoslovak intelligentsia and chances to cooperate with Western groups of intellectuals, especially West Germany. However, a KGB officer was supposed to be based in Prague, to monitor the activities of intellectuals⁹³. That base later will affect the balance of powers during the Prague Spring. During the times of those cooperation of intellectuals, Czechoslovakia developed the ties with Eastern Germany, that were established in 1950s. Moscow was not satisfied with the relationship of the satellites that was even growing stronger.

⁹⁰ David W. Paul (1974), "The Repluralization of Czechoslovak Politics in the 1960s", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 721-740

⁹¹ Edward Taborsky, *Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960*, Princeton University Press, York, Pa, 1961

⁹² David W. Paul (1974), "The Repluralization of Czechoslovak Politics in the 1960s", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 721-740

⁹³ Ivo Duchacek (1962) "Communism in Czechoslovakia 1948-1960 by Edward Taborsky", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 558-559

In 1960, the Communist Party decided to state that Czechoslovakia had completed the primary steps of becoming a socialist state and needed a new constitution⁹⁴. The economic situation was deteriorating with every minute, it was in the phase of stagnation: the industrial level of development of decreasing and was the lowest in Central Europe. A group of economists, headed by Ota Šik, Czech economist and political activist, initiated a number of changes, that were supposed to control the state involvement in the economy. In 1965, the New Economic Model was launched⁹⁵. It was a liberalizing plan that later was playing its crucial role during the Prague Spring. What was initially intended to deal with the economy, cause changes in the social, political and cultural spaces⁹⁶. The political leadership was hoping that the situation would remain stable: the strategy was to ease regulation in the economy sector and strengthen the control in political. However, that agenda did not work. The cooperation with neighboring countries with different models were allowed, the censorship became less severe. That made it possible for the intellectuals to discuss the events and offer theories⁹⁷.

One of the leading roles in the state was playing the *Union of Czechoslovak Writers (Svaz československých spisovatelů)*⁹⁸. That organization had seen several phases, one of which, during 1940s, can be characterized by specific loyalty of chosen representatives towards Stalin. The writers gathered several congresses. Ones specifically worth mentioning are the

⁹⁴ David W. Paul (1974), "The Repluralization of Czechoslovak Politics in the 1960s", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 721-740

⁹⁵ Edward Taborsky, *Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960*, Princeton University Press, York, Pa, 1961

⁹⁶ Oldřich Tůma and Jaroslav Pánek. *A History of the Czech Lands*, Karolinum Press, Prague, 2009

⁹⁷ Oldřich Tůma and Jaroslav Pánek. *A History of the Czech Lands*, Karolinum Press, Prague, 2009

⁹⁸ Marci Shore (1998) "Engineering in the Age of Innocence: A Genealogy of Discourse Inside the Czechoslovak Writers' Union, 1949-1967", *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 397-441

3rd and the 4th Congresses of Czechoslovak Writers. The 3rd Congress of Czechoslovak Writers took place in 1963⁹⁹. Its major aim was to create more freedom in literature. Several foreign guests arrived: Simone de Beauvoir, Edward Albee, John Steinbeck and Viktor Šklovskij. Among them was Jean Paul Sartre. The 4th Congress took place in 1967. It is remarkable for the fact that a number of Czech representatives were condemning the bureaucratic operation of the state. They were the speakers of the society, stating the ideas that were shared by ordinary people¹⁰⁰. Later several of them, M. Kundera¹⁰¹, L. Vaculík, I. Klíma, were eliminated from the communist party.

One more force was the movements of youth, consisting of mainly university students, that were supposed to become intelligentsia in the coming years. It was a new category of the ones, who were hoping to be heard. They were hoping to catch the attention of the government, organizing students' demonstrations¹⁰². Students were no longer considered to be part of general population; they became forming their own class. One of the steps, taken for that, was setting up an official establishment, the *Czechoslovak Youth Union* (*Socialistický svaz mládeže*). That union was supposed to address social and political issues of the young representative of the country. To motivate the students' activities on 30 November 1963 Conference of the Youth Higher Education Committee was formed in Prague.

