

THE POSITION OF CZECH WORKERS AND UNIONS ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REFORMS IN THE SIXTIES

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In 1963, afraid of the economic crisis resulting in mounting social tension, Czechoslovakia's political leadership finally consented to economic reforms. In the years that followed, these reforms took considerable turns both in theory and practice. They were supported by workers and unions, although they lowered social security standards. They were made more acceptable by the fact that they were accompanied by social reforms and that independent social activity was now tolerated. During the "Prague spring", the unions' freedom of action increased once more, and as far as setting up democratic organs within the factories was concerned, unions assumed a leading role. The new workers' committees demonstrated that the workers were not trying to simply defend their day-to-day interests, but also to bring about democratic conditions in society in general as well as within the factories. Increased independence of the unions and the influence of the workers' committees, however, met with resistance by anti-reform forces at home and abroad, especially after the august of 1968.