

it would be unreasonable to expect that governments could stand aloof from these arrangements, even when the objects of cultural exchanges are simply scientific. Often there is public money involved, or the need to make available to scientists facilities which are not available to other people. The involvement of national academies of science (the Royal Society in Britain) does not help much, if only because these bodies are usually slow to act and dependent on outside sources for what money they can splash around. The ideal would be that governments should negotiate the principles on which scientific exchanges take place, offer help when this seems likely to be effective, but usually rely on institutions here and there to make detailed arrangements for the transfer of people. Quotas should be scorned. And while this heady subject is being tackled, should there not also be a thorough exploration of the possibility that some governments might usefully spend a part of what they allocate for scientific research on projects to be undertaken in other countries? This, after all, would be entirely consistent with the belief that it can only be a matter of time before Europe as a whole is thoroughly integrated, at least where intellectual enterprises are concerned.

But is this not idle pipe-dreaming? Surely this is a time for hanging gratefully onto the benefits which have been wrung from the past decades, not for seeking still more tangible expressions of the truth that the common interests of scientists and others working in the several countries of Europe, not merely as scientists but in all other fields, are strong enough to stand out successfully against the often arbitrary dispositions which governments are inclined from time to time to make in what they consider to be their essential interests. That is the cautious view, but it is probably mistaken. In a curious way, Europe as a whole has learned a great deal about itself in the past 10 days, and it will not be quite the same ever again. Just as, in the late fifties, it began to seem quite bizarre to think of using nuclear weapons in such a tightly knit and closely structured society as that of Europe, it now seems to be established that you can fill the streets with tanks and then be prevented by what would be the enormity of the exercise from letting them open fire. That would be just as old-fashioned. But it has also been demonstrated that a little guile and a lot of cheerfulness can go a long way to make up for sheer weakness. It would be interesting to know the extent to which Czechoslovak fortitude in the face of tanks stemmed from the availability of several pieces of technology—radio transmitters, motor cars and telex machines—but the whole happening does prompt the question whether rigorous control of a population may be more difficult—not easier, as Orwell has implied—in what is called a technological society. For the rest, however, the events in Czechoslovakia have been a sober but heartening reminder that, whatever its governments may think, Europe as a whole does hang together. In the long run, what has been happening may well be seen to have accelerated many liberal tendencies.

POLITICS

Czechoslovakia—Reactions

"RUSSIA has lost the battle." This statement by a Czechoslovakian scientist soon after the Russians marched into Prague reflected the general feeling of shock and disappointment. But the Russian arrival had no effect on Czech morale. Dr P. E. Kent of British Petroleum, the United Kingdom representative to the International Geological Congress which met in Prague at the time of the invasion, says that the delegates from Russia and other Eastern European countries were as upset by the events as the Western delegates. Many of them continued to attend the conference and all were anxious to maintain contact with other scientists.

The executive of the congress met on Wednesday afternoon and decided to carry on as long as possible as a gesture of support and to provide an "island of freedom". The Technical University where the conference was held was the only public building to remain in Czech hands until the conference ended on Saturday morning. All other cultural and educational institutions were occupied immediately and the President of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Frantisek Sorm, was forced to take refuge in the Technical University.

Most of the sessions met, at least nominally, on Thursday, though transportation through the city was difficult and many of the 3,200 delegates were staying in central hotels in the midst of the Russian tanks and troops. Dr Kent felt that the major role of the conference at this point was to provide a united and calming front of more than 3,000 foreigners from ninety-one countries. By Friday, however, trains were leaving the country and large numbers of delegates left; the final meeting was held on Friday afternoon when representatives of about twenty-five of the participating nations made speeches of sympathy to the Czechoslovakian cause. Most of the British delegation left Czechoslovakia on Saturday morning, travelling by train. Dr Kent stressed that the first concern of the Czech scientists throughout this period was for the safety and comfort of the foreign scientists and that their hospitality never wavered.

The Czechoslovakian scientists also feel strongly that Western scientists should make their protest heard. The following proclamation was one of many distributed among the delegates at the Geological Conference in Prague last week.

To all Scientists of the World !

We scientists of Czechoslovak Republic are calling you in this tragical hour of our nation's FIGHT with ALL YOUR POSSIBILITIES and ENERGY AGAINST the UNLEGAL OCCUPATION OF CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALIST REPUBLIC !

Organize proclamations, protest actions in your countries.

SCIENTISTS !

DEMONSTRATE YOUR FELLOW-FEELING !

HELP US DEFEND FREEDOM !

Scientists
of Czechoslovak Academy
of Sciences, Prague