⁹⁹ Robert Vlach (1964) "Czechoslovak Letters 1963", *Books Abroad*, Vol. 38, No. 4, pp. 382-384

¹⁰⁰ Oldřich Tůma and Jaroslav Pánek. *A History of the Czech Lands*, Karolinum Press, Prague, 2009

¹⁰¹ Katérina Hala (2006), "Jean-Paul Sartre a Milan Kundera. Drama Majitelé klíčů", *Otázky českého kánonu: Sborník příspěvků z III. kongresu světové literárněvědné bohemistiky. Hodnoty a hranice. Svět v české literatuře, česká literatura ve světě*. 1. vydání. Praha: Ústav pro českou literaturu AV ČR, pp. 485-492

¹⁰² Marci Shore (1998) "Engineering in the Age of Innocence: A Genealogy of Discourse Inside the Czechoslovak Writers' Union, 1949-1967", *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 397-441

Sartre visited Prague in 1963¹⁰³. He had a number of meetings with Czech representatives: he had a debate with Czechoslovak writers in the Dobříš castle, he met the students of the Philosophy faculty of the Charles University and Czech representatives and activists in the *Municipal Library (Městská knihovna)*¹⁰⁴. Sartre presented the opinion that the most remarkable writings of the later 20th century would be based on the attempts to seek the truth in the communist reality.

In 1963 during the known conference in Liblice the new interpretation of Franz Kafka's work was opened. The conference had a symbolic meaning. Previously Kafka and his novels were condemned¹⁰⁵. That is more, the characters, that Kafka was depicting, were not the ideal people of the reality, which the communists were hoping to establish in the upcoming years. The main role of Kafka is his ability to make the dictators tensed. The writer did not aim at lecturing the proletariat with the ruling mottos of the times. Due to that, he was proclaimed to be imperialist. The symbols of his work were later represented during the Prague Spring. By some authors, the Liblice conference is recalled as the "Spring of Liblice".

The conference in Liblice did not take place without specific preparations prior. Between 1948 and 1957 a series of books of different authors were published on Kafka all across the Soviet bloc. For example, one of them was György Lukács, Hungarian philosopher and critic, who wrote a book *Against mistaken Realism* in 1958, where he analyses Kafka with the conservative Communist perspective.

¹⁰³ William L. McBride (2015) "Permanent Deviation: Understanding Our Place in History with the Aid of Sartre's Critique, Volume Two", *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 10, No. 10, pp. 685-689

¹⁰⁴ Jan Patočka (1964) "Jean Paul Sartre návštěvou ve Filosofickém ústvě ČSAV", *Filosofický časopis*, No. 12, Vol. 2, pp. 195-200

¹⁰⁵ Jo Bogaerts (2018) "Challenging the Absurd? Sartre's Article on Kafka and the Fantastic", *Sartre Studies International*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 15-33

One important remark was made by František Kautman¹⁰⁶, who's goal was to analyze Kafka in a new way, supporting the cultural heritage. Kafka's writings were closely connected to Prague, and that recovers the fact that they were written in German. Sartre had a similar position. The philosopher had been always advocating for the preservation of Czech heritage¹⁰⁷. He was personally supporting the re-vision of approaches to Franz Kafka. Sartre was the one to use for the first time the notion of '*le fantastique*' in the context of Kafka¹⁰⁸. Sartre was expressing that as the following: the fantastic is always present as something with a more mysterious background, giving more sacred sense to things and phenomena but that sense can never be fully understood. Sartre was trying to eliminate the existing interpretations of Kafka's works as something absurd. The French philosopher see Kafka as a writer that created a realistic portrait of a person¹⁰⁹. It is not only the human behavior and activities; it is its connection to the world around.

Another important persona, Karel Kosík, also presented a speech at the conference. He spoke about Jaroslav Hašek's *the Good Soldier Schweik* and Franz Kafka's *the Trial*. The main feature, that both of those works share, is the significance of a man. A human is not just a system, it has a product of humanity. In Kafka's literary heritage, Kosík was able to find the common grounds with the reality, created by Stalin's rule.

¹⁰⁶ František Kautman, (1966) "Sartre a my", *Filosofický časopis*. No. 14, Vol. 5, pp. 603-617

¹⁰⁷ Jérôme Millon (2019) « Sartre vu de Tchécoslovaquie. Jan Patočka, *Correspondance avec Robert Campbell et les siens (1946-1977)* », edited by Erika Abrams for L'Année sartrienne, No. 35, 2021

¹⁰⁸ Jo Bogaerts (2018) "Challenging the Absurd? Sartre's Article on Kafka and the Fantastic", *Sartre Studies International*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 15-33

¹⁰⁹ Jo Bogaerts (2018) "Challenging the Absurd? Sartre's Article on Kafka and the Fantastic", *Sartre Studies International*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 15-33

