

hectare between 1963 and 1966 (Agricultural Statistics 29). The number of tractors increased dramatically, and emphasis was placed on scientific research and agricultural education for farm leaders.

Czechoslovak agriculture entered a period of growth that lasted through the first years of the 1970s. The average annual growth rate in agricultural production between 1966 and 1971 was 3.5 percent (Hajda 138). Total grain production rose from 5.2 million tons in 1965 to 9.7 million tons in 1973. Wheat production accounted for much of this, with total production increasing from 2 to 4.6 million tons over the same period. Barley production doubled. Livestock production growth was steady, but did not keep pace with the growth in grain production. Fruit and vegetable production remained at 1965 levels (Agricultural Statistics 33, 36, 91-95). By 1968, state farm workers and members of agricultural cooperatives had standards of living equal to those in urban areas.

Yielding to increasing criticism for its failure to deal with continuing political, social, and economic problems, the Central Committee of the Communist Party voted in January, 1968, to replace Novotny as party leader. The appointment of Slovak bureaucrat and compromise candidate Alexander Dubcek marked the beginning of what has become known as the Prague Spring. The reform-minded Dubcek and his followers began their pursuit of "socialism with a human face" by combining elements of democracy and market economy with the Marxist system. In the agricultural sector, managers of state farms and cooperatives were given more power to make decisions in an effort to increase efficiency. Cooperatives were also given the right to conduct business in other sectors of the economy, particularly food processing and distribution, and a new price regulation system freed about 15 percent of commodities (Fischer 30).