3. Sartre's perception

In the following sections of this thesis, I would like to provide an analysis of the four chosen Czech authors: Jan Patočka, František Kautman, Karel Kosík and Milan Kundera. Selected articles from *Filosofský časopis* and *Sociologický časopis*, from the period of 1963-1970, will be presented. All the articles were chosen by the following criteria: 1) they were written shortly after the Sartre's visit to Czechoslovakia, 2) they were focusing on Sartre, 3) they included the personal vision of the Czech intellectual, discussed by Sartre. They are supposed to present the mutual Czech-French connection and show how intellectuals were using Sartre's works to develop ideas and form the new wave of thinking and approaches to the relationship between the Socialist state and people, their place in that state and the attitude towards personal freedoms.

The Czech representatives were chosen for a couple more reasons. All of them were active in the same period of time, all of them were facing pressure from the state. Patočka was Sartre's student and was teaching Kosík, at some point. Patočka, Kosík and Kautman attended the debate with the French philosopher in 1963, Kautman and Kundera took part in the Liblice conference. Kosík and Sartre held a letter-exchange.

3.1 Jan Patočka

Jan Patočka (1907-1977) was a philosopher, who was specifically known in terms of being part of the dissident movement in Czechoslovakia and being one of the activists to sign Charter 77. His sphere of interest was existential phenomenology, Czech and European culture¹¹⁰. More precisely, the examination of the world we are in, its structure and the way it

¹¹⁰ Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel*, edited by Jonathan Harris, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000

affects people. The philosopher spent years in Czechoslovakia, France and Germany where he studied philosophy. Due to it, he wrote not only in Czech, but also in French and German. Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger were his teachers. He was heavily influenced by his teachers, Jean-Paul Sartre and Karl Jaspers. His first influential work was *Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém (The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem)* of 1936, which was the first systematic Czech research in phenomenology¹¹¹. In a year, in 1937, he started serving as editor-in-chief of *Česká mysl (The Czech Spirit)*, which was a magazine focusing on philosophy with specific sympathies towards positivist ideas. In 1938 Patočka joined the Institut International de Philosophie. The philosopher was a member of the Pedagogical Department of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science (Pedagogického ústavu J. A. Komenského ČSAV, 1954—1957) and the Philosophical Department of Czechoslovak Academy of Science (Filosofického ústavu ČSAV, 1957—1968). He was teaching at Charles University during 1945-1950 and 1968-1972. These years are easily explained: from 1939 to 1945 Czech universities were closed and later, from 1972, he was banned from working in universities. After the Prague Spring, the philosopher was creating foundation to the future dissident movement. Patočka was one of the first supporters and speakers of Charter 77. He had to face a number of interrogations by the police for his political activities.

A lot of inspirations for first works of Patočka came from French philosophy. He was not satisfied with the stage on which Czech philosophy was in the first half of the 20th century¹¹². He was trying to fix it. The shields of his main interest were phenomenology and

¹¹¹ Jérôme Millon (2019) « Sartre vu de Tchécoslovaquie. Jan Patočka, *Correspondance avec Robert Campbell et les siens (1946-1977)* », edited by Erika Abrams for L'Année sartrienne, No. 35, 2021

¹¹² Jérôme Millon (2019) « Sartre vu de Tchécoslovaquie. Jan Patočka, *Correspondance avec Robert Campbell et les siens (1946-1977)* », edited by Erika Abrams for L'Année sartrienne, No. 35, 2021

existentialism¹¹³. His most famous works are: *Přirozený svět jako filosofický problem* (1936, *The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*), *Tělo, společenství, jazyk, svět* (1968-1969, *Body, Community, Language, World*), *Co jsou Češi?* (1970, *Who are the Czechs?*), *Dvě studie o Masarkyovi* (1977, *Two Studies on Masaryk*).

In 1964, Patočka published an article in the philosophy journal (*Filosofického časopisu*)¹¹⁴. That writing was dedicated to Sartre's visit to Czechoslovakia. Patočka analyses Sartre's words and concludes a number of things. Patočka agrees with the fact that existentialism can be considered an ideology, that is supposed to deal with the issues, that appear in Marxism¹¹⁵. Moreover, Patočka approves the main ideal of the Critique of Dialectic Reason. Patočka states that not only the Western representatives are able to be loyal to a philosophy, but any activist is able to be connected to that, so, every Eastern thinker is able to commit to the Socialist ideas. Patočka disagrees with Sartre in an interesting question. Patočka believes that general theory of being cannot be identified as a totally self-efficient method¹¹⁶.

Patočka systematized all the Sartre's ideas in one speech that he prepared for the XIV. International Congress for Philosophy in Vienna in 1968. Patočka was sure that Sartre was able to contribute to the history of philosophy more than any thinker before. Some scholars tend to think that it was Patočka, who did the most for the adaptation of Sartre's works in Czechoslovakia. Patočka re-considered Heidegger and re-interpreted his concepts, according

¹¹³ Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel*, edited by Jonathan Harris, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000

¹¹⁴ Jan Patočka (1964) "Jean Paul Sartre návštěvou ve Filosofickém ústvě ČSAV", *Filosofický časopis*, No. 12, Vol. 2, pp. 195-200

¹¹⁵ Jérôme Millon (2019) « Sartre vu de Tchécoslovaquie. Jan Patočka, *Correspondance avec Robert Campbell et les siens (1946-1977)* », edited by Erika Abrams for *L'Année sartrienne*, No. 35, 2021

¹¹⁶ Jan Patočka (1964) "Jean Paul Sartre návštěvou ve Filosofickém ústvě ČSAV", *Filosofický časopis*, No. 12, Vol. 2, pp. 195-200

to Marxist principles. That made it possible for the public to come back to the German thinker that was banned during the Stalinist times. Heidegger was the one to state the comeback of a human to the reality we exist in and re-design that reality for the human. The ontological distinctions, introduced by Heidegger, were crucial to the development of thought. At the same time, Patočka was blaming his teacher for not paying enough attention to the notion of being-in-the-world. That made the Czech intellectual to form his own theory of 'three movements of human existence'.

3.2. Karel Kosík

Karel Kosík (1926-2003) was a philosopher and supporter of Marxism. Like a lot of his contemporaries, Kosík was sympathetic towards Stalin during first stages of the thinker's literary activity. He is famous for his *Dialectics of the Concrete* (1963). Kosík was member of resistance *Předvoj* (*The Vanguard*) during the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia. He studied in Prague, Charles University, and in the Soviet Union. In the late 1950s, Kosík participated in several seminars, led by Patočka. That is one of the reasons that explains the interest in Western philosophy. His main focus was the research of the man's place in reality¹¹⁷. During 1950-1963, Kosík served as a researcher at the Institute of Philosophy in the Czech Academy of Science. Then, in 1963 he became a professor at Charles University. Kosík took part in the discussions with Sartre in the Academy of Science in Czechoslovakia. In the times of the Prague Spring, the philosopher was the representative of a more liberal and democratic socialism. Due to political activities, the philosopher was eliminated from the

¹¹⁷ Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel*, edited by Jonathan Harris, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000

university in 1969. He was heavily influenced by Heidegger and Husserl, that made him revise some of the principles of Marxism¹¹⁸.

Kosík is known for the following writings: *Dialektika konkrétního* (1963, *Dialectics of the Concrete*), *Předpotopní úvahy* (1997, *Antediluvian Thoughts*), *Poslední eseje* (2005, *The Last Essay*). He created a number of articles, where he re-formulated the democratic revolutions of the 19th and 20th century in Marxist terms. He used Marxist-Leninist paradigm to interpret the changes of social and economic structures in “*Buržoasně demokratická revoluce*” (*The bourgeois democratic revolution*), by means of revolution¹¹⁹. He tried to see the differences and similarities between the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917. They can be compared in the way how the working class was developing. Bourgeois revolutions are representing, to some extent, the class struggle and the clash between proletariat and bourgeoisie, headed by the second group. The radical breaking point is the moment, when proletariat gains first pieces of freedom and independence.

Příspěvek k dějinám české demokratické kultury 19. Století (*A contribution to the history of Czech democratic culture of the 19th century*) is revealing the misunderstanding between the democratic and conservative groups and opens the “Czech question”. Kosík was able to use the Marxist principles in the context of the development of Czech nationalism¹²⁰. That way, he created a foundation to be able to talk about communism and nationalism at the same time and, thus, Kosík became the speaker of the Party and the Czech nation at the same time.

¹¹⁸ Denko Skalovski (2015) “Kosik’s Dialectics of Concrete Totality”, *Philosophy Study*, Vol. 5, No. 6, pp 273-281

¹¹⁹ Karel Kosik, Karel Kovanda and James Schmidt, *Dialectics of the Concrete: A Study on Problems of Man and World*, reviewed by L. Roland Irons, *New German Critique*, 1979, No. 18, pp. 167-175

¹²⁰ Karel Kosik, Karel Kovanda and James Schmidt, *Dialectics of the Concrete: A Study on Problems of Man and World*, reviewed by L. Roland Irons, *New German Critique*, 1979, No. 18, pp. 167-175

Kosík's *Dialektika konkrétního* (1963, *Dialectics of the Concrete*) was another work, sometimes referred as the philosophical manifesto, that contributed to the acceleration, led to the Prague Spring¹²¹. It examines key notions, overviewed by the Marxist philosophy: labor and economic determinism. It was a way to uncover the frames that the Czechoslovak nation was put in, using theory. It is possible to see the irony, that can be followed throughout the whole work. This piece was heavily condemned by the orthodox Marxists for exploitation of Hegelian concepts. Kosík looks at Marxism from the point of view of an existentialist, he combines human experience and social structures. Czechoslovakia, under the rule of Klement Gottwald, was considered, by the philosopher, to be the 'social fascism'¹²². The Prague Trials of 1950-1954 and the Moscow trials of 1936 were justified by the same logic: 'prefabricated socialism' that was designed by the Communist Party. Kosík's point of view concluded that Stalinist rule was not re-vised socialism, it was a completely new form¹²³. In the *Dialectics of the Concrete* Kosík for the first time officially referred to Sartre¹²⁴. The Czech writer was seeing his French colleague as the first one, who presented existentialism as part of materialistic philosophy, that cannot be eliminated.

Sartre held a letter exchange with Kosík¹²⁵. The Czech intellectual was writing Sartre about his life: how he was removed from teaching at the university, how he was interrogated, how

¹²¹ Denko Skalovski (2015) "Kosík's Dialectics of Concrete Totality", *Philosophy Study*, Vol. 5, No. 6, pp 273-281

¹²² Karel Kosík, Karel Kovanda and James Schmidt, *Dialectics of the Concrete: A Study on Problems of Man and World*, reviewed by L. Roland Irons, *New German Critique*, 1979, No. 18, pp. 167-175

¹²³ Karel Kosík, Karel Kovanda and James Schmidt, *Dialectics of the Concrete: A Study on Problems of Man and World*, reviewed by L. Roland Irons, *New German Critique*, 1979, No. 18, pp. 167-175

¹²⁴ Denko Skalovski (2015) "Kosík's Dialectics of Concrete Totality", *Philosophy Study*, Vol. 5, No. 6, pp 273-281

¹²⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre (1975) "The Kosík-Sartre Exchange", *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*, No. 25

his literary works were banned in Czechoslovakia. Sartre was sure that Kosík was forced to eliminate himself and his opinions, in order to become someone else and satisfy the mainstream ideas. Sartre was hoping to convince Kosík in the absence of Kosík's guilt in everything that was happening. Sartre pointed out that Czechoslovakia was taken from the outside actors that humiliated the state¹²⁶. In the perception of the French activist, it was not possible to blame the ideas of the society. However, that was not the only issue in the situation. Sartre was sure that it was the Soviet Union that intervened, created a false view on Kosík's ideas and found the guilt of the Czech representative in something, he personally did not engage at all. Sartre was sure that the Czech culture cannot be ruined as long as there are people like Kosík. The French philosopher summarized his ideas by stating that if Karel Kosík is the one to blame, everyone else who think about their acts are to blame either¹²⁷.

3.3. František Kautman

František Kautman (1927-2016) was a Czech historian and writer. He graduated from the university in Prague in 1949 and spend 4 years, 1952-1956, in Moscow, where he studied literature. He was specifically interested in the heritage of Franz Kafka and Fyodor Dostoevsky¹²⁸. Then he returned to Prague, where he worked in Kultura journal and in the Czechoslovak Academy of Science (ČSAV). He participated in the Liblice conference in 1963. During normalization, he was banned from publishing and he had to move to the underground part of literary Prague. Kautman signed the Charter 77. His well-known publications are: *Literatura a filosofie* (1968, *Literature and Philosophy*), *Franz Kafka* (1992), *O literatuře a jejích tvůrcích* (1999, *About Literature and its Creators*).

¹²⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre (1975) "The Kosik-Sartre Exchange", *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*, No. 25

¹²⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre (1975) "The Kosik-Sartre Exchange", *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*, No. 25

¹²⁸ Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel*, edited by Jonathan Harris, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000

In 1966, Kautman published an article in *Filosofický časopis*¹²⁹, that was connected to Sartre. Kautman highlights the link, uniting Sartre and the Czech scene – Marxism and Christianity. Kautman went through the stages of evolution of approaches on Sartre: how they went from banning the French intellectual to his gradual appreciation among the Czech thinkers. Kautman acknowledges that some of the Czech activists were using Sartre's ideas, for example Jan Patočka and Václav Havel. However, the Czech writer states that in Czechoslovakia the cult of Sartre did not exist. Unfortunately, existential ideas were not studied properly and, due to that, those ideas could not have been integrated in the narratives.

Kautman highlighted Sarterian view on life and on the way how the French author was trying to provoke evolutions, leading to better outcomes and giving people more purposeful lives. Sartre was advocating for resistance in the political context and was supporting the struggle of population for the more liberalized future¹³⁰. Sartre commented on the Czech case in the context of the Munich conference of 1938 and warned the importance of the further elimination of any scenarios that could be similar.

Kautman examines the attitude of Sartre towards Marxism as well. The Czech writer admitted that Sartre was going through the transition of his ideas and views on the ideology¹³¹. He agreed that it was normal for a person, who thinks, to upgrade the opinions with time, due to a number of objective reasons. Sartre was known to be able to analyze the dogmatic Marxism and appreciate the creative part of the ideology. Sartre was not the one to kneel down to any of the communist parties, he was the one to attempt to get a closer and more detailed look on the ideology itself. In general, Kautman was sympathizing with the

¹²⁹ František Kautman, (1966) "Sartre a my", *Filosofický časopis*. No. 14, Vol. 5, pp. 603-617

¹³⁰ František Kautman, (1966) "Sartre a my", *Filosofický časopis*. No. 14, Vol. 5, pp. 603-617

¹³¹ František Kautman, (1966) "Sartre a my", *Filosofický časopis*. No. 14, Vol. 5, pp. 603-617

majority of the ideas of the French philosopher and, especially, to the humanistic part, that was present in all of the Sartrean works¹³².

3.4. Milan Kundera

Milan Kundera (1929-2023), Czech writer, had a captivating story with gaining citizenships. Initially, he was born in Czechoslovakia but lost the citizenship in 1979. In 1981, he obtained the French one and, in 2019, he gained back the Czech one¹³³.

In Prague, Kundera studied at the Faculty of Arts (Filozofická fakulta) at Charles University. In 1948, Kundera gained membership in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. He was eliminated from the Party in 1950 but he gained his membership back in 1956. It is not that widely discussed in the Western audience that in the first stages of his activity, Milan Kundera was dedicating positive reviews to Stalin. Kundera was a member of a union of intellectuals, that was formed in the freshly established Stalinist regime¹³⁴. Later, there was a shift in his ideas. It is fairly visible in *Žert* (1967, *the Joke*), a novel on Stalinism¹³⁵.

In 1953, he presented to the world his first writing. The activist was hoping to reform the Czechoslovakia. Kundera was the one on the 1963 Liblice conference, referring to Sartre, in order to expand the cultural ties¹³⁶. Kundera participated in the Prague Spring in 1968. From

¹³² František Kautman, (1966) "Sartre a my", *Filosofický časopis*. No. 14, Vol. 5, pp. 603-617

¹³³ Aviezer Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel*, edited by Jonathan Harris, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000

¹³⁴ Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre Against Stalinism*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2004

¹³⁵ Katérina Hala (2006), "Jean-Paul Sartre a Milan Kundera. Drama Majitelé klíčů", *Otázky českého kánonu: Sborník příspěvků z III. kongresu světové literárněvědné bohemistiky. Hodnoty a hranice. Svět v české literatuře, česká literatura ve světě*. 1. vydání. Praha: Ústav pro českou literaturu AV ČR, pp. 485-492

¹³⁶ Charles Molesworth (1987) "Kundera and The Book: The Unsaid and The Unsayable", *Milan Kundera: Fictive Lightness, Fictive Weight*, Vol. 46, No. 73, pp. 65-83

that moment on, he was banned from teaching and his books were removed from the libraries and shops. Since 1970, Kundera was no longer in the Communist Party; he was no longer capable of publishing. In 1975, he moved to France. From 1993, the writer was creating his works in French. He was influenced by Robert Musil, Friedrich Nietzsche, Franz Kafka and Martin Heidegger. His noted works are: *Laughable Loves* (1969, *Směšné lásky*), *L'Art du Roman* (1986, *The Art of the Novel*), *Testaments Trahis* (1994, *Testaments Betrayed*) and *Identity* (1998, *L'Identité*).

In 1965, Kundera presented an article that was concisely named *Sartre*¹³⁷. The article presented the view of Kundera on the arrival of Sartre and how the Czech society reacted to the. In Kundera's view, Sartre was the perfect representative of the modern post-WWII era. In the second part, Kundera stated that Sartre's literary work was not fully appreciated by the Czech society as they were 'alien to the Czech scene'¹³⁸. The reason for that was that Sartre's works lacked the romantic component that was the ruling one in the Czech environment at those times. Kundera stated that, due to Sartre, it was possible to move from the ahistorical view on a human to a concrete perception of personality in modernity.

The key ideas of Sartre can be found in the Kundera's Book¹³⁹. The lines can be connected to the first part of the Critique. While writing about human relations, Kundera was using Sartreian psychology, re-considering a human in the context of other people and hell. The French activist researched the notion of the group¹⁴⁰. Kundera used that as well: he pointed out how a woman can be objectified by the group by the means of sexualization. Sartre valued individuality and the necessity of individual freedom. Kundera recalls the ideas of

¹³⁷ Milan Kundera (1965) "Sartre", *Literární noviny*, Vol. 14, No. 25

¹³⁸ Milan Kundera (1965) "Sartre", *Literární noviny*, Vol. 14, No. 25

¹³⁹ Milan Kundera (1965) "Sartre", *Literární noviny*, Vol. 14, No. 25

¹⁴⁰ Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Faber & Faber, United Kingdom, 2020.

seriality and the way, how a human is terrified of being lost in the past society¹⁴¹. Kundera uses the notions of the French philosopher while describing how easy it is to eliminate the individuality if people are going through the identity crisis. Another thing that Kundera and Sartre shared was the belief that Czechoslovakia was the center of Europe. Sartre was mentioning it as a spot for cultural dialog, Kundera developed that idea. For him, the state was a center of gravity of Western Europe, that was endangered by the Soviet threat¹⁴².

More of the Sartre's presence we can see in Kundera's *Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí* (1984, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*)¹⁴³. Sartre stated that existence is nothing. For him, choices have consequences. Choices put liability. They are made on the self-basis of a person. Kundera reconsidered that¹⁴⁴. Unlike Sartre, he stated that people have no limitations. Choices are not a responsibility; they are the sort of freedom and chances to gain experience. Another difference is that, for Kundera, no one can shape one's choices based on someone's background¹⁴⁵.

3.5 Summary

All of the four Czech representatives were interested in the problem of Czech nation and its place in the modern world. They agree with the Sartre's belief that Czechoslovakia was the spot in the center of Europe, that was referring the relationship of the West and the East. All

¹⁴¹ Charles Molesworth (1987) "Kundera and The Book: The Unsaid and The Unsayable", Milan Kundera: Fictive Lightness, Fictive Weight, Vol. 46, No. 73, pp. 65-83

¹⁴² Charles Molesworth (1987), "Kundera and The Book: The Unsaid and The Unsayable", Salmagundi, No. 73, pp. 65-83

¹⁴³ Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Faber & Faber, United Kingdom, 2020.

¹⁴⁴ Katérina Hala (2006), "Jean-Paul Sartre a Milan Kundera. Drama Majitelé klíčů", *Otázky českého kánonu: Sborník příspěvků z III. kongresu světové literárněvědné bohemistiky. Hodnoty a hranice. Svět v české literatuře, česká literatura ve světě*. 1. vydání. Praha: Ústav pro českou literaturu AV ČR, pp. 485-492

¹⁴⁵ Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Faber & Faber, United Kingdom, 2020.

the writers see Sartre's visit and his ideas as the possibility for liberalization and former dialog of cultures, that was promoted by the French intellectual. Sartre was hoping to move the discussions in the direction, uniting Marxism and phenomenology¹⁴⁶. Here, all the Czech authors revise Heidegger and his concepts of human relationships¹⁴⁷. Another common thing, noted by the Czech authors, was that Sartre was becoming less radical in philosophy but, at the same time, more radical in his political claims. One matter, on which all the writers disagreed, was Sartre's optimistic belief on the minor reformation of the Communist system, that would evolve to that idea itself, not seeing enough of self-sufficiency. The Czech representatives were thinking that without external influence no reformation is possible.

In regard to the connection with Sartre, the Czech writers were focusing on different aspects. Patočka was more interested in the mutual influence of the people and the world around, Kundera was writing more about the individual freedom and relationship of people within the group, a Kautman were reviewing the issues of Czech culture and heritage with connection to religion, and Kosík was exploring the economic and labor relations.

¹⁴⁶ Jérôme Millon (2019) « Sartre vu de Tchécoslovaquie. Jan Patočka, *Correspondance avec Robert Campbell et les siens (1946-1977)* », edited by Erika Abrams for L'Année sartrienne, No. 35, 2021

¹⁴⁷ (Roland Irons (1979), "Review of the Concrete: The Text and Its Czechoslovakian Context", New German Critiques, No. 18, pp. 167-175)

4. Conclusion

To sum up, it can be said that the linkage to Jean-Paul Sartre can be found throughout the development of thought in the Czech intellectual society in the 20th century, starting roughly in late 1940s and following to the modern times¹⁴⁸. The connections were mutual: Sartre was affecting the Czech scene and the Czech culture was, in return, influencing Sartre¹⁴⁹. Having visited Czechoslovakia a couple of times, Sartre did the most for the development of the Czech thought in 1963. Czechoslovakia was facing the period of transitions, that was boosted by the debates with the French philosophy¹⁵⁰. The French-Czech exchange was present due to a couple of reasons, such as a specific approach to internal politics in France, a number of Soviet supporters in France and the French Communist Party, etc. It was visible that Sartre was helping to maintain a dialog between the cultures and his ideas, that he managed to plant in the minds of intellectuals, were used to form the reformists narratives. Those narratives resulted in: the Prague Spring, in a short-term perspective, and in the Velvet Revolution, in the long-term one¹⁵¹. Sartrean ideas were influencing the speakers of the Charter 77, who signed the well-known document.

Sartre had a long-going relationship with the Soviet Union and his attitude towards its acts had shaped with time. That was explained by the events and the turbulences, that took place in the Central European states. However, what never changed was the Sartre's will to preserve the Czech heritage¹⁵². He advocated for that idea numerous times, especially in the

¹⁴⁸ Edward Taborsky, *Communism in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960*, Princeton University Press, York, Pa, 1961

¹⁴⁹ Petr Horak (2005) "Jean-Paul Sartre - sto let", *Filosofický časopis*, Vol. 53, No. 3, p. 339

¹⁵⁰ Ivo Duchacek (1962) "Communism in Czechoslovakia 1948-1960 by Edward Taborsky", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 558-559

¹⁵¹ William L. McBride (2015) "Permanent Deviation: Understanding Our Place in History with the Aid of Sartre's Critique, Volume Two", *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 10, No. 10, pp. 685-689

¹⁵² Jérôme Millon (2019) « Sartre vu de Tchecoslovaquie. Jan Patočka, *Correspondance avec Robert Campbell et les siens (1946-1977)* », edited by Erika Abrams for L'Année sartrienne,

World Peace Congress in Moscow in 1962 and the Liblice Conference 1963¹⁵³. Sartre was interested in the revolution of views and ideas in Czechoslovakia and claimed that that country was the only place to provide the Western World with a new model that varied from what the Soviets and the Chinese were offering¹⁵⁴. At the mentioned conference, Sartre met a number of the Czech thinkers that later produces articles, reviewing his philosophical heritage. That way, Sartre gained connection to Jan Patočka, Karel Kosík, František Kautman and Milan Kundera. The mentioned Czech representatives presented works on Sartre, during different periods: starting with Patočka, who wrote his first article on Sartre right after the visit in 1964, and never terminating¹⁵⁵. Although, Sartre was an inspiration and a model for a lot of thinkers, it is seen that the Czech intellectuals did not just blindly follow the paths, offered by Sartre. Instead, they were developing concepts and revealing their own ideas.

In the end, it can be concluded that Sartre did influence the Czech representatives and initiated a re-consideration of Marxist concepts in the context of reformist ideas of Czechoslovakia thinkers¹⁵⁶.

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¹⁵³ Jo Bogaerts (2018) "Challenging the Absurd? Sartre's Article on Kafka and the Fantastic", *Sartre Studies International*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 15-33

¹⁵⁴ Roland Irons (1979), "Review of the Concrete: The Text and Its Czechoslovakian Context", *New German Critiques*, No. 18, pp. 167-175)

¹⁵⁵ Petr Horak (2005) "Jean-Paul Sartre - sto let", *Filosofický časopis*, Vol. 53, No. 3, p. 339

¹⁵⁶ Prokop Toman (2005) "Příspěvek k Sartrovým slovům a mlčení v Čechách", *Acta Oeconomica Pragensia*, Vol. 13, No. 5, pp. 23-37